Saints and Sainthood around the Baltic Sea: Identity, Literacy, and Communication in the Middle Ages

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Saints and Sainthood around the Baltic Sea
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Identity, Literacy, and Communication in the Middle Ages

Edited by
Carsten Selch Jensen
Tracey R. Sands
Nils Holger Petersen
Kurt Villads Jensen
Tuomas M. S. Lehtonen

Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Culture LIV
MEDIEVAL INSTITUTE PUBLICATIONS
Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo
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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
are available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN: 9781580443234
eISBN: 9781580443241

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During the Middle Ages the various regions around the Baltic Sea were drawn, one by one, into an expanding Christian cultural sphere that would come to include nearly all of the European countries. This process of Christianization and colonization gradually transformed the identities and cultures of the people in the target areas, and also reshaped the overall notion of Christianity in the old heartlands of Europe. One of the key elements in these processes of cultural transformation and in the establishment of new identities was the introduction and adoption of a cult of saints in the various regions targeted by these processes of Christianization and colonization. In some regions, familiar saints from the Christian heartlands were accepted into a local environment and gradually transformed to fit the needs of the local people in a new cultural and mental milieu. In other cases, new saints arose from within the newly Christianized regions themselves and became symbols of new identities arising from these local settings.

The importance of the cult of saints in the cultural transformation of the regions around the Baltic Sea has been emphasized by a number of different scholars and has pointed research in new directions. This was the motivation for an interdisciplinary conference about saints’ cults around the Baltic Sea that was held in Helsinki in October of 2011 at the Finnish Literature Society. The conference was organized as a collaboration between the research project “Oral and Literary Cultures in the Medieval and Early Modern Baltic Sea Region” under the auspices of the Finnish Literature Society, the Institute of History at the University of Tallinn, Estonia, and the Department of Church History at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, with the additional participation of the research project “Symbols that Bind and Break Communities: Saints’ Cults as Stimuli and Expressions of Local, Regional, National, and Universalist Identities” under the auspices of the European Science Foundation. The
The editors would like to thank the Finnish Literature Society for hosting the conference, and the research projects mentioned above for their financial support. We would also like to thank the authors for their willingness to prepare their papers for publication in this book on saints and sainthood around the Baltic Sea.

The editors
Part I
Introduction and Methodological Questions
Chapter One

Saints and Sainthood around the Baltic Sea—
An Introduction

Carsten S. Jensen, Tracey R. Sands, Nils Holger Petersen,
Kurt V. Jensen, and Tuomas M. S. Lehtonen

The present collection of essays concerns the medieval cult of saints around the Baltic Sea, a European region that has often been seen as peripheral in relation to broad perspectives of European medieval history. The expansion of Roman Christianity to ever more far-flung parts of northern and northeastern Europe originated from the central European powers, with missions during the sixth and seventh centuries from Rome to England, during the eighth from England to Frisia (in modern geography roughly the northern part of the Netherlands and the west coast of Germany), during the ninth from the Carolingian Empire to Denmark and Sweden, and from the tenth century onward from both the Holy Roman Empire and Scandinavia to the eastern parts of the Baltic. It has become clear that these missionary efforts, which often accompanied strategies of political and territorial expansion, had important consequences even for the “old” parts of Christendom. Thus, the notion of periphery should be used with caution.

Indeed, during the Middle Ages the various regions around the Baltic Sea were gradually, one by one, drawn into the sphere of an expanding Christian culture that eventually was to include nearly all of the European countries. This process of medieval Christian expansion, of Christianization and colonization, which gradually transformed the identities and cultural notions of the people in the areas of the missions as well as reshaping the overall notion of Christianity in the old heartlands of Europe, has been studied by numerous historians, notably by Robert Bartlett in his acclaimed book *The Making of Europe. Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change, 950–1350* (1993 and later). One by one, the lands and regions subjected to these processes had to redefine their past as well as their present in the light of a new religious, cultural,
and mental framework that eventually would engulf the old beliefs and norms and replace them with new modes of thinking.

The cultures in which these complex religious and cultural transformations occurred were primarily oral ones. One of the outcomes of the process of redefining the past and present around the Baltic Sea was the gradual establishment of a Latin written culture, which partly erased and partly Christianized pre-Christian cultural memories. This process dramatically changed the identities of the local people, as various forms of paganism were gradually replaced by Christianity, and as new political structures came into being. As a consequence, new interpretations of the past and present in the face of new religious and political structures—along with the novel technology of writing—led to the construction of written narratives in order to reconstruct local histories in accordance with the profound changes that had taken place in the various regions. Similarly, during these centuries of transition, heathen imagery gradually became Christianized or even disappeared altogether, as a Christian visual culture assimilated or replaced earlier traditions. The same happened with regard to the pre-Christian musical traditions. Few traces remain of songs from before the introduction of Christianity, whereas Latin liturgical music was introduced into the new Christian areas in connection with the establishing of Latin liturgy and chant.

In recent years, processes of cultural transformation have been at the very center of scholarly discussion and have thus attracted researchers from a wide range of different and highly specialized fields of research. Among others, we find historians, theologians, art historians, musicologists, anthropologists, folklorists, and experts in literary culture dealing with this particular field of research and gathering important new insight into the early history of Europe, especially in those regions that, as noted above, rather misleadingly have been labeled “the periphery.”

One of the key elements in these processes of cultural transformation, and in the establishment of new identities, was the introduction and adoption of the cult of saints in the various regions reached by the missionaries. The establishing of an ecclesiastical calendar determining the annual round of liturgical celebrations was therefore one of the most important steps when establishing a Christian culture in a new locality. Due to local adjustments and expansions, liturgical books from different dioceses can be distinguished by differences in saints’ cults, helping scholars to trace the early developments in these local saints’ cults by revealing important information on the processes of cultural transformations. In some regions,
well-established and well-known saints from western, central, and southern Europe were adopted into a local environment and gradually transformed and reinterpreted to fit the needs of the local people and churches in a new cultural and mental milieu. In other cases, local saints arose from within these newly Christianized regions, and became symbols and signifiers of local or regional identities. The importance of the cult of saints for the cultural transformations of the regions around the Baltic Sea during their transition into Christendom and beyond, throughout the Middle Ages, has been emphasized by many scholars working in various fields of research within ecclesiastical and cultural history—see for example Lars Boje Mortensen (ed.), *The Making of Christian Myths in the Periphery of Latin Christendom* (c. 1000–1300), (Museum Tusculanum Press 2006); and Ildar H. Garipzanov (ed.), *Historical Narratives and Christian Identity on a European Periphery. Early History Writing in North, East-Central, and Eastern Europe* (c. 1070–1200), (Brepols 2011). Recently, Professor Bartlett has also contributed to this specific field of research with a new and overall synthesis on the important role played by the cult of saints from the time of the early church until the Reformation: *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things? Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton 2013).

The introduction of the concept of saintliness, and the corresponding possibility of incorporating new saints into the liturgy and into people’s daily lives, allowed the integration of locally important figures and narratives into a greater Christian worldview. This provided a bridge between local culture and general theological understanding, seen as universal, but, indeed, applicable to local traditions. This kind of thinking had been a basic ingredient for the establishing of saints’ cults since antiquity. It was also clearly reflected in the traditional procedures for establishing saints’ cults, based on local veneration and the approval of the local bishop as necessary requirements to the establishment of a formal saint’s day with a liturgical office in honor of that saint. The procedure was superseded only gradually, beginning in the twelfth century, by papal canonization. Where local veneration did not lead to episcopal approval, there would simply be a local, unofficial cult with no actual liturgical celebrations. The belief that divine grace could be channeled through the intercession of the saint in question was basic to the community of the saint’s followers and provided a vivid connection between peoples’ lives, their fears and hopes, and the cults of saints.
When liturgical celebrations for a saint were established, this saint was then incorporated into the annual round of liturgical celebrations, and the stories about this saint would thus be made a part of an overall web of Christian narratives. Thus, local narration would become integrated into the larger Christian interpretation of life, providing further opportunities for local identification. The same would also be the case for legends concerning saints not officially accepted into the (local) church calendar, and even for local narratives about official saints; such legends would obviously be less subject to official control and were often transmitted orally for a long time before being recorded in writing.

Similarly, the exchange between local narrative and the grand Christian (biblical or biblically informed) narratives also meant that even universal saints could be appropriated into local narratives or worldviews. For example, the most universal of saints, the Virgin Mary achieved a particularly Baltic presence. The German conquest of Livonia during the twelfth century was carried out under her patronage and, during the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), the entire region was dedicated to her. Livonia was therefore considered a second crusading destination, the land of the Mother in contrast to the Holy Land, which was seen as the land of the Son. Although the cult of the Virgin naturally was dramatically reduced after the Reformation, folk memory retained this memory so that even now, one of the poetic synonyms for Estonia is Maarjamaa (the land of Mary). Other saints celebrated universally were also appropriated into local narrative traditions in various ways. One example is St. Katherine of Alexandria, though, as Irma-Riitta Järvinen points out in this volume, it is not always possible to follow the oral traditions behind the narratives collected by folklorists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries back to specific medieval sources.

The study of the cult of saints in the new northeastern corner of Latin Christendom provides important insights into how universal Christian traditions were appropriated into local cultures. This appropriation occurred, of course, not only with saints’ cults but also in the way Christ and other biblical figures and narratives were adapted into local visual and narrative culture. It can be seen in church decorations by local artists as well as in individual texts belonging to different genres, such as sermons and hymns, and as time went on, in vernacular texts as well as Latin ones. The saints, however, especially the local ones, seem to have been more adaptable, probably because they were less sacrosanct than the biblical figures.
The aim of this book is to bring together contributions by scholars from various disciplines working with topics within the overall problematic sketched above. As already made clear, the study of saints’ cults belongs in several academic fields. In October of 2011 an interdisciplinary conference, “Saints and Sainthood around the Baltic Sea: Orality, Literacy and Communication in the Middle Ages,” was held in Helsinki. A number of presentations from this conference have since been reworked in order to produce a volume on the overall topic for a general academic audience.

This volume focuses on the introduction and adoption of saints in the regions around the Baltic Sea, and their role in the cultural transformations that led to the establishment of new local identities. Individual articles examine the cult of saints in Russia, Prussia, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Estonia, and Latvia (more commonly referred to in the Middle Ages as Livonia). The contributions cover a wide range of more specialized topics: the introduction of foreign (and “old”) saints into new regions, the creation of new local cults of saints in newly Christianized regions, the role of the cult of saints in the creation of political and lay identities, the adaptation of the cult of saints in folk poetry, the interaction between oral and literary cultures, the establishment (through the introduction of saints’ cults) of communicative networks around the Baltic Sea and beyond, and appropriations of saints in times of war. Some of the chapters also address questions of research methodology for the medieval cult of saints. Chronologically, the chapters span from the tenth to the late fifteenth century.

The volume opens with Martin Wangsgaard Jürgensen’s methodologically oriented chapter, “The Elusive Quality of Saints: Saints, Churches, and Cults,” which takes up a problem concerning the relation between medieval saints as they emerge from the sources and the lack of common congruence by which modern scholars discuss this material. The author attempts to establish a methodological balance between the medieval *habitus* surrounding saints on the one hand and modern scholarly approaches to the cult of saints on the other.

From another methodological perspective on the use and reuse of saints in both medieval and modern times, Cordelia Heß discusses a particular Prussian saint in her chapter, “Medieval Cults and Modern Inventions: Dorothy of Montau, the Teutonic Order and ‘Katholiken für Hitler.’” The widowed laywoman Dorothy of Montau was barely known outside the town of Marienwerder/Kwidzyn, where she spent the last eighteen months of her life as a recluse in the cathedral church. But after
her death in 1394, many laid claim to her: the cathedral chapter tried to introduce her as its own local saint, the Teutonic order tried to use her as a spiritual example of humility and asceticism in its late crusading ideology, and the Prussian population continued to venerate her as one of their own. The different attempts to construct an ideal of sainthood according to the spiritual and political needs of different groups, however, were not restricted to the medieval cult. Polish Jesuits tried to re-establish Dorothea’s cult during the Counter-Reformation, and, after World War II, German historians in exile tried to define Dorothea’s cult as a sign of the “superior German culture” of the region. These attempts cannot entirely be seen as a corruption of the original content of the sources; rather, the medieval hagiographic accounts contain the seeds of the different interpretations that would become relevant in the different historical periods.

“Finnish Saints’ Traditions and Folklore” by Irma-Riitta Järvinen also addresses certain methodological issues in the study of the appropriations of three female saints in Finnish oral culture. In her chapter, Irma-Riitta Järvinen presents the many-layered traditions relating to St. Anne, St. Katherine, and St. Birgitta in Finland. She notes how one of the most important sources for their martyr legends, part of the Legenda aurea by Jacobus de Voragine (thirteenth century), connects to vernacular Finnish folklore and ritual traditions. Järvinen also discusses songs about St. Katherine in Finnish: a Kalevala-meter song about the death of Katherine and a rhymed ballad called Pieni Katri, “Little Katri,” which represents a fairly recent tradition originating from Sweden. In addition, there is an analysis of the ritual traditions associated with these—and other saints—documented from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries.

In the following chapter, “Varangian Saints and Christlike Varangians in Early Rus’ Christianity,” John H. Lind demonstrates how Scandinavians, known first as Rus’ and from ca. 1000 as Varangians, were not only instrumental in forming the Rus’ polity during their exploration of the east-European river system from the eighth century onwards, they were also the dominant force in bringing Christianity to Rus’. Apart from the accelerating archaeological evidence, this can be seen from the treaty concluded between Rus’ and the Byzantine emperors in 944. In contrast to the previous treaty from 911, when all the Scandinavian Rus’ were presented as pagans, the treaty of 944, whenever necessary, distinguished between those Rus’ who were still pagan and those who had now become Christians. Furthermore, the treaty of 944 called for a separate ratification by the Christian Rus’, demonstrating that Christianity in
Rus’ had already achieved official status long before the ruler, Vladimir Sviatoslavich, converted to Christianity in 988/9. Accordingly, the first saints venerated in Rus’ were two Varangians, father and son, who, arriving from Byzantium, had been martyred during a pagan revival in 983. As such, they were venerated in the Kievian Caves Monastery, a stronghold of Greek (as opposed to Latin) Christianity. Nevertheless, the *Paterikon* of the monastery describes both how the monastery owed its foundation in the last part of the eleventh century to a Varangian, baptized in the Latin rite, and how early Christianity in the monastery was formed as a blend of influences from both Greek and Latin rites. Varangians were held in high regard in the monastery irrespective of which confession they represented. In this way, the chapter shows that early Christianity in Rus’, much as in Scandinavia, was receptive to influences from both dominant confessions.

In “The Cult and Visual Representation of Scandinavian Saints in Medieval Livonia,” Anu Mänd explores the spread of the cults of Scandinavian saints to the “peripheral” region called Livonia during the process of Christianization. The discussion focuses on the veneration and visual representations of St. Olav, St. Canute (Knud), St. Birgitta of Sweden, and St. Henry of Finland, pointing out along the way the probable conflation of the cult of the two different Danish saints St. Canute the King (Knud den Hellige) and St. Canute the Duke (Knud Lavard). The article discusses the main centers and promoters of these cults, such as the guild of St. Canute, the guild of St. Olav, as well as St. Olav’s Church in Tallinn and the guild of St. Olav in Riga. Some of these saints became identity markers for particular social and ethnic groups and for certain occupations, and Anu Mänd also investigates the visual “domestication” of these saints and how their representations shaped the local urban environment.

At the same time that the countries around the Baltic Sea were subjected to a process of Christianization between the tenth and the thirteenth centuries, they were also subjected to an equally zealous process of colonization that often set aside the old rulers and installed new ones, and with them, new political structures. The rewriting of history among the newly Christianized people was in a sense regarded as a continuation of the biblical narratives, often referred to as “foundational stories,” showing that God continues to govern and direct history even in the present. Carsten Selch Jensen in “History Made Sacred: Martyrdom and the Making of a Sanctified Beginning in Early Thirteenth Century Livonia” discusses the need to highlight local holy men, or “champion[s] of the sacred,” who
played a key role in the construction of these Christian foundational stories. These men were, so to speak, living proof that the history of the various regions was in fact unfolding in accordance with God’s will, and they were therefore portrayed by chroniclers as truly holy men. One of the most important of such texts from the medieval North is the Chronicle of Henry of Livonia, which forms the basis for Selch Jensen’s chapter. This text has very few direct references to established saints and saints’ cults. The author wrote his chronicle not long after the key events actually happened. This proximity in time made it difficult for the chronicler to look for his champions of the sacred among a well-established group of universal or local saints already acknowledged by the Roman Church. Rather, he picked his champions of the sacred from among the more recent figures who were playing their part in the contemporary process of Christianizing the pagan people in Livonia and Estonia, namely the martyrs. The article demonstrates how Henry has constructed his chronicle in such a way as to portray these martyrs as a sort of protosaints who would lend holiness to the Christianization of Livonia and Estonia and ensure that these events were perceived as a truly holy history.

Nils Holger Petersen discusses one particular saint and his transmission around the Baltic Sea in his contribution, “St. Canute Lavard around the Baltic Sea.” The saint in question, the Danish royal saint, Knud Lavard, was born ca. 1096, murdered on January 7, 1131 by his cousin Prince Magnus and canonized on June 25, 1170, authorized by a papal bull. In Danish historiography, Knud’s canonization has primarily been seen as a political event staged by his son, King Valdemar the Great. Outside of Denmark, Knud was not nearly as important a saint, but he was venerated in most areas around the Baltic Sea. The preserved liturgical documentation includes a thirteenth-century manuscript containing the full office for the *Passio Sancti Canuti* on January 7 and the *Translatio Sancti Canuti* on June 25, as well as some few late medieval sources from Sweden, Gotland, and Finland, in addition to the sixteenth-century printed Danish liturgical books. Other preserved sources are statutes of Danish guilds in honor of St. Knud (sometimes ambiguous as to which St. Knud is meant, as touched upon also in Anu Mänd’s article). The overall picture is analyzed by way of Aleida Assmann’s concepts of *storage memory* and *functional memory* in order to describe St. Knud’s relative and changing importance for regional and national identities around the Baltic Sea.

In Lars Bisgaard’s chapter, “Saints, Guilds, and Seals. From Exclusivity to Competition,” the relationship between guild and saint is
INTRODUCTION

explored using the rich Danish collection of medieval guild statutes as his material. Many Danish medievalists have stressed the importance of saints for the daily life of guilds and guild identity, but exactly what this entailed has not yet been explored. Lars Bisgaard takes up two basic questions: Which saints were the most popular and most often chosen to be patrons of guilds, and can any development be observed over time? Secondly, is it possible to say anything about the importance of sainthood for the guilds? The last question may partly be answered by studying how the guilds chose to represent themselves on seals, many of which have survived in Denmark, making such a study possible and worthwhile. Bisgaard concludes that a major change seems to have taken place in the years before the Reformation. At this time, the representation of saints was given up and replaced by images of craft tools among the craft guilds. The result suggests that the cult of saints may have been weakening at this time, a circumstance that gives additional understanding to why Protestant preachers chose to attack the veneration of saints.

Tracey R. Sands, in her contribution, “Saints and Political Identities in Late Medieval Lund and Uppsala,” examines the veneration of Nordic “national” saints according to the late medieval liturgical calendars of two Nordic archdioceses, Lund (Denmark) and Uppsala (Sweden). The representation of Danish and Swedish saints reflects the political relations between the two kingdoms and their archbishoprics. When the Archdiocese of Uppsala was formed in 1164, the archbishop of Lund was named its “primas.” This status appeared to lose importance in both Uppsala and Lund during much of the Middle Ages, but was reasserted by archbishops of Lund—and rejected by archbishops of Uppsala—from the fifteenth century onward. This was also the period of the Kalmar Union (established in 1397), in which a single monarch ruled the three Nordic kingdoms of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, a union increasingly rejected by Swedish noblemen around 1500. Interestingly, the Danish liturgical calendars are quite inclusive of Swedish saints, several of which were celebrated in Lund with relatively high degree, and there is no indication that non-royal Danish saints were favored over Swedish ones. In contrast, there are no Danish saints in late-medieval Uppsala calendars. Swedish saints, however, are strongly promoted, and the calendar includes a separate feast for at least one saint from every Swedish diocese in addition to the festum patronorum regni.

In the penultimate chapter of the volume, “Saints at War in the Baltic Region,” Kurt Villads Jensen deals with the relation of saints to
war. Saints have been studied for the information they can provide about religious practices, daily life, politics, and dynastic connections, but the connection between saints and warfare has been almost totally neglected. It has fallen outside the dominant socioeconomic historiographical tradition in Scandinavia, and outside the strong Lutheran or perhaps even pietistic tradition of much earlier scholarship. Modern historians have missed an important aspect of medieval Christian understanding of the cults of saints, the warrior saint. It was impossible to imagine societies without evil, hence without war: it was necessary to fight against evil, not only spiritually, but also physically. Warfare was endemic to medieval societies, including in Scandinavia and, not least, in the Baltic, where military campaigns were as critical to economic interests as they were to ecclesiastical expansion throughout the Middle Ages. Saints played a role in this. They must have been closely integrated in preparations for warfare and even in actual battles, but we still know too little about how this worked in practice. This chapter opens with a discussion of how to define a warrior saint, followed by a presentation of a number of saints exemplifying the warlike aspects of their lives and cults, thus illustrating how some saints were employed in warfare. The article concludes with a discussion of the Virgin Mary as a warrior saint.

The last article, by Felicitas Schmieder, “Saints around the Baltic—Some Remarks, Conclusions, and Further Questions,” summarizes some of the important implications of the chapters and at the same time points forward to yet-unsolved questions and research areas still to be studied within the greater context of medieval saints and their history in European culture. It is therefore safe to conclude that these contributions taken together demonstrate the profound cultural importance of the cult of saints in the medieval Baltic region (or, perhaps, in the regions around the Baltic Sea). The veneration of established saints, and the creation of new ones, occurred in all parts of this region during the Middle Ages; moreover, participants in the cult of saints could be found in all social classes from rural peasantry to the highest ranks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The saints could be invoked, petitioned, or deployed as symbols or protectors of an extensive range of interests and activities, and in many cases, they continued to resonate in cultural memory long after the end of the medieval period and thus also had an impact in the more recent history of the various regions and countries.
Chapter Two

The Elusive Quality of Saints: Saints, Churches, and Cults

Martin Wangsgaard Jürgensen

This chapter will present some problems concerning the relation between the medieval saints as they emerge from the sources and the lack of common congruence by which we, as scholars, discuss this material. Or, more directly, it will discuss the question: What is a saint’s cult and how can the underlying structures beneath its many manifestations be characterized? Following the discussion, it presents some thoughts or preliminary observations concerning terminology which, to my mind, allow us to better grasp the research field in all its complexities without undeservingly skewing or favoring certain aspects over others. It will thus propose a slightly artificial distinction between saints as cult figures and saints as signs. It is the latter which is to be the main focus and the center of the present study.

The Complexities of the Cult of the Saints

The cult of saints has more or less always been on the scholarly agenda of social and church historians, but since the 1970s the research into this field has grown dramatically, and the number of volumes produced concerning questions of saints, sainthood, and sanctity is by now vast.¹ The trend is still going strong. The articles in the present volume, with their diverse presentations fixed thematically by a geographic setting, present a perfect example of the turns this trend has been taking over the last decade.

The large number of studies of saints and their cults ensures the continuous development of arguments and understandings in tune with contemporary research done in parallel fields. Nevertheless, a fundamental problem for scholars of the saints’ cults is the difficulty of reconciling
the many concepts or shapes in which we encounter the saints. The problem is two-sided: on the one hand, we have the widespread presence of saints in the medieval source material, where saints and saintly figures can be encountered in the most surprising contexts and can be completely embedded into everyday life, free from any obvious liturgical references. On the other hand, we find scholars applying special thematic emphasis to certain aspects of the material: the role of royal saints, saints and feminism, or saints and identity, etc.²

In the following, I contest the value of raising such thematic and analytical questions or requiring such themes as structuring ideas for research. In fact, as stated above, it is positive to explore as many facets of the saints’ cults as possible. But at the same time, most scholarship up to this point has failed to explore the actual, underlying nature of the cult of the saints, which, I would argue, is critical to an understanding of the

Figure 2.1 Two royal saints depicted in the vault of Skive Old Church in northwestern Jutland (Denmark): St. Olav (left) and St. Canute the King (right). Wall-painting from 1522. Photo: By author.
The elusive quality of saints

phenomenon in all its complexity. It is this underlying level which I wish to address.

The saints’ role as personal protectors and helpers, each with a specialized area of competence, was a significant part of medieval cults. We can hardly overestimate the importance of the saints and their relics during the Middle Ages, when cults arose and declined rapidly, constantly providing new locations for pilgrimage and pious attention. This is such a well-known fact concerning saints and their cults that it is perhaps, at times, taken for granted, and this facet is prevalent to such an extent that some of the finer points of cults may elude us.

What I want to do at present is to encourage reflection about the way we address the importance of the saints’ cults without necessarily oversimplifying the role of saints in medieval culture and religious life. One such simplification which I specifically want to examine here is the notion that the representation of a saint—be that written or visual—always equals an expression of devotion to the saint.

Thus, it is a common assumption that saints were of tremendous importance. This leads to the conclusion that a saint is always equivalent to something important. For instance, when a group of female saints is found depicted in a church, one easily reaches the conclusion that due to the fact that saints are important, female saints might be understood to especially display or favor a female reading. The conclusion would in turn sum up the group of saints as constituting an important representation of sacred female presence.

A different, but very similar line of thinking could be that when guild brothers toasted the name of the one of the two Danish St. Knuds—Canute in the English form—it was a toast of importance, which obviously expressed the strong bond between saint and brethren. Or, one could point to a depiction of St. Anne on a spoon (figure 2.2). Again, one could argue that this exact spoon decoration was chosen because of a close link between devotion to Anne and the user of the object.

While the conclusions behind each example may or may not be correct, it is essential to note that saints were not only the recipients of devout attention, they were used as signs to communicate something in society. I shall try to develop this point further at a later stage in this chapter.

To support interpretations like the ones summarized above, it seems to me that a much more fundamental discussion of what the saint is or what the saint does is needed; that is, a discussion of what functions the saint fulfills beyond the obvious roles as patron and protector. The easy
answer would be that the saint bestows a sense of identity on the devotee, but how so and in what way? And how does this combine with the role of saints as helpers? Can we always equate the specific saint—e.g., St. Catherine of Alexandria—with the particular role saints played as intercessors, healers, and helpers, or is there a further layer to this? I would propose that this may be so.
A development can be traced in the role of the saints’ cults, from late antiquity to the early modern period, in which the initial status of saints as great, sacred personalities gradually also became a modus for communicating ideas about the broader notions of the sacred and the world. Thus, the saints developed from being solely spiritual helpers into both functioning as helpers of those in need and also as constituting a signifying system. In other words, we are dealing with two tracks within saints’ cults, which draw their power from the same source, but serve different purposes in medieval society. At present, I will not discuss the role of helper and healer any further. Instead, I shall focus on saints as a form of communication.

The Transformative Power of Saints

It may first of all be interesting to discuss why saints were at all interesting as a means of communication. What was the attraction of the cult of saints? I suggest that what could be called the transformative power of saints is a crucial component behind the way saints operated in medieval culture. By this I mean the ability of saints to alter the mind and fabric of the location where they were introduced, or at least the belief that the saints were able to accomplish this. One may say that when a saint is represented, it is perhaps not always out of a strong veneration for that specific saint but always with a regard to the effect that saints were believed to have. This distinction is important and I shall return to its significance in a moment.

To exemplify my argument, we can turn to the cathedral town of Lund in Scania. In the late fifteenth-century inventory of relics stored in the cathedral, a noblewoman named Kirstine or Christina of Gladsaxe is recorded as having donated two reliquaries to the church. In our context the second of the two gifts is of relevance. The reliquary itself is not preserved any longer, but it is described as a large silver image of St. Lawrence. Of particular interest is the fact that the cathedral was dedicated to St. Lawrence and the special significance of this choice of reliquary thus seems obvious. Nevertheless, things become complicated when we note what additional items the vessel contained. The reliquary was alleged to have stored six relics of the Eleven Thousand Virgins from the company of St. Ursula, who was martyred near Cologne; a relic of St. Gregorius Maurus or Gregor the Moor, along with remains of St. Cassius and St. Florentius, as well as St. Victor—all of whom were companions of St. Gereon, who like the previously mentioned virgins, were martyred at Cologne.
The form and contents of the reliquary seem in this case to have only a very limited direct connection. The shape of the vessel points to a local context, while the contents speak of different relations. However, rather than reading the reliquary as a specific reverence to Lawrence, we could interpret the vessel in a different light. One might interpret the vessel as a sign referring to something other than the saint itself. Perhaps we could see St. Lawrence as representing, or pointing, to that which empowered the saints in the first place. The reliquary thus becomes a representation of sanctity in general shown in a guise (St. Lawrence) of local significance. In this way, the vessel can first be understood as an emblematic representation of the Cathedral of Lund, housing the relics stored inside, and secondly, as a representation of the Church at large embracing the saints. It is not St. Lawrence as such or his depiction that is of importance but what he contains and represents: both Lawrence the church and Lawrence the saint contain the sanctity bestowed by God.

This is a subtle interpretation, which perhaps would be beyond the concerns of the laity in the town of Lund. Nonetheless, given the substantial amount of theological writing on the nature of saints and relics generated throughout the Middle Ages, such distinctions as these would hardly fall outside the intellectual scope of the cathedral clergy. And it would appear that there are certain instances in which the distancing of the representation of a saint from his or her vita and legends helps us to see hitherto unnoticed patterns in the medieval use of saints.

Saints as Arguments or Statements

Saints were petitioned by the sick, by those down on their luck, those hoping for the best, and those in spiritual need. But there was a different side to this. The St. Lawrence example demonstrates the first and most obvious part of my argument, namely that the representation or invocation of saints, no matter what their form or medium, is tantamount to an argument or statement. What argument they represented is a completely different question, which of course would differ from case to case. Different uses and contexts would spur different arguments. Saints depicted in coats-of-arms and seals pose one argument, while the liturgical commemoration of saints poses another. By considering saints as statements, we open up an understanding of the saints’ cultural role beyond their function as intercessors.
Images of saints are normally interpreted as devotional foci. However, by separating our conceptualization of the saints into two categories—on the one hand, saints as helpers, and on the other, saints as arguments—we are able not only to gain insight into the way saints were used outside the church, in contexts not traditionally related to devotion and liturgy, but also to examine the way saints could be used in church art. I believe we need to consider the use of saints in such rhetorical discourses in order to appreciate the dynamics and power behind medieval saints’ cults and approach how they, during the Middle Ages, developed into the omnipresent figures that survive in such abundance in the source materials up until the present. Or to phrase it another way, we need to understand how saints developed from being regarded strictly as venerated intercessors to being seen as argumentative tools, as a figure of thought, or as a means of grasping the concept of sanctity.

One way to show how saints were charged with meaning beyond their own individual sanctity, and how they could serve as references or signs, can be exemplified through the relationship between saints and time. The four evangelists could represent the four seasons; the twelve apostles could refer to the months of a year, while the individual saint might be understood as an allusion to his or her specific time in the calendar.13 This reference to time and season reached deeper than the mere reference to the specific feast day; it could also point to specific seasonal activities outside the church. To take a Danish example, a parish clerk’s chair from Hvidbjerg in central Jutland, dating from 1500–1525 illustrates this (figure 2.3).14 On this chair we find the two Danish saints Kjeld and King Canute carved on the ends. The feast days of these two saints followed directly upon one another, St. Canute’s day being on the tenth and St. Kjeld’s on the eleventh of July. The chair itself thus holds a time-specific sequence, but, furthermore, in popular sayings these two saints were said to set in motion the harvest in the fields, so that they also represented a specific reference to the beginning of a seasonal activity. Accordingly, the saints on the chair can be understood as pointing not only to themselves and their individual feasts, but also to a place in the cosmological time system of the rural community that surrounded the church. The saints, in other words, become emblematic of more than themselves; they become statements concerning how the world functions.

We can also turn to church art in general, where we perhaps find the best representation of this line of thinking and see how saints, not through personality or type, but through presence and numbers, made a
Saints adorned everything in churches from bench-ends to the walls, vaults, bells, and textiles. The significance of individual saints, both within the Church and in the personal lives of medieval people is undeniable, but I would argue that it is just as important, if not even more so, that the role of saints was to represent sanctity, or visualize the church as a sacred space and make celestial qualities apparent to the beholder.

In the medieval Church the major saints would certainly be honored on special feast days; the most important ones would even have several feasts. However, significant as each saint was individually, the idea of saints as a group entity had a strong influence in the broader theological framework. As an assembly comprised of different categories of holy men and women, the saints represented a heavenly population that emerged in the church as representatives of the splendors of beatitude (figure 2.4).
They testified to sanctity in the same way as angels did, but in a very tangible way, owing to their human shape and nature. Their number was a testimony to God’s glory, and a witness to the cosmic scale on which medieval piety operated. We only have to think of saints like St. Maurice and his legion of martyred knights or the above-mentioned St. Ursula and her similarly astronomical number of eleven thousand martyred virgins. In these groups, the saints appear almost with an allusion to military force, echoing evocative biblical imagery such as: “with mighty chariots, twice ten thousand, thousands upon thousands, the Lord came from Sinai into the holy place” (Psalm 68:17). The point is that, to a large extent, saints were rendered as a group and depicted in the church interior not as individuals, but as an army of sanctity. In the litanies, one saint after the other was named, followed by a responsive “ora pro nobis.” And, although they were ordered hierarchically, the litanies addressed the saints as a collective. The same was also the case during the liturgical prayer of the Confiteor, where we encounter the appeal to a united group of holy men and women.\textsuperscript{15}

Figure 2.4  The interior of Lyngby Church seen toward the East. The walls and vaults are completely covered by scenes from the Passion and saints. Wall-paintings, ca. 1500–1525. Photo: By author.
Power rested in sheer numbers. This belief grew throughout the Middle Ages, where a corporation of saints such as the highly popular Fourteen Holy Helpers, a group of more or less well-known saints compiled into one singular unit of spiritual help, was reinvented in the middle of the fourteenth century. Whether we should define this as a liturgical way of thinking, or perhaps only as “inspired” by a liturgical way of thinking is an open question. Nonetheless, this manner of addressing saints, and thereby sanctity, is manifested in texts and images alike. On the church bell from Rimso in Denmark, dating from the fifteenth century, we read: “Help us God and Mary the mother of God help here St. Nicholas / help the Holy Trinity help the holy Magi and all God’s saints.”

When the bell in Rimso sounded, it called upon the entire community of saints at once. The same idea was followed visually as well, when saints were placed all over church interiors, on the walls as well as the furniture. This was, I contend, not to provide the church with devotional imagery per se, but to display heavenly splendor and “excite to the following of their example, in the same way that writing and letters do,” as the Danish Humanist and Carmelite Poul Helgesen wrote in 1528, in a defense of images. When parishioners lifted their eyes inside the parish church, their gaze would be met by numerous holy men and women, crowding the walls and furnishings, emerging as a visualized litany. The saints crowded the church space as witnesses and examples for imitation, encouraging each individual member of the congregation to strive and long to be among their company in heaven. As Bernard of Clairvaux writes in his first dedication sermon, those gathered in the church yearn as much for the company of the beatified souls in heaven, as those above yearn for the company of the pious souls below.

Saints as Representations

What I am problematizing is principally the one-sided identification of saints’ representations as expressions solely of devotion and cult. In applying only a cultic or devotional framework in the study of saints, we are able to describe just one side of the culture surrounding saints and sainthood in the Middle Ages; in doing so we fail to embrace the dynamics and richness that decades of research have revealed in this field. In addition, it seems to me that we fail to apprehend an important facet of how saints were utilized in medieval society. That is to say, we fail to see how saints filtered into all aspects of daily life and could come to adorn
any object, no matter how prosaic its purpose. By the end of the Middle Ages, saints, thus, seem to emerge everywhere and on everything. On the one hand, this can be understood as an expression of extremely widespread devotion to saints. On the other hand, it seems to indicate that saints could be said to express something else, something besides the cult.

In order to grasp this, a method or vocabulary is needed to enable us to discuss this whole spectrum of saints’ presence in medieval culture, without losing touch with the specificity of each context in which we encounter saints. We thus need to go a level deeper than the individual instances of the saint’s presence in specific places, texts, or images, and consider the theological substance of the saints’ cult at large. In so doing we can bring together the world of miraculous healing, pilgrimage and shrines on the one hand, and on the other the multitudes of other contexts in which saints also appear and are evoked.

But, before I continue, it would perhaps be relevant to address what a saint is. I do not refer to dogmatic definitions of sainthood or canonization, which though an interesting topic for discussion, lack relevance when it comes to the cultural understanding of the saint, which is what is at stake here. The question should thus perhaps rather be: What does the saint represent? Trying to give answers to this is crucial if we seek to understand the broader religious cultures which drew on saints and which certainly believed in some form of impact that these might have.

One way to answer the questions of what a saint is and represents is by encircling the issue of what the saint does. We could say that a common element in all representations of saints, whether they are written or pictorial, is that the saint is represented in order to convey something specific. The saint, as stated at the beginning of the chapter, poses an argument for transformation or indicates the potential for transformation. Examples of this are transformations by miraculous healing, the transformation of political landscapes through the power of the saint or, for instance, the personal transformation of a repenting sinner. The saint is a promise of change; “be like me and you will achieve glory,” seems to be the implicit message in any saintly representation. And this, one should stress, is effective irrespective of the form in which the saint was represented. Augustine of Hippo, one of the most prominent voices of the early church, expressed this idea very clearly and provided a road map for theologians throughout the Middle Ages. As Augustine states in Book 22:9 of The City of God:
What do these miracles attest but the faith which proclaims that Christ rose in the flesh and ascended into heaven with the flesh? For the martyrs were all martyrs, that is witnesses, to this faith. It was in bearing witness to this faith that the martyrs endured the bitter enmity and the savage cruelty of the world; and they overcame the world not by resisting but by dying. For this faith they died; and they can now obtain these blessings from the Lord, for whose name they were slain. For this faith their wonderful endurance went before, so that all this power might follow in these wonderful works.

The Saint as a Metaphor

Alongside these facets, there is the specific devotion to the individual saints as intercessors, protectors, or helpers; in other words, the cult at its most specific, expressed through the shrines and relics visited by the devout who hope to find intercession and cures for their ailments (figure 2.5). On the other hand, we have the saints represented both in situations which address sanctity generally and in situations which could hardly qualify as devotional, but rather are representational in a much broader sense: as representations of spiritual qualities (faith, persistence, patience, etc.), concepts such as “identity” (i.e., patron saints referring to specific places), or simply as referring to something sacred and thereby conveying an almost talismanic power to the person or item. In other words, a way to bless all the “stuff,” as Daniel Miller would define it, which surrounds everyday existence and constitutes the crucial components of daily life.

While the role of intercessor is fairly straightforward, the other side to the cult of saints is more elusive. This elusiveness may come from the fact that when saints are used as signs, it can happen in two different ways. In order to comprehend this, we need to think of a concept that facilitates the openness of the saints as symbols: a concept which gives us a handle on the use of saints both inside and outside their devotional setting and qualifies this double use.

Above I stated that any representation of a saint can be conceived as an argument for transformation and change. Consequently, we are dealing with communication when confronting a representation of a saint. Furthermore, I have tried to distinguish between two modes of representation: a specific one, treating cultic devotion, and an open mode, using saints to refer to something other than the cult. The second mode, I would argue, involves two distinct, yet entwined systems of communication. One system
is based on theology used by the Church, while the other system grew from the first and developed alongside the theology-based system.

To define these two systems, as I have chosen to call them, it may be useful to refer to thinking about metaphors as conceptualized by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in 1980. Proceeding from this work, I would identify the first system as a metaphorical way of thinking. Saints are conceived as representatives of something other than themselves, and
their primary function is to create understanding. That is, they are concretes expressions of otherwise ungraspable divine qualities. According to this perspective, from late antiquity onwards, the Church used saints as metaphors for sanctity or sacredness. This is continuously stressed throughout the Middle Ages, where dogma notes that one does not honor the saint him- or herself, but what the saint represents. In this system, the saint ultimately symbolically equals God, and when honoring the saint, one is in fact honoring God though the medium of the saint. The other system, I would argue, is a metonymical one. It is necessarily referential, but instead of showing one thing for another, the metonymic system uses

Figure 2.6 The heavily restored image of St. Erik, the Swedish king, painted in Vittskövle Church (Scania, southern Sweden), ca. 1475–1500. Photo: The Danish National Museum.
saints as a sort of sign constituted as a *pars pro toto*. It is a synecdoche based on saints; St. Erik as a *pars pro toto* representation of the kingdom of Sweden for instance (figure 2.6).

The saint as a sign is clearly a charged symbol, drawing its persuasive power from the believed holiness of the saint. In that sense, the metonymical system clearly rests on the metaphorical system and, to a certain extent, both systems benefit from each other. However, we may also note how these two ways of using or understanding saints can get in each other’s way. This has very much to do with the notion that the metonymical use of saints is much more closely aligned with the tangible, devotional understanding of saints as specific helpers and healers. A conflict between the metaphorical understanding of the saint and the metonymical understanding arises when the latter gains prevalence over the first. For instance, this may occur when a statue of the saint or an idea of the saint becomes independent of its metaphorical basis—i.e., as a sign of sacredness or divine power—and, through that, gains a power of its own.

The cult of relics is one way to illustrate this (figure 2.7). Thus, a constant concern arising from the firm belief in the miraculous powers of the relics was the problem that too much was attributed to the relic, while the connection between the saint from whom the relic originated and the divine was all too easily forgotten. These shifts in importance and attention would arguably take place all the time. The saint, the image, or the relic of the saint would gain prevalence and overshadow the theological backdrop of the cult as such. These shifts show how meanings behind saints’ cults were always up for negotiation, but they also demonstrate how easily the tangible manifestations of the saints could undermine the elusive theological basis for the concept of saints as a whole.

The constant pull toward investing more in the metonymical understanding of the saint is perhaps nowhere as visible as in the late Middle Ages, when the number of depictions, and indeed the very use of saints as part of everyday communication and sign systems, becomes present on a massive scale. It is exactly during this period that the profound critique of the cult of the saints swells again; in response, the Church began to strongly promote Christ and Eucharistic piety as an alternative to the massive presence of the saints. One can easily comprehend how the use of saints in the metaphorical system became encumbered or muddled by the prevalence of the metonymical system. Here the Eucharist proved a much more coherent and clear representation of the same thing saints were supposed to show (figure 2.8). Through this, it also becomes possible
to understand the comparative ease with which the northern European Protestant reformers were able to reconceptualize saints’ cults as a collection of examples of pious living and *exempla*—metaphors that is—rather than entities of their own. One such instance is when Martin Luther aimed to redefine the entire medieval concept of sainthood by rejecting pious actions as beneficial and raising all faithful Christians to the status of saintliness. As Luther famously states in his *Large Catechism* from 1529, in the exposition of the third commandment:

Figure 2.7 A lead capsule from Nørre Kirkeby Church on the island of Falster (Denmark) storing remains of the Eleven Thousand Virgins. The capsule is now kept in the National Museum of Denmark. Photo: The Danish National Museum.
For the Word of God is the sanctuary above all sanctuaries, yea, the only one which we Christians know and have. For though we had the bones of all the saints or all holy and consecrated garments upon a heap, still that would help us nothing; for all that is a dead thing which can sanctify nobody. But God’s Word is the treasure which sanctifies everything, and by which even all the saints themselves were sanctified. At whatever hour, then, God’s Word is taught, preached, heard, read or meditated upon, there the person, day, and work are sanctified thereby, not because of the external work, but because of the Word, which makes saints of us all. 29
Concluding Remarks

It is my hope that by these various observations I have communicated some understanding of the nuances that should be kept in mind when embarking on the study of the medieval cult of saints. Taking these aspects into consideration helps to create a point of departure, from which it becomes possible to consider the cult of saints from a perspective that enables historical-sociological studies, while simultaneously helping maintain the theological backdrop of the entire phenomenon. From this perspective, it is of great importance to establish a discussion and framework by which we can discuss these matters—the nature of the cult of saints—in order to appreciate the complexities presented in the multitude of studies on the subject that continue to be presented and published.

NOTES


3 Important works such as Vauchez, Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages (2005) and Peter Brown’s classic study The Cult of Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity (Chicago, 1981) shed light on some aspects of the nature of the cult of the saints, but the emphasis on sociological and historical developments overshadows a basic discussion of how the concept of saints was utilized culturally.

4 For general studies see for instance Jonathan Sumption, Pilgrimage: An Image of Mediaeval Religion (Bristol, 1975).

5 See for example Jeffrey F. Hamburger, The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany (New York, 1998). It must be underscored that the works of Caroline Walker Bynum and many others have discussed the complexity of medieval notions of gender, and cautioned against
over-simple conclusions about gender representation. See the discussions in Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York, 1991) for further examples.

6 Recently the role of toasting St. Knud has been discussed by Lars Bisgaard in “Religion, gilder og identitet i den senmiddelalderlige,” in *Middelalderbyen*, ed. S. B. Christensen (Danske Bystudier nr. 1) (Århus, 2004), pp. 249–69.

7 A specific example of this could be one of the many medieval spoons kept in the Danish National Museum in Copenhagen. See for instance the late medieval silver spoon published in Erik Kjersgaard, *Mad og øl i Danmarks middelalder* (Copenhagen, 1978), fig. 123.

8 *Scriptorium rerum Danicarum medii ævi*, ed. Jacob Langebek (Copenhagen, 1834), vol. 8, pp. 451, 455.

9 More information on the Cathedral of Lund can be found in Thomas Rydén, *Domkyrkan i Lund* (Malmö, 1995).


In this way images of saints were used similarly to a host of different types of images with very different iconographies. Compare, for example, the present discussion with Margrete Syrstad Andås, *Imagery and Ritual in the Liminal Zone: A study of texts and architectural sculpture from the Nidaros province c. 1100–1300* (Copenhagen, 2012), chapter 2.


For this see, for example, Conan Macken, *The Canonization of Saints* (Dublin, 1910); Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages* and, concerning current reflections upon the nature of sainthood, Fabijan Veraja, *Commentary on the New Legislation for the Causes of Saints* (Rome, 1983).


George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago/London, 1980).

Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors*, chapter 8.


A sound introduction to the development of the Eucharistic piety of the late middle ages can be found in Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1991).

Examples of this thinking can also be found in Luther’s *De Votis monasticis Martini Lutheri iudicium*, written in 1521 at the Wartburg (*D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 8:564–669).

“Denn das Wort Gottes ist das Heiligtum über alle Heiligtümer, ja das einzige, das wir Christen wissen und haben. Denn ob wir gleich aller Heiligen Gebeine oder heilige und geweihte Kleider auf einem Haufen hätten, so wäre uns doch damit nichts geholfen; denn es ist alles totes Ding, das niemand heilig machen kann. Aber Gottes Wort ist der Schatz, der alle Dinge heilig macht, dadurch sie selbst, die
Chapter Three

Medieval Cults and Modern Inventions: Dorothy of Montau, the Teutonic Order and “Katholiken für Hitler”

Cordelia Heß

In the 1390s, the Teutonic Knights, who were at that time at the peak of their power in Prussia, made a strange choice: they picked a widow from Gdansk as their patron saint. Or did they really? The patronage of St. Dorothy of Montau over the Teutonic Order is one of the stories of her life that has been repeated over the centuries—although there is little historical evidence to support it. Dorothy was a peasant’s daughter, a sword maker’s widow and the mother of nine children, of which only one survived childhood. She was walled into a cell at the cathedral in Marienwerder, today Kwidzyn, for the last three years of her life, where she died, most likely of starvation, after a life of more than forty years of constant self-abuse. At the time of her death, her body was covered with self-inflicted wounds, some of which she had kept consistently open throughout her adult life. ¹ The pathological aspects of Dorothy’s imitatio Christi, her masochistic relationships, first to her violent husband, and later to her confessor Johannes Marienwerder, and finally Dorothy’s visions, which centered on mystical pregnancies and the infant Jesus, made her a strange choice as the patron saint of the Order of the Knights of St. Mary, who ruled over the entire civilized Northeast as defenders of the Christian faith against the Slavic pagans. How did Dorothy become the patron saint of both the Teutonic Order and of Prussia? The answer lies in the historiography and hagiography of twentieth-century scholars, rather than in the medieval sources themselves.

Prussia was a contested area from the time the Teutonic Order entered the territory, and the cult of Dorothy of Montau was part of the ideological struggle for the possession of the land. This struggle was par-
ticularly infected during the interwar period and the Second World War (WWII), and, even after 1945, significant groups in Germany kept up the hope of regaining the “German East.” St. Dorothy is one of the saints used in order to establish a tangible continuity of German settlement and culture in this region (St. Hedwig is another example). Her assumed patronage not only of the region, but also of the Teutonic Order, further connects her to the medieval German colonization of the East.

Recently, a number of studies, anthologies, and conferences have dealt with the “patriotic” aspects of saints, mainly the medieval attempts to claim saints as patriots for a particular town or territory, which in some cases persisted until the modern era. In St. Dorothy’s case, the medieval attempts to define her as a local saint for the diocese of Pomesania are well visible in the sources, while in the modern era her cult was literally invented as an ethnic German cult. The people and groups who produced this invention were Catholic historians and theologians from Prussia and Silesia, and their reading of the medieval sources is an example of the continuous political importance of saints’ cults, and of the transformations of these cults over time.

I will address St. Dorothy’s cult as a process of interaction between the saint’s identity and image in the hagiographic records, especially the acts of the canonization process, on the one hand, and the political and religious identity of those who promoted and made up her cult, on the other hand. Of late, the issue of “patriotic saints” has, for the most part, dealt with the patron saints of towns in western and central Europe and with the Scandinavian Holy Kings, focusing on the relationship between canonization or cult development in general and authority and regional identity. Two issues are particularly relevant for the interpretation of Dorothy of Montau as a German patriotic saint and of the instrumentalization of her cult; first, her presumed role as the patron saint of the Teutonic Order and of its ongoing struggle with the Lithuanians in the East, and second, the question of the German character of the cult community based on the witnesses involved in the canonization process. Both of these issues were raised by those who promoted Dorothy’s cult until she was finally canonized in 1976, a group of displaced German Catholics from Gdansk and Frombork, who gathered in West Germany after WWII.

I will address the issue in inverse chronological order, starting with the scholars who investigated Dorothy’s cult before and after WWII and who focused on the German character of both the saint and the region. Then I will go back to the medieval sources, especially Dorothy’s 1404
canonization process, and will pay particular attention to the different ethnicities mentioned in the medieval material—or the lack thereof.

**Borderland History and Hagiography**

Scholarly investigation of St. Dorothy started in the late nineteenth century, when the German vita by her confessor, John of Marienwerder, was edited as part of the *Scriptores rerum prussicarum* series. The question of Dorothy of Montau as a German saint was debated at that time. This debate, however, was closely connected to the broader—and much more politically explosive—question of the *Volksgeschichte* (national or ethnic history) of the German–Polish borderlands. At the same time, the cult of Dorothy was also an integral part of the spiritual life of many Catholics in Prussia, and many of those who promoted her canonization after the war had already started publishing material about her before and during WWII—both in Catholic journals and in those devoted to the political mission of revisionism. The Latin hagiographic records remained unprinted, but several extensive articles had been published by the beginning of WWII. These dealt with Dorothy’s mysticism and with her confessor Johannes, a priest in the Teutonic Order and canon in the Marienwerder cathedral chapter. They were published in such journals as “Zeitschrift für Ostforschung” and “Zeitschrift für die Geschichte und Altertumskunde Ermlands,” which during the Weimar Republic had increasingly become organs for German scholars resisting the modification of German territory on the basis of the Versailles Treaty. In the 1920s and 1930s, historical research about East and West Prussia, as well as about Silesia, was mainly research to prove either the German or the Polish character of the region. Both Polish and German academic institutions received support from their respective governments to undertake research into the controversial area of the cultural and ethnic heritage of the contested territories.

The period of the Teutonic Order’s conquest and the subsequent colonization are crucial for the Germans’ argument. Just as was the case in the later St. Dorothy cult, two issues were intertwined; the definition of the order’s conquest as a crusade and as a conscious attempt to export German culture to the East, and the presumed German character of the region or at least of its cultural elites. Evidence of this was said to be found in various aspects of early settlement, such as the spread of Lübeck law and the predominance of German names, and thereby a presumed majority of ethnic Germans, in Prussia.
As modern research into these topics has shown, most of the methods traditionally used serve no purpose for analyzing ethnicity in Prussia because of the comprehensive processes of cultural assimilation. Grischa Vercamer, for example, found, in his dissertation on rural settlement in the Kaliningrad region, that processes of assimilation on different levels were ongoing in the fifteenth century: the Prussians lived together with Germans in villages under German law, and there were freeborn Prussians who founded villages under German law, many of them bilingual. Vercamer determined that 20 percent of the Prussian peasants had German names, as did 40 percent of the Prussian rural upper class—the numbers in the towns might have been even higher, and by the Reformation Prussian names had disappeared entirely. Consequently, it is impossible for modern scholars to deduce the ethnicity of the population of Prussia on the basis of medieval sources. Nonetheless, contemporary scholars working on medieval Prussia and the Teutonic Order show little interest in criticizing in a consistent way the previous, ideologically problematic studies or in reassessing their results. It is also the case that in research about St. Dorothy many names are cited that warrant a critical reassessment.

“Katholiken für Hitler”—Paul Nieborowski

One of the first men to promote Dorothy’s cult to a broader public was Paul Nieborowski, historian, priest, and author. For his monograph “Die Selige Dorothea von Preußen,” published in Wrocław (Breslau) in 1933, he was the first to make use of the extensive acts of the canonization process, which had not yet been printed at that point. It is unclear how Nieborowski gained access to the documents; however, a copy is now preserved in the Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz in Berlin (GStAPK), which was then located in Kaliningrad (Königsberg). Nieborowski claims that in 1938 a copy of the acts of the medieval process had been sent to Rome to promote the reconsideration of the canonization—postwar Catholics never indicated the exact year the acts were submitted nor who initially started the reassessment. Nieborowski was also the first to acknowledge the highly relevant nature of the canonization process of Dorothy of Montau for the cultural history of “all the estates of the German Prussian people.” For this, later scholars dealing with Dorothy frequently cited him and assigned him the requisite scholarly credit. His importance for the establishment of Dorothy as a patriotic saint has been noted by David Wallace, who discusses Nieborowski’s presentation of
Dorothy as a very significant saint both in the ongoing struggle for the
German East and in the references by the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche
Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP) [The National Socialist German Workers’ Party]
to the Teutonic Order and the crusade in the East in general, without,
however, addressing Nieborowski’s general political commitment.9

Nieborowski was an interesting figure both in the context of
German Catholicism and of Ostforschung. An ordained Catholic priest,
he had been heavily involved in the political debates around the plebiscite
regarding the nationality of Silesia after the First World War. When Poland
received parts of the territory, he resigned his position as a priest and
began working full time as a propagandist. Nieborowski, who sometimes
published under the pseudonym Paul Walter von Marienburg, founded a
publishing house that mainly distributed his works, along with some by
other people, all of which fell under the rubric of “Schutz und Ruhm der
Deutschen Ostmark, das ist unser Ziel!” [Protection and Glory for the
East German territory, that is our goal]. His company’s coat of arms was
that of the Teutonic Order, a black and white shield with a crest.10

For Nieborowski, Dorothy of Montau was unquestionably a
German saint. Many German Catholics had found it difficult to prove their
national loyalty during the nineteenth-century Kulturkampf, and were
again treated with suspicion under National Socialism, with the Gestapo
maintaining large departments entirely devoted to the surveillance of
Catholic groups and orders. However, for Nieborowski, there was no con-
tradiction between Catholicism and National Socialism. He supported
the new order wholeheartedly, even though he never joined the NSDAP.
In 1934, he wrote two articles for the Westdeutscher Beobachter, which
were subsequently reprinted in a special edition entitled “Katholiken für
Hitler” under the question “Wie urteilt ein katholischer Geistlicher über
den Nationalsozialismus?” [How does a Catholic priest assess National
Socialism?] The answer was unambiguous:

[Thus] I find it necessary and a matter of duty as a Catholic priest
to bear witness for the Führer and for his method of governing the
state [...] The victory of Adolf Hitler was a victory for the seriously
endangered Christianity of Germany and Europe, a victory as grand
and far-reaching as that of Constantine the Great in 313 [...] This
glorious man, who has saved Christianity, and with it Catholicism,
in Germany, sees himself in his humility only as an unworthy tool
of divine providence [...] This is why my German priest’s heart has
been won over by him!11
Nieborowski became a member of the Reichsschrifttumskammer, both as an author and as a publisher, despite the rather moderate income from his business. In 1944, he was still receiving “public support” as a “verdienter Volkstumskämpfer.” The connection between Catholicism and National Socialism, and as a consequence, of the promotion of the cult of Dorothy and revisionist and fascist politics, is, in any case, quite pronounced. While not all German Catholics who supported the cult of Dorothy also supported the NSDAP, the German character of Prussia played a crucial role in all of their works, and, as a result, the arguments developed by Nieborowski were also adopted by scholars who were less supportive of National Socialism.

Post-War Alliances

Nieborowski died in 1948, but his works continued to be frequently quoted in postwar scholarship about Dorothy—which increased and flourished. In 1950, the Dorotheenbund, an association entirely devoted to her canonization, was founded. It consisted of Catholic refugees from Pomesania and Warmia, most of whom had relocated to Westphalia, and who even in West Germany maintained contact and a strong common cultural identity.

They raised money, supported the dissemination of source materials about Dorothy, and published their collective efforts in a magazine, Der Dorotheenbote. In this monthly publication, one would find scholarly works about all aspects of Dorothy’s life, reports on the progress made in editing the source materials and a lot of devotional material—people would report that Dorothy had helped them on their way from Prussia to Germany, in fleeing the communists, or in reconnecting with lost friends and relatives in their new homeland. Dorothy was frequently addressed as the “patron saint of Prussia,” thereby establishing a close connection between the refugees, their cultural identity, and the saint’s presumed identity. The promotion of the saint’s cult became a part of the exile identity of a large group of Germans who hoped to soon return to Prussia.

The Dorotheenbund was formed by scholars, Catholic priests, and lay people closely connected to the political lobby groups—the Vertriebenenverbände—that the refugees formed in West Germany. It also employed the same rhetoric: fascism and the war were catastrophes lacking apparent historical and economic grounds, and the biggest catastrophe of all was the forced flight of the Germans from the East and the loss
of their homes. Compared to the suffering of the Germans, the Holocaust was barely noted. Both anti-communism and revanchism were, however, strong common features.\textsuperscript{13}

The history of the Catholic expellees has until now been mainly a topic of interest for Catholic research, in the search for a model of successful diaspora organization and pastoral care.\textsuperscript{14} The Catholic religion was—alongside ethnicity—a factor supporting the common identity of the Germans from the East. This common sense of identity was to be maintained in exile, with collaboration with the nonreligious and often more radical \textit{Vertriebenenverbände} not appearing entirely self-evident for the Catholic expellees.\textsuperscript{15}

The veneration of domestic saints played a central role in the identity politics of Catholic bishops and priests, as has been shown by the case of St. Hedwig and the role she played for the expellees in the Oldenburg region.\textsuperscript{16} To a lesser extent, the cult of St. Dorothy also constituted one of the arguments for the Germans’ strong ongoing connection to what they perceived as theirs—the loss of direct access to Dorothy’s cell and cult sites in her hometown of Montau and Marienwerder being a major source of distress.

\textbf{An Unlikely Couple? Richard Stachnik and Anneliese Triller}

A central figure in the \textit{Dorotheenbund} was Richard Stachnik, a complex personality. Stachnik, born in 1894 in Piła, in northwest Poland, was ordained shortly after the First World War, during which he had studied theology and philosophy in Pelplin. He worked as a priest and religious instructor in Gdansk beginning in 1928, as well as being responsible for the pastoral care of students at the town’s \textit{Technische Hochschule}. In 1930 he became leader of the Gdansk section of the \textit{Zentrumspartei}, the party for political Catholicism. As a consequence, he was banned from preaching and pastoral care in 1937, losing his teaching position as a result. In 1944, Stachnik was incarcerated in the Stutthof concentration camp as a political prisoner for a week, from August 23 to September 1.\textsuperscript{17} He spent the remainder of the war in Gdansk, then ended up in a Russian war prison, before fleeing to Westphalia in 1946. Until 1955, he worked as a religious instructor at a high school in Herne, eventually receiving greater responsibility in the curial administration. He also served as the priest at a convent in Coesfeld, remaining in this position until his death in 1982.
Stachnik’s own experience as a victim of Nazi crimes did not—according to his writings—prevent him from being a deeply committed German and Prussian patriot, and his devotion to Dorothy was part of this.\textsuperscript{18} Richard Stachnik edited most of the hagiographic material about Dorothy, in many cases working with the archivist and cultural historian Anneliese Triller, who was also a devoted Catholic and a refugee from the former German East. Born Birch-Hirschfeld, she had converted to Catholicism in 1924. In 1933, she became custodian of the Episcopal Archives in Frombork (Frauenburg), a duty she fulfilled until she was forced to flee from the Red Army in 1945. Her main work was to provide people with evidence for their Ariernachweise, i.e., certification of their non-Jewish descent in the previous two or three generations. In order to be able to process the numerous requests more effectively, Birch-Hirschfeld developed an indexing system for the Episcopal Archives, which according to her own statements was a duty that also served her own interest in family history and genealogy.\textsuperscript{19}

Anneliese Birch-Hirschfeld requested membership in the Reichsschrifttumskammer in May 1938, so as to be permitted to publish her dissertation. The request was denied, since writing was not her main profession, and she was advised to request a specific attestation for her dissertation instead. Since the Reichsschrifttumskammer was not only a professional organization, but also an institution for the political surveillance of its members, her request was accompanied by a note from the leader of the political department of the NSDAP-Gau, who attested that Birch-Hirschfeld “was not a member of the NSDAP, had never attended any party meetings nor done anything else to demonstrate her positive attitude towards the state.”\textsuperscript{20}

In 1941, she married Alfons Triller, a Slavic languages lecturer at the academy in Braniewo (Braunsberg), who was categorized as “entirely unpolitical” when his department was checked for political enemies in 1938.\textsuperscript{21} Anneliese Triller’s scholarly career is an example of the continuity of Ostforschung both personally and with regard to content, even though she had not been actively involved with National Socialism. Triller wrote many articles concerning “new evidence on the German character (das Deutschtum) of southeastern towns in Prussia;” she was a member of the Historischer Verein für Ermland before, during, and after the war; and an article commemorating her eightieth birthday was printed both in a scientific Festschrift and in the organ of the right-wing, revisionist organizations of East Prussia, Landsmannschaften.\textsuperscript{22} In this article, she recalls
with delight her time as custodian of the Episcopal Archive and the large amount of work she was responsible for in connection with the many people who came to the archive needing to prove their Aryan ancestry—nothing is said about those who failed this test, which was obligatory for most professional organizations under National Socialism. The little that she wrote after the war that was critical toward National Socialism primarily addressed the Nazis’ attempt to limit Catholic devotion and organization.23 Even if she lacked a particular devotion to National Socialism, Anneliese Birch-Hirschfeld did not lack an interest in the ideological support for the German claims in the East. She published articles about “Prussia’s mission and achievement for the German Volksstum” and positively reviewed Nieborowski’s book about Dorothy.24

In a way that was similar to Richard Stachnik, who published in favor of Dorothy’s canonization even before and during WWII, Anneliese Triller’s engagement on behalf of the saint-to-be had begun as early as 1934, when she published a series of popular articles in the Warmia church magazine. She also analyzed the German character of St. Dorothy’s cult in the canonization process, discussing the medieval sources themselves.

“Ethnicity” in the Medieval Canonization Process

In the canonization process, approximately 250 witnesses appeared and testified about miracles they had observed or personally experienced, either with the living saint or at her tomb. Of these 250, Triller identifies two with Polish names and two with Prussian names—thereby concluding that the cult of St. Dorothy was almost entirely German, deeply rooted in the culture of the Germanic Christian upper class in the Prussian towns.25 These results, based on the names in the medieval sources, constitute a circular argument and must be deemed unreliable on the basis of source criticism: when the person who wrote the acts or the report of the miracle was German-speaking, he was very likely to Germanize the names of the witnesses. Furthermore, the established principles for choosing witnesses suitable for a canonization were generally part of a delicate process that certainly did not take ethnicity in a modern sense into account, but rather emphasized the extraordinary nature of the miracle, a superior social status or a connection to the saint’s vita. Thus, the witnesses in a canonization process tell us very little about the “real” connection of a certain segment of the population to the saint’s cult.26
Given the speed of assimilation and the right of connubium, especially in the Prussian towns, it is almost impossible to determine person’s ethnicity in the late fourteenth century. Additionally, Triller’s arguments for categorizing people as Polish are highly questionable: at one point, she defines someone as Polish because he reports a miracle happening on Christmas Eve, and from the vague circumstances Triller deduces that the family in question must have been drunk and thus must have been Polish—since it was only the Poles in the area who were in the habit of getting drunk at Christmas.27

Since the Teutonic Order was the institution that produced the overwhelming majority of source materials related to medieval Prussia, it is basically impossible to gather reliable evidence about the spiritual and religious preferences of certain segments of the population during this period. Officially, they were all Christians and adhered to the preferences in devotion to saints and feast days prescribed by the order. It was only in the late fifteenth century that a certain reformatory discourse criticized remaining pagan practices among the Prussians, but even these sources must be handled with care.28 Thus, an attempt to assign the primary support for the cult of Dorothy of Montau to a certain section of the Prussian population is doomed to failure, due to a lack of sources.29 Dorothy might very well have been a patron saint of Prussia, but this is not reflected in the medieval sources, and thus could be a much later phenomenon.

The Eastern Crusade

The second issue related to Dorothy as a German saint is her status as patroness of the Teutonic Order and the order’s crusade.

The Teutonic Order’s role as a territorial ruler in Prussia and its continuing attempts to expand its territory relied heavily on its crusade-based self-definition. During most of the fourteenth century, the Lithuanian nobles’ resistance to baptism legitimized the order’s attempts to subdue at least sections of Samogitia (Samaiten). This territory was located between Prussia and Livonia, which were themselves controlled by the order.

By the end of the century, however, the problem was that the surrounding enemies could hardly be defined as enemies of Christendom: the kingdom of Poland certainly did not require any help with conversion, and when it formed a political and personal union with Lithuania in 1387 and the Grand Duke of Lithuania converted, the last justification for a Christian mission was gone. The Teutonic Order’s repeated military expe-
ditions against Lithuania lacked legitimacy or were at least highly doubtful even according to crusading ideals, but nonetheless Lithuania is noted as a target for a crusade in Dorothy’s 1404 canonization process.

High Master Konrad of Jungingen and three Großkomture showed up during the process; Konrad witnessed non monitus, non rogatus, non citatus neque ... in causa canonizandi productus [not advised, not asked, not cited and not ... brought forward because of the attempted canonization], as it is recorded in the protocol. The functionaries of the Knights’ Order provided testimony about a miracle nobody had previously heard of: Dorothy is said to have predicted four specific dangers inherent in a “journey” to Lithuania, and according to the High Master’s testimony, they all came true.30 These journeys were the annual “reysen,” for which the Teutonic Order gathered adventurous young noblemen from the empire for military expeditions to Lithuania. In this context, Dorothy seems to have provided the order with aid in their warfare, or, in their own terminology, to their crusades and the spreading of Christianity among the heathens.

In this context, the difference between the process as it was planned by the cathedral chapter and the process as it finally unfolded is crucial, and the acts tell us about the difference in quite some detail. The Pomesanian cathedral chapter, which planned the process, made lists of potential witnesses based on the miracle journals they had been keeping at Dorothy’s tomb and sent them to the curia. Obviously, they did not want the order to dominate the process, despite the presumed greater likelihood that Dorothy would be canonized if some of the order’s prominent figures provided testimony—none of them were mentioned as potential witnesses in the lists.31 Instead, they planned the process as one for a local saint: they invited 110 witnesses, seventy of whom came from the home bishopric of Pomesania and thirty from the neighboring bishoprics of Culm and Warmia. Furthermore, these witnesses were common laymen and laywomen, not clerics or noblemen. In the parts of the acts’ texts that were meant to ensure the cathedral chapter’s control of the canonization process rather than as cult propaganda, Dorothy was portrayed as a saint closely linked to the peasant population and to the places where she lived. The term patrona Prussie does not appear in the canonization process. Not even High Master Konrad of Jungingen used the term. Rather than patrona Prussie or patron saint of the Teutonic Knights, she appears as patrona Pomesaniae.32
The picture of Dorothy as a patron saint of Prussia is seriously complicated by her supposed role as a saint in the context of crusades, i.e., in the Teutonic Order’s struggle with the Lithuanians. Dorothy appears on several occasions as an ally against the (supposedly still pagan) Lithuanians: one of the interrogation articles states: “In the common opinion, people believe that, with the help of the prayers and merits of Dorothy, the Christians will soon achieve victory over the unbelieving Lithuanians and many will convert to the Christian faith, as many already have been converted.”\(^{33}\) No wonder that even the High Master Konrad von Jungingen talks about Dorothy’s help in the conquest of Lithuania—the one common feature of the saint’s image shared by both the Teutonic Order and the Pomesanian cathedral chapter. A defeat of the order would also have weakened the position of the cathedral chapter, which was formally incorporated into the order but ruled the diocese independently. Furthermore, the crusade rhetoric was deeply rooted in the foundational texts of the entire order and endured until the end of the fourteenth century.\(^ {34}\)

**A Saint for Patriots**

Ironically, it was the Lithuanians who brought the attempts to obtain Dorothy’s official canonization to an end. Despite her prayers, they, together with the Poles, won the Battle of Tannenberg/Grunwald, after which Prussia’s leaders had other things on their minds. We have only scattered information about the cult of the almost-saint after 1410: Dorothy’s German Vita was the first book to be printed in Prussia in 1492. After the Reformation, her tomb and shrine in the cathedral church were destroyed and there has been no sign of her relics since that time.

During the Counter-Reformation, a Polish Jesuit attempted, with little success, to reestablish the cult. Then, in the nineteenth century, the aforementioned instrumentalization of research on Dorothy arose and claimed the cult as German. The cult of St. Dorothy and its presumed German character, as well as her status as a patroness of the Teutonic Order, are used as a small but distinct aspect in the broader propaganda presentation of the Teutonic Order as the bearer of superior German culture and as a defender against the threat from the East—previously the Lithuanians, by this point Bolshevism.\(^ {35}\)

From the point of view of modern hagiographic research, the national character of a saint or a saint’s cult is only one aspect of the entire phenomenon of the veneration of saints. East and West Prussia is a region
with an exceptionally turbulent past, but patriotic demands on saints have also been visible in other regions. The common factor is that the modern use of saints can be very far removed from what we actually find in the hagiographic records, since the images of the saints have to be adapted to very different political circumstances—see, for example, the importance of St. Birgitta and St. Erik for the national identity of Protestant Sweden. Additionally, the medieval hagiographic records do not present one uniform image of the saints; instead, the texts were adapted for different audiences. Canonization processes can present a saint entirely differently than do sermons directed at the population; the cult propaganda of different social groups present very different aspects of a saint’s vita—as in the case of the Marienwerder (Kwidzyn) cathedral chapter and the Teutonic Order. The cathedral chapter portrayed a humble helper and intercessor on behalf of the lower strata of the Prussian population, while the Teutonic Order portrayed a mighty fighter against the pagans on the outskirts of the Christian world.

Recently, a third group has quietly claimed St. Dorothy, and, for the first time, the multilingual and multiethnic population of medieval Prussia can be seen. This is not taking place at the cult’s original site, the Kwidzyn cathedral church, but in Dorothy’s natal village of Mątowe Wielkie (medieval Montau) where the church has long been a site for the veneration of the saint, a phenomenon that has flourished since the Germans left. The local priest, who is trying to reestablish a community life in an almost-deserted village, gives guided tours of the medieval church with its wooden interior, which include an introduction to Dorothy’s life and achievements as saint. One of his main points is that Dorothy always confessed in both German and Polish. Finally, with the Teutonic Order now gone, the recent Polish presidency of the European Union and what will hopefully be the final German acknowledgment of its eastern borders, there is no longer a need for a German saint in a contested region. St. Dorothy had probably never been a good candidate—she seems to be more of a saint for patriots than a patriotic saint.
NOTES

1 Recently Dorothy has attracted the attention of an increasing number of German- and English-speaking scholars. The most recent studies addressing her mysticism and her vita are the contributions in Almut Suerbaum, ed., Dorothea von Montau and Johannes Marienwerder: Constructions of sanctity. Oxford German Studies 39 (Leeds, 2010). The most thorough study on the different hagiographic texts is Petra Hörner, Dorothea von Montau: Überlieferung, Interpretation: Dorothea und die osteuropäische Mystik (Frankfurt am Main and New York, 1993). The relationship between Dorothy and her confessor is analyzed in Dyan Elliott, “Authorizing a Life: The Collaboration of Dorothea of Montau and John Marienwerder,” in Catherine M. Mooney, ed., Gendered Voices: Medieval Saints and Their Interpreters (Philadelphia, 1999).


3 The Scriptores have lately been heavily criticized for their now hopelessly outdated editorial practices. Additionally, Polish scholars have criticized the patriotic goal behind these practices. See Jarosław Wenta, Studien über die Ordensgeschichtsschreibung am Beispiel Preußens. Subsidia historiographica 2 (Torun, 2000).

4 Hans Westpfahl and Richard Stachnik, Beiträge zur Dorotheenforschung (Braunsberg, 1942), with further references.


11 “… halte ich es für notwendig und pflichtgemäß, als katholischer Priester ein offenes Bekenntnis zum Führer und zu seiner Staatsführung abzulegen … Der Sieg Adolf Hitlers war ein Sieg des sich in höchster Gefahr befindlichen Christentums in Deutschland und Europa, ein Sieg, so groß und folgenschwer wie jener, den Konstantin der Große im Jahr 313 errang … Der herrliche Mann, der das Christentum und damit den Katholizismus in Deutschland gerettet hat, sieht sich in seiner Demut selbst nur als unwürdiges Werkzeug der göttlichen Vorsehung an … deshalb fliegt ihm mein deutsches Priesterherz zu.” Katholiken für Hitler, Sonderdruck, 1934. Bundesarchiv Berlin (hereafter: BA), VBS 47/2101/0905/15.

12 The “Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung” checked two books by Nieborowski for their accordance with National Socialist ideology in 1944, after a woman from Oppeln denounced him. The ministry found both of the books, written under the pseudonym Paul von Marienburg, unacceptable, but since both were out of print, and since inferences were made about the pension Nieborowski received as a fighter for the Volkstum, the ministry chose not to pursue the case. 2 Okt. 1944, Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung an Reichsschrifttumskammer. BA, VBS 47/2101/0905/15.


17 Muzeum Stutthof w Sztutowie, nasz znak DD-4370-292/12, I-III-27443, Akta personalne więźniamy. Thanks to Dr Danuta Drywa for this information.

18 This devotion became most famous after Günter Grass wrote his novel “Der Butt” as some sort of reckoning with his former Latin teacher Richard Stachnik. See Wallace, *Strong Women*, pp. 46–52.


20 Antrag auf Aufnahme in die Reichsschrifttumskammer, BA, VBS 47/2101/0097/14.

21 Reichssicherheitshauptamt, Beurteilung der Dozenten an der Univ. Braunsberg, BA, R/58/5300.


25 Triller, “Kanonisationsprozess.”


27 Triller, “Kanonisationsprozess,” p. 339. The same argument was already brought forward by Nieborowski, *Die Selige Dorothea*, p. 186.


31 *Akten des Kanonisationsprozesses*, pp. 22–47.

33 “Iuxta communem vulgi opinionem hominum partium Prussie firmiter tenetur et creditur, quod precibus et meritis beate Dorothee Cristiani contra Lituanos infideles in brevi victoriarn obtinebunt et infideles quamplurimi ad Cristi fidelum convertentur, sicut etiam plurimi sunt conversi,” *Akten des Kanonisationsprozesses*, p. 46.


35 On the modern historiography of the Teutonic Order see, for example, Wolfgang Wippermann, *Der Ordensstaat als Ideologie: Das Bild des Deutschen Ordens in der deutschen Geschichtsschreibung und Publizistik* (Berlin, 1979).

36 Personal observation during a visit in September 2010.
Finnish Saints’ Traditions and Folklore: Interpreting St. Anne, St. Katherine of Alexandria, and St. Birgitta of Sweden

Irma-Riitta Järvinen

This chapter will investigate some of the oral and vernacular remnants of the cults of saints and traditions concerning them in Finnish folklore. The folklore data was collected mostly in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As such, folklore does not represent medieval Finnish saints’ cults, but rather it reflects the living traditions of later centuries. However, the persistent variety of these traditions proves the profound and widespread impact of medieval Catholic teaching, and shows how these cults were shaped and made useful in the life of the mainly peasant population. Further, the existence of a vivid oral tradition suggests that the Lutheran reformers were either not successful or they did not care to root out all the features of the older lived religion, even though official claims and decisions were made by the synods or by leading members of the clergy.¹

In the following pages, a short outline of recent studies on medieval Finnish saints’ cults will be presented. The analysis of this chapter focuses on oral and vernacular traditions of three female saints: St. Anne, St. Katherine of Alexandria, and St. Birgitta of Sweden. Some festivities and traditions related to a larger spectrum of Catholic saints will also be discussed.

Folklore collections in the Folklore Archives of the Finnish Literature Society (Helsinki) abound with information about calendar customs in connection with medieval Catholic saints—proverbs, beliefs, and ritual traditions. Among the archival materials that have also been published and digitized are songs about saints in Kalevala meter, as well as charms or vernacular prayers to these saints in the same ancient meter.²
Charms for healing, farming, animal husbandry, and hunting document express faith in the intercessory powers of saints, and also in the help of pre-Christian spirits. The medieval liturgical calendar of the Diocese of Turku, with its succession of saints’ feasts, gave an organized framework to the order of work duties in the agrarian calendar. The intertwining of pragmatic and ecclesiastical concerns provided a powerful mnemonic aid in the oral culture of the laity. The earliest preserved records of folk traditions concerning the saints, including records of what people actually did on the feast days, date back to the seventeenth century, but the bulk of folklore texts were collected and written down two centuries later. Collecting folklore was part of the nationalist ideology of the nineteenth century, and folklorists were initially more interested in the pre-Christian mythology and the ancient heroes of the Finns than in medieval Catholic traditions. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century and even the beginning of the twentieth, with the widening of the concept of folklore, that the mythology of the Roman Catholic past came to be regarded as worthy of scholarly attention.

Since the turn of the millennium, research on saints’ traditions in Finland from a historical or art-historical perspective has been active, and several monographs have been published on the liturgical legend of St. Henry of Finland, wooden sculptures of St. Anne (St. Anne with the Virgin and Child) from medieval Finnish churches, and the cult of St. Olav in Finland. The cult of St. Birgitta of Sweden and various hagiographic and other literary traditions related to her have been studied in several volumes. Research on medieval pilgrimages in Finland and from Finland is the subject of a recent volume. Various aspects of literary culture in medieval Finland, manuscripts and their fragments, medieval Finnish stone churches, and some broader aspects of medieval cultures have been studied in several volumes. All these sources and many more provide information about the circumstances in which medieval believers lived and acted. The verbal expressions preserved in folk poetry and calendar customs may add some understanding to the ways the saints were comprehended and interpreted.

Not all the saints in the medieval calendar of the Diocese of Turku have left their mark on later folklore. The number of saints in the liturgical calendar of the Missale Aboense (1488) was about two hundred, whereas the number of locally respected saints in parish churches was around fifty-three; these were saints’ feast days when working was forbidden. The highest rank was given to twenty festivals; those connected to the Virgin
Mary and Jesus were in the highest rank, and so were those of Saints Anne, Birgitta, Erik, Henry, John the Apostle, John the Baptist, Katherine of Alexandria, Lawrence, Michael the Archangel, Nicholas, Peter and Paul, Stephen, and Ursula and the Eleven Thousand Virgins. The feasts of Saints Olav, Barbara, and Margaret had the rank of duplex.¹²

The most obvious explanation for the survival of the memory of a saint in folk tradition is that the saint’s feast day marks an important date in the agrarian calendar—starting or finishing an important task in the fields or with livestock, or inside the house. The four seasons of the northern climate, with their weather conditions and the contrast and changes between light and darkness, have also had a strong impact on shaping the calendar traditions of the saints.

Among the most fascinating traditions are a number epic poems in Kalevala meter, which have preserved at least some connection to a saint’s hagiography: songs about St. Henry, St. Katherine, St. Stephen, St. Mary Magdalene, and St. Margaret. These epic songs in the old meter bear a strong testimony of the efforts of the people to remember these holy persons and their stories in vernacular oral culture. It is hard say when each of these poems came about, but the fourteenth to fifteenth century would be the time when saints’ cults were spreading in Finland. Historian Tuomas Heikkilä comes to the conclusion that the hagiographic legend of St. Henry in Latin would have been written in the last decades of the thirteenth century, but the Kalevala-meter poem in Finnish was created later and used the Latin text as its source; both were used side by side.¹³

Behind the folklore texts we can in some cases distinguish what people had learned and understood about the saints, and even the sources for their interpretations. Parish priests could provide a mediating link between Latin sources and their interpretations in vernacular culture. In the Diocese of Turku, parish priests preached in the vernacular (though no texts of such sermons have been preserved). Preaching in the local vernacular was also a characteristic of the mendicant orders, the Franciscans and the Dominicans, who played a prominent role in late medieval Finland.¹⁴ Sermons on the memorial days of saints focused on their hagiography, and saints’ lives provided material for the popular exempla sections of the sermon. One of the most influential collections of hagiography, the Legenda aurea, by the Dominican priest, later bishop, Jacobus of Varrazze (Jacobus de Voragine), was used in the Diocese of Turku; remnants of three copies have been found. Thus, people had a chance to hear about these distant
figures, whose exemplary life stories included many horrifying events and exciting turns.

Paintings and sculptures in local medieval churches were another important source of inspiration when saints’ lives were reinterpreted. Pilgrims were able to see the abundance of art depicting saints in far-away churches and to talk about it when they came home. There is documentation of pilgrimages made from Finland to Rome and to Santiago. In the North, Finnish pilgrims visited the grave of St. Olav in Nidaros (Trondheim) and the grave of St. Birgitta in Vadstena; in Finland, they visited the Cathedral of Turku, the Birgittine cloister of Naantali, the sacred places of St. Henry in Köyliö and Nousiainen, and, moreover, the churches (Hattula, Renko) on the road from Hämeenlinna to Turku.15

Christian names bear the memory of saints, even today. Roughly speaking, the most common Christian names at the end of the sixteenth century were the names of the most respected saints, and in the calendar of 1790, three-quarters of the Christian names were still the names of saints.16 The international saints’ names were transformed to a number of Finnish vernacular variants, for example, Marja, Marjatta, Marjukka, Anna, Annikki, Anni, Pirkko, Pirjo, Matleena, Leena, Kerttu, Kerttuli, Henrikki, Heikki, Juhani, Jussi, Olavi, Olli, Erkki, Eero, Jaakko, Pietari, Pekka, Petri.

In this chapter, I shall sketch how the folklore of saints can be interpreted—what it reveals and what it does not. The surprising thing is that the recorded items of folklore about saints vary considerably: they can seem odd or irrelevant, but they can also include actual references to the life story of a saint or an understanding of his/her importance. The three popular female saints on whom my discussion focuses, St. Anne, St. Katherine of Alexandria, and St. Birgitta of Sweden, are remembered in very different ways in folk tradition. There must be reasons for this kind of variation. St. Anne and St. Katherine are nonhistorical, “old” or “mythical” saints, whose cults were deeply rooted in the tradition of the international church well before the fourteenth century. Their status as powerful intercessors may have been particularly attractive, especially to women. St. Birgitta (ca. 1302–1373) is a historical figure whose cult became widespread in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The stories about saints are many layered, built on the tensions between the historical and nonhistorical, fiction and belief. In any case, the saints fit into the mythological continuum from the pre-Christian belief in spirits, and in Finland, both belief systems flourished side by side.
St. Anne, the Mother of Mary, in Western and Eastern Finland

The cult of St. Anne, mother of the Virgin Mary, actually arose in the sphere of the Eastern Church as early as the fourth century. A church was built by the Emperor Justinian in her honor at Constantinople in the sixth century, and the day of its consecration at the end of July became the feast day of St. Anne (July 26) in many parts of the Christian world. The Finnish Dominican-influenced Calendar of Saints of the Diocese of Turku celebrated St. Anne just after St. Lucy on December 15, but the Birgittine cloister of Naantali held a mass for her on July 26.17

The strength of Anne’s cult in medieval Finland can be concluded from the number of her representations in Finnish medieval church art. Only Jesus and Mary are more frequently depicted in sculptures than St. Anne.18 In Sweden and in Finland, the cult of Anne was promoted by the Birgittine Order.19 St. Anne was the patrona of the Birgittine monastery in Naantali, near Turku in Finland.20 In Birgitta’s writings, the value of the work of wives and mothers is strongly emphasized, with references to Mary and her mother Anne.21

St. Anne had an altar in the Cathedral of Turku.22 Anne’s wooden sculptures—many of which represent the common type in which St. Anne holds the Virgin and Child in her lap—have existed or still exist in more than twenty medieval churches.23 Paintings depicting St. Anne or parts of her legend have existed in five churches; she is the patroness of five churches or chapels, and one decorated chancel was dedicated to her. Moreover, there is evidence that the Dominican Order, in the fifteenth century, was planning a convent in Raisio near Turku dedicated to St. Anne, though this plan never was carried out.24

Art historian Elina Räsänen’s research material includes forty-five sculptures of St. Anne in Finnish medieval churches.25 Thus, there is plenty of material proof of this saint’s importance in the religious life of fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Finland, but as is the case in general with the veneration of saints, no accounts have survived of the reactions of ordinary devotees to these sacred images.26

In medieval Turku, the Guild of St. Anne was active, and took care of her altar in the cathedral. According to the Finnish historian Mikko Piippo, the Guild (fraternitas) of St. Anne was one of the eleven guilds known to have existed in Finnish medieval towns; in the countryside, there were seven guilds.27 Most of the town guilds were situated
in Turku—besides the Guild of St. Anne, there were the Guilds of St. Nicholas, St. Erasmus, St. Gertrud, St. Ursula, and the Guild of the Three Kings. Unfortunately, hardly any information remains of the actual functions of the guilds in Finland—only a list of members of the Guild of the Three Kings after it was founded in 1488. The members were leaders of the church and church elite, the most notable noblemen, and representatives of the town administration. All source material that exists concerning the guilds in Turku points to their connections with the church—that is, their activity in taking care of the altars and giving money for the care of the sick and poor. Piippo points out that European research on guilds has discovered that their most important function was drinking and feasting, along with some religious ceremonies like remembering the dead.

Eastern and Western traditions meet in Finnish folklore about St. Anne. Anne traditions comprise three folklore genres, namely calendar proverbs, notes on calendar customs from western Finland (the area of the old Diocese of Turku), and charms/prayers from eastern Finland and Karelia. Unlike elsewhere in Scandinavia, in the Diocese of Turku, Anne’s festival day was, for an unknown reason, one week later, on December 15. At the end of the seventeenth century, St. Anne came rather to be associated with December 9, as in other northern countries. In the Greek Orthodox Church, the festival day of St. Anne and of her husband, Joachim, was, and still is, on September 9, one day after the birth of the Virgin Mary. These dates have had an effect on the folklore and calendar customs of St. Anne’s day in Finland and Karelia.

Because the festival of St. Anne falls during the darkest time of the year, the calendar proverbs observe the long night and darkness: “There is enough night to spend on Anne’s day,” “Anne’s has a long sleep in her eyes,” “Lucy’s night, Anne’s eve, the rooster falls three times from its stick.” The festival day of St. Lucy was December 13. Thus, the proverbs were important in helping people to remember the order of the memorial days of the saints, but above all they defined the order of work in the peasant calendar. For women, St. Anne’s day marked the beginning of Christmas preparations. The proverbs state that Christmas baking must be started, and beer for the Christmas season has to be brewed. In this way, Anne’s day connects her to memories of her as the original lady of the house, the Virgin Mary’s mother, who prepares a festival for the birthday of her grandson. The idea only applies to the better-off members of society who were able to store extra food for the celebration. Ideal abundance of food and drink connects Christmas to the pre-Christian celebration of the turn
of the year, called *kekri*, which was celebrated in Finland each November all the way into the nineteenth century.

In the eastern tradition, Anne has a different role. In eastern Finnish and Karelian hunting charms she is called Annikki, Annikka, Annatar, Anni, and very rarely Anna. She is appealed to as a female forest spirit, who is the wife or the daughter of Tapio, the male forest spirit. The charms describe her as holding the golden keys of her storehouse, which is a metaphor for a forest packed full of prey. These charms are full of references to the riches of Anne, to her gold and silver—in practice, linking her to valuable furs. Her name, *Anna*, is the homonym of the first-person imperative in Finnish—a direct appeal “give to me.” She is also appealed to as a protector of the cattle in the forest pasture; in the charms, wolves and bears are referred to as her dogs.

Anne’s connection to hunting is not surprising because her memorial day was September 9 in the Greek Orthodox Church and that coincided with the beginning of the hunting season. The hunting charms, used before going to the forest to hunt, appeal to her generosity as a “giver,” a provider of prey.

The role of St. Anne as the great helper of women and of the family has almost vanished from Finnish and Karelian folklore. The archives preserve a few remnants of this role, namely prayers to Anne to heal a twisted ankle by spinning a red and blue thread—usually the role of the healer in these charms belongs to the Virgin Mary or to Jesus. In folklore, other features that also connect to her legend have been better preserved. Almost all Finnish folklore concerning St. Anne connects to her role as a provider of material abundance. This is how she is seen in the folk memory of later centuries. In calendar proverbs, the darkness around St. Anne’s day is emphasized as is the great need for sleep. All of her roles in the Finnish folklore tradition show how the saints could be adapted to the local folk religion and how their roles could be expanded and applied in new environments.

**St. Katherine of Alexandria, Virgin Martyr**

While St. Anne was seen as the great mother figure and a prosperous lady of the house in western European folk traditions, St. Katherine was clearly connected with young women hoping for a good marriage. Her cult and legend were associated with the monastery of St. Katherine at the foot of Mount Sinai, founded in the sixth century.
According to the legend told by Jacobus de Voragine in *Legenda aurea*, Katherine was the princess of Cyprus living in Alexandria, a beautiful and talented young woman who betrothed herself to Jesus. Emperor Maxentius wanted to make her his mistress, but she refused. The emperor sent fifty philosophers to argue with her and turn her away from the Christian faith, but they all converted to Christianity and so did the emperor’s wife and his advisor. They were all burned. Katherine was imprisoned, but a dove fed her in the prison. She was to be tortured with a wheel, which broke down, and finally, she was executed with a sword; milk flowed from her body instead of blood. An angel carried her body to Mount Sinai.

Unlike the story of St. Anne, a part of the legend of St. Katherine has actually been transformed into a Kalevala-meter poem. This short poem, of which only a few variants exist, has a simple narrative structure. St. Katherine is called Kaia, Kaio, Kaisa, or Katrina, and her male opponent is called Ruotus, which stands for the name Herod in Finnish. In the poem, Katherine is a skillful weaver, whose hand is sought by the evil king Ruotus. Katherine refuses him, and the king sends her to the stake. One of the variants of the poem ends with the Virgin Mary reading a book; also Katherine, like several other saintly figures, is seen to hold a book in church art. Another variant of the poem combines it with a mythical theme: forging a golden woman in a fire. The theme of forging a golden woman is associated with the heroes Väinämöinen or Ilmarinen in Finnish epic poetry. As Tracey R. Sands has pointed out, there is a familiar chapter in the medieval *vita* of St. Katherine, known in two quite different Old Swedish versions, which tells that Maxentius tempted Katherine with the offer that he would have a golden statue made in her image and placed in the public square for the people to worship. She replied that the birds soiling the statue would do her little honor. In the later of the two versions, from the Linköping manuscript, Katherine’s speech is quite long and mocking, and includes a reference to goldsmiths arguing over the weight of the statue. The reference to the forging of a golden woman in the Finnish poem could well suggest an awareness of details of the life of St. Katherine and, possibly, awareness of the Swedish manuscript.

The third Finnish variant uses the burning of Katherine as an introduction to a charm that was used for healing burns. The depiction of Katherine as a weaver is also an oblique reference to her depictions in ecclesiastical art. The wheel on which she was to be tortured according to the legend, and which was her most recognizable attribute in church art,
was associated with spinning and weaving not only in Finland but all over Europe. This made her the patron saint for occupations such as rope makers, wheel smiths, spinners, and weavers.

We have no evidence of what the conceptions and rituals of the Finnish laity concerning St. Katherine were like in the late Middle Ages, when her cult in the Catholic Church was at its zenith. However, in later folklore collections the role of St. Katherine is clear.

The legend and cult of St. Katherine of Alexandria were influential and widely spread in late-medieval Europe, and in Scandinavia, the Baltic region, and Finland; she was the most celebrated figure among the virgin martyrs of the Roman Catholic Church. Katherine was one of the “Four Capital Virgins” and one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers, whose intercession was sought at the moment of death. Their help seems also to have been sought for earthly concerns in many cases.

In the Diocese of Turku, Dominican influence was strong in the fourteenth century, thus differing from other parts of the Archdiocese of Uppsala; this is evident in the liturgy and calendar used. A Dominican house was established in Turku in 1249. The cult of St. Katherine was supported particularly by the Dominican Order, evidently because of the emphasis on the value of learning in her hagiographic legend. The Dominican Order promoted studies in theology and philosophy, and every convent had to have a lecturer, whose teaching the monks had to follow. The order also established its own schools for higher education, usually in connection with a university. During the time of Bishop Johannes of Westphalia (1370–1385), a chancel for St. Katherine was built in the Cathedral of Turku, and a prebenda was established. For St. Birgitta of Sweden, St. Katherine was an exemplary saint, and the name Katarina was well represented in all branches of her family; there is a good deal of devotion to St. Katherine in Birgitta’s natal family. Katherine’s importance in medieval Finland is proved by the great number of representations of her in Finnish medieval church art, outnumbering those of all other virgin martyrs. Only the Virgin Mary was a more popular figure than Katherine among female saints in Finland. Paintings or sculptures of St. Katherine are found in twenty-three medieval churches in Finland. She had her own chapel in the Cathedral of Turku and altars in a few smaller churches (Mynämäki, Lohja); moreover, at least three (Kaarina, Huittinen, Hammarland), and perhaps as many as six (e.g., Lammi, Karleby, Virolahti), churches were dedicated to her. St. Katherine’s feast day on November 25 was celebrated with the degree of totum duplex, as
noted in the *Missale Aboense* of 1488, which includes the liturgical material of the medieval Diocese of Turku. The Virgin Mary and St. Anne were two other females honored by such a high degree, whereas other female saints were celebrated with the degree of *duplex*.⁴⁹

**St. Katherine as the Protector of Sheep and Cattle**

During the 1870s, a mistress of the farm recited the following Finnish vernacular prayer to St. Katherine, on the evening of the saint’s feast day, November 25:

Katrina, quick woman, good lady, carrying leaf fodder, weed of the yard, flower of the field, pretty lady of the manor.

Cast me a sack of oxen, fling me a bag full of cows. Black ones would be fine, and spotted ones would suit.

Go around at night with your brush, in the day with a bunch under your arm, walk on the lanes unheard, inspect the cowshed crouching down, groom the animals, straighten their hair.⁵⁰

The parish of Kangasniemi in the county of Savo, eastern Finland, where this text was written down, was a farming area in which woodlands were cleared by fire, with hunting and fishing as important supplemental food sources.⁵¹ This peripheral region was far from the cultural centers of southern and southwestern Finland, and the Dioceses of Turku and Viipuri. In the Protestant Finland of the end of the nineteenth century, Katrina was petitioned with these words, and with other similar prayers, to take care of the cattle.

It may be difficult to see the connection with the image of St. Katherine of Alexandria behind this text. The hagiographic legend of the celebrated virgin martyr dates her death to early fourth century and describes her as a learned and beautiful maiden of royal birth. She was persecuted by Emperor Maxentius but defended her virginity and Christian faith and died as a martyr.⁵² The “myth-making mechanism” of the Catholic Church⁵³ was at work when constructing the legend of St. Katherine from a variety of sources.

In the folkloric example, Katrina is described as a beautiful and helpful female. Following the structure of the charm she is first addressed and praised, and then her services are requested. She is portrayed by the
charm as carrying a brush and fodder for the cattle and walking around in the lanes and in the cowshed taking care of the animals.

The deeds and functions of St. Katherine in Finnish vernacular religion were first documented as early as the seventeenth century, which is less than two centuries after the veneration of the Roman Catholic saints was, at least on the official level, suppressed through the Protestant Reformation. However, in country parishes far away from the centers, these practices on saints’ feast days were overlooked by the local clergy, and they could live on as a tradition of the agricultural year. In the seventeenth-century records of eastern Finnish district courts or episcopal visitations, there are no signs that people would have been accused of veneration of saints.54 Christfrid Ganander, a Finnish scholar of the Enlightenment, writes in his *Mythologia Fennica* of 1789 in the following way, which expresses a certain distance from the phenomenon he is describing: “Sanct Catharina. One of the saints, who is prayed to, the good lady of the cow house in the company of the Virgin Mary ... who should take care of the cattle. A prayer to her is the following, to keep the bears away from the cattle ...” He then cites a lengthy charm in Kalevala meter for protection of the cattle.55

Ganander also pays attention to how the festival day of St. Katherine has been celebrated by the Finnish laity—he uses the past tense, but the ritual was actually practiced until the end of the nineteenth century:

This is one of the papist festival days among the Finns. On that day the lady of the house collected flour from women in the neighbourhood, and a porridge called “mämmi” was made. They also cooked a cow head, especially kept for this occasion, and the tongue of the cow and the “mämmi” were eaten in the cowshed. The sheep were shorn three times a year, as is done even today.56

Both cattle and sheep link to the legend of St. Katherine. Cows, as producers of milk, connect to a famous miracle of hers. When Katherine was beheaded, “milk gushed forth from her body instead of blood,” as Jacobus de Voragine tells in *Legenda aurea*. Katherine’s torture wheel was equipped with knives, but it was broken by an angel. The torture wheel was clearly viewed in vernacular tradition as evoking a spinning wheel, and thus also connects the saint to sheep, as producers of wool.

The date of St. Katherine’s feast day in the calendar, November 25, has affected the ways in which it was celebrated to promote the well-being of cattle and sheep. St. Katherine’s day was one in the chain of larger
and smaller agricultural celebrations of the late autumn—including St. Michael’s day, St. Martin’s day, and the pre-Christian turn of the year called kekri. In the oldest record of Finnish and Karelian ethnic religion, the list of “old gods of the Finns and the Karelians” written by Mikael Agricola in 1551, kekri was understood as a spirit that would increase the growth of cattle. In Finland, by early November all agricultural work was finished, and the sheep had to be shorn. The wool collected around St. Katherine’s day was called “Katherine’s wool”, and there was a proverbial saying, “Katherine shears the sheep.” Work indoors should be started at this time, which for women meant spinning and weaving. In Estonia, as well as in many other countries in Europe, it was forbidden to spin on St. Katherine’s day, but in the Finnish speaking area we find this only in Ingria.

There are more than fifty descriptions of this women’s ritual in the Folklore Archives—the latest from the 1930s, which could refer to the actual practice of the ritual at the end of the nineteenth century. These stem mainly from eastern, southeastern, and central Finland, and Ingria. They all emphasize the ritual meal in the cowshed—porridge, cow’s head and tongue, sheep head, and beer. Prayers to St. Katherine were recited. This was mainly a women’s ritual: they, whose main concern was to take care of the cattle and sheep, celebrated together and prayed for success in their work, asking for protection and fertility for their animals. Some records add that the ritual foods, such as beer and porridge, were given to the cows as well. The women’s ritual took place in the cow house, which was transformed into a sacred space. It was a place where women appealed to St. Katherine for help, kneeling down as they would do in the church. The vernacular ritual had been transferred from the official sacred space to the home circle.

A great number of calendar proverbs associated with St. Katherine’s Day remark upon the weather conditions typical for that time of the year. November is often wet. Both Finnish and Estonian folklore mention the urinating Katherine in this context; or could it be a later development, the degradation of the saint? Thus, she is called “the pissing Katherine” or the “water tail Katherine”; the proverb states: “Katherine is pissing on her feet.” The order of the saints’ days for late November appears in a proverbial mnemonic saying with similar content: “Katherine is pissing on Andrew’s mittens”—St. Andrew’s day follows soon after St. Katherine’s day, on November 30.
The legendary poem of St. Katherine, discussed above, is well in line with some other Finnish Kalevala-meter ballad songs, which also tell the story of a woman who wants to make up her own mind. These songs have been called by such names as “The Intruder Killer,” “The Hanged Maiden,” and “The Husband-Killer.” This was a popular storyline among Kalevala-meter ballads: a girl, Katherine (or equivalents of the name), had to fight for her life and turn down a bad suitor or even kill an intruder. The religious message has not been well preserved in the text of the Finnish legendary poem of St. Katherine—only the name of the girl, which is a variant form of the name of the saint, and the basic opposition: a skillful girl who does not want to marry a powerful, evil man.

The ritual meaning of St. Katherine in Finland, among the laity, was more alive than the actual legend about her. She was venerated as the provider and protector of sheep and cattle. But did the same people who prayed to her as the patroness of sheep and cattle actually know the story of the virgin martyr Katherine? In any case, she was considered a helper of women, whose main concern in the agrarian society was to take good care of their animals, which were the source of nourishment and clothing. Through this important link to livelihood and everyday concern for the welfare of domestic animals, the appeals to St. Katherine and rituals to venerate her have been able to penetrate through many centuries.

St. Birgitta of Sweden in Finland

In contrast to St. Anne and St. Katherine, St. Birgitta of Sweden is a historical saint, whose biography and canonization process are well known. During her lifetime, she had many roles: those of a wife and mother, an influential politician, and a mediator of heavenly messages. Birgitta died in Rome in 1373, and she was canonized in 1391. Soon after canonization her cult spread also to Finland, and her name appears in liturgical calendars of the Finnish diocese as early as 1396, first with the rank of duplex, and later as totum duplex. She was declared one of the patron saints of Sweden together with, among others, St. Erik, St. Olav, and St. Elin of Skövde, and, as late as 1999, she became one of the patron saints of Europe. After Birgitta’s death, the order she had founded, the Ordo sanctissimi Salvatoris, more commonly known as the Birgittine Order, founded their first monastery in Vadstena, in the diocese of Linköping. During the fifteenth century, a further monastery was founded in Naantali, near Turku in Finland.
For Birgitta’s canonization process, people were interviewed about miracles that were attributed to the saint’s influence. Of the sixty-four miracles recorded, four had taken place in Finland. Historian Sari Katajala-Peltomaa has studied miracle stories documented in connection with canonization processes and notes that one of the miracles attributed to St. Birgitta tells about a seven-year-old girl from western Finland who got lost in the woods, was searched for by a group of people from the neighborhood, but was found after her father called on St. Birgitta for help. This happened around 1375, and the grateful father, his daughter, and some villagers made a pilgrimage to Birgitta’s grave in Vadstena.

The strength of Birgitta’s cult in late medieval Finland is apparent from the fact that there are over thirty depictions of her Finnish churches. She is typically portrayed holding a book or writing tablet in her hand or has turned toward a writing table. Several churches were dedicated to her (Halikko, Lemland/Åland Islands, Lempäälä, Loppi, Naantali, Padasjoki, Tuulos, Uusikirkko/Kalanti, Vihri).

The first document about the festival day of St. Birgitta, on October 7, comes from 1406, even before the establishment of the monastery in Naantali. Soon after the Naantali monastery was founded, it acquired an influential position in Finnish religious life, and actually became a serious competitor with the Cathedral of Turku for donations and pilgrims. The nuns were in contact with local people buying and selling goods, and the skill of sewing as a professional activity was spread to the citizens by the nuns.

Considering the influence of Naantali Abbey and the Birgittine Order, and the strong cult of St. Birgitta in Finland, the surviving folk traditions about this saint are very modest compared to those about St. Anne and St. Katherine. The festival day of Birgitta in early October is surrounded by other important days of the agricultural year, such as the festival day of St. Matthew on September 21, syys-matti, which initiated the indoor work of the farm, and the festival of Archangel Michael, mikkeli, when the cattle were taken inside, and after which the farm servants had their free week and could get hired to another farm. This season was full of festivities; the agricultural tasks around the day of St. Birgitta were already associated with other saintly figures.

Ethnologist Kustaa Vilkuna has stated that Birgitta traditions were strongest in the areas of Häme and Savo, where the Christian mission was still underway in the fifteenth century. Especially in Savo, pre-Christian folk belief flourished in this period. In comparison, there is no
recorded folk tradition about Birgitta in the southwestern area of Finland around Turku known as Varsinaiš-Suomi, where Naantali and Halikko are situated. Birgitta is not a prominent figure in folklore sources. There are hardly any signs of her in Kalevala-meter poetry; only the name of Birgitta has been woven into the origins of the bear and of the dog, in Kalevala-meter charms:

Pirjotar quick-tempered lady  
who was not willing to spin  
and could not sew  
cast her wool to the water  
threw her ball of wool...^69  

Pirko was favourable to the air  
turned herself towards the wind  
showed her bottom to the hard wind  
the wind made her pregnant  
the bad weather made her heavy  
she carried the dog in her womb  
(...)

to become company for a wanderer  
to please the hunter.^70

This concept of St. Birgitta not being able to sew goes back to an image painted on the altarpiece bought for the church of Vadstena in 1449; these images about her childhood go back to her *vita* which was written after her death when her canonization was in progress.^71 The image further connects to a miracle legend about her: Birgitta having been orphaned at the age of eleven, was sent to her aunt Katarina. She was sewing with other girls but was in despair because she could not sew as well as she wanted. When her aunt entered the room, she saw an unknown lady beside her, helping her, but who then disappeared. However, the work was beautifully done. The legend was interpreted as evidence of Birgitta’s shortcomings as a seamstress because the Virgin Mary had to help her.^72 How this interpretation of Birgitta was spread is difficult to trace, because it appears only in a singular text, and thus it is not possible to speak of an actual tradition. Birgitta is understood as an opposite of St. Katherine, whose Finnish legendary poem depicts her as a diligent weaver.

Vilkuna has paid a good deal of attention to the use of the Finnish name of Birgitta. It became not only a popular first name, Pirkko or Pirjo, but was also used in connection with the name of the group of beetles known as *Coccinellidae*. In Finnish the name is *leppäpirkko* “blood pirkko,”...
referring to the red color of the beetle. The name has a good number of variants that are connected to female saints, not only to Birgitta, but also to St. Gertrud (leppäkerttu or leppäterttu), St. Katherine (lentokaija, leppätira from Estonian lepatriinu). In eastern Finland and Karelia, this beetle is called God's cow (jumalanlehmä) or even Ukko's sheep (ukonlammass) or Ukko's cow (ukonlehmä). Ukko is the name of the pre-Christian god in Finnish, which points to a continuum of heavenly figures in the name of this beetle. The saintly connection is also found in other languages: in Swedish nyckelpiga, or Jungfru Marie nyckelpiga, English ladybird, and in German Marienkäfer.

In Finnish folklore the name appears in a popular children's rhyme and a little vernacular ritual. When the beetle is sitting on the hand of a child, the rhyme is said, and the beetle is sent off: (1) to the side of a stone church, (2) to the side of a big stone, (3) to father and mother, (4) over the sea, (5) as far as cow bells can be heard. The beetle is asked to perform various tasks: to eat porridge there, to bring golden clothes, to say where the suitors come from, where the person saying the rhyme will be married, or whether the cowherd can get to the church on Sunday. The references of the rhyme connect with a variety of areas which match the interests of women: cattle, food, clothes, predicting the future, and marriage. Could the children’s rhyme be a variant of a long-forgotten medieval vernacular prayer? In any case, the name of the beetle and the rhyme along with it are not proof of any awareness of St. Birgitta in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when the rhymes were collected.

Vilkuna also pays attention to the negative connotation attached to Birgitta’s vernacular name, Pirkko; the word äkäpirkko in western dialects is used for a child who is “misbehaving” but has fits of anger, and the verb pirjastaa for making noise or misbehaving. Vilkuna draws this notion of Birgitta’s having been a disobedient child from the altarpiece in Vadstena: a painting shows how Birgitta’s foster mother Katarina is about to punish her with a whip.

Folk traditions about St. Birgitta have a different character than the traditions about St. Anne and St. Katherine. Birgitta’s memory is dimly distinguished in the children’s rhyme, and there are no important rituals relating to her, as there are for St. Katherine. There is only one archived record about her festival day: on that date, it is time to start making fishing nets. St. Birgitta’s irrelevance in the agrarian calendar wiped out any popular memory of her as a saint.
Folk Traditions on Saints’ Festival Days

The liturgical calendars, with their ranking of saints’ feast days, expressed the view of the church elite about the importance of various saints, but clearly not every saint become equally revered and remembered by the laity, and there was local variation as to which saints were considered most important. Certainly, the saints whose feasts were celebrated with the highest degree were more emphasized by the church than those celebrated with lower degree, but the laity had its own ways. Some saints’ days, such as those of St. Mary Magdalene or St. Olav, were celebrated with the highest degree only in the Dominican calendar dating from 1407. However, the laity’s appreciation of the festival days differs from that of the church elite, as we shall see from the following synopsis.

As no sermons have been preserved from medieval Finland, we do not know how the saints and their festivals were presented or how the message was delivered in the vernacular language. The story of the life of the saint had to be interesting enough for people to relate their own lives to it. The most important and most frequent festival days were those connected to the Virgin Mary and Jesus, who were of higher rank than the actual saints, and highly appreciated also in folk tradition. In the following summary, I shall briefly present the saints’ festivals and how they have been observed in folk traditions. The emphasis was on weather, agricultural work, behavior of animals, and rituals of protection.

Henry (January 19, June 18): The day “breaks the winter’s back” (midwinter); half of the cattle fodder is left and two-thirds of the food for the people; the bear turns over in its sleep; if there is little snow, there will be no hay in the summer; if there is cold weather, the summer will be warm. The *translatio* of St. Henry was celebrated in June with a large market in Turku, but it has left no marks in the later folk tradition.

Erik (May 18): Cold weather on this day predicts a warm summer; rain on this day is worth gold; the cuckoo is heard; plowing must be started, oats/barley/peas/flax are sown; it is time to fix the fences and to let the cattle out into the woods.

John the Baptist (June 24): The most important festival of the summer, this is the day for magic, omens, and beliefs: weather omens, omens about the crops, love magic, fertility magic, magic securing the success of the cattle; hoards can be discovered; musical skills can be learned from the water spirit/devil; bonfires are lit; the year’s first sauna whisks are made of birch.
Peter and Paul (June 29): Warm summer begins; turnips are sown; working on this day will cause thunderstorms; cutting hay begins; bonfires are lit.

Mary Magdalene (July 22): If it rains on this day, there will be rain for seven weeks.

Olav (July 29): Autumn time begins, so the hay harvest must be finished; “Uoti’s hook” (hunger) was feared, in case grain was consumed before the new crops were ready. The day was celebrated by eating a yearling sheep.

Lawrence (August 10): There is cold and rainy weather; swallows gather in flocks; threshing begins; sowing the rye begins; hunting fowl with traps begins.

Michael the Archangel (September 29): Crops must be inside by this day, and the cows and sheep should be taken inside; work inside the house begins; beginning of winter; weather omens; magic to protect and promote the welfare of the cattle and horses; celebrated by eating a ram.

Birgitta (October 7): Pirjetta (Birgitta) is the mother of the bear; net weaving is started (both these notions are rare, as there is only one text on each).

Katherine of Alexandria (November 25): This is the last celebration in the chain of fall festivals before Christmas preparations begin; prayers and ritual meals, mainly by women, to promote the success of the cattle and sheep; weather proverbs; rainy time.

Nicholas (December 6): The weather on this day will continue until the end of December.

Anne (December 15): Anne figures as the mistress of the house; Christmas preparations are started; she is the provider of prey, protector of cattle; the darkness of the period is emphasized.

Stephen (December 26): Cold winter begins; weather omens; magic to promote the welfare of cattle and horses; festival of men and horses; horse races when returning from church; mumming traditions with songs.

John the Apostle (December 27): Christmas celebrations continue with visits, dances, and singing; the day was called the third day of Christmas.

It is easy to see from the list above where the emphasis lay on the important saints’ festival days—or at least those traditions that remained until the early twentieth century: it was the work calendar, beginning or ending a task, feasting, predicting the weather, observing omens about the
coming crop, and practicing magic concerning the welfare of animals and human lives, and of course feasting and drinking.

**Conclusion**

The vernacular traditions of St. Anne and St. Katherine were deeply rooted in late medieval Finland and continued to be observed to a much greater extent than was the case with other saints. They were connected to the people’s livelihood. The welfare of cattle and sheep was particularly the concern of women; although men could also take part in the household feast of St. Katherine, they did not join the women in the cowshed. Prayers were offered to St. Anne to protect the cattle in the woods but also to grant success in hunting, which was the province of men. The gender lines in these cases were not strict.

St. Anne and St. Katherine were important saints on the other side of the Gulf of Finland in the area of Estonia, too. Many local churches and altars in larger churches were dedicated to both saints, and St. Katherine was known as a protector of sheep in Estonia as well as in Finland. Saints' traditions came to Finland not only from the West through Sweden but also from the South and Southeast. That there was frequent, grassroots contact over the Gulf of Finland by merchants and local people who sold and exchanged their products has been documented in sixteenth-century records.79

St. Birgitta was a respected ecclesiastical figure soon after she was canonized. In the vernacular imagination, however, she did not have a special, unique role like Katherine or Anne. On the whole, the late folklore sources about most saints only include observations of weather conditions or define the dates for starting or finishing an agricultural task, whereas folklore traditions about both St. Anne and St. Katherine illustrate why people needed their saints in the same way as they needed their old household spirits: to protect themselves from the threats of life and to help them in making their living.

**NOTES**

This chapter was written under the auspices of the Academy of Finland grant “Oral and Literary Culture in the Medieval and Early Modern Baltic Sea Region: Cultural Transfer, Linguistic Registers and Communicative Networks” [project number 137906].
These questions are discussed by Raisa Maria Toivo, *Faith and Magic in Early Modern Finland* (Houndmills, 2016); and by Miia Kuha, *Pyhäpäivien vietto varhaismodernin ajan Savossa (vuoteen 1710)* (Jyväskylä, 2016).

Kalevala meter is the old Finnish poetic meter, which is an unrhymed, nonstrophic trochaic tetrameter. It was used not in only epic and lyric songs, but also in charms, ritual poetry, children’s songs, riddles, and proverbs. Matti Kuusi: Introduction, in Matti Kuusi, Keith Bosley and Michael Branch (eds.), *Finnish Folk Poetry—Epic: An Anthology in Finnish and English* (Helsinki, 1977), pp. 62–65. The oldest Kalevala-meter traditions (89,000 texts) have been published in *Suomen Kansan Vanhat Runot* (SKVR), 1908–1948, 1994, in fifteen volumes, and can be found online at http://skvr.fi


Knuutila, *Soturi, kuningas, pyhimys* p. 178; for the problems with the plentitude of saints’ festival days, see Göran Malmstedt, *Helgdagsreduktionen. Övergången från ett medeltida till ett modernt år i Sverige* (Göteborg, 1994).


17 Malin, Der Heiligenkalender Finnlands, p. 101.
19 Räsänen, Ruumiillinen esine, materiaalinen suku, p. 253.
20 Lamberg, Jöns Budde, birgittalaisveli ja hänen teoksensa, p. 324.
22 Malin, Der Heiligenkalender Finnlands, p. 251.
25 Räsänen, Ruumiillinen esine, materiaalinen suku, p. 35.
26 Räsänen, Ruumiillinen esine, materiaalinen suku, p. 246.
28 Malin, Der Heiligenkalender Finnlands, p. 241.
33 Krohn, Suomalaisten runojen uskonto, p. 178.
37 For the texts, see Kuusi, Bosley and Branch, Finnish Folk Poetry—Epic, pp. 312–14.

40 The others were St. Margaret, St. Barbara, and St. Dorothy.


44 Ibid., 3:180.


46 Sands, *The Company She Keeps*, pp. 79–82.


48 Hiekkanen, *Suomen keski-ajan kiwikirkot*.


50 Katrina, *kipo kaponen*

   hyvä rouva, roukku selkä
   piha rikka, pellon kukka
   kaunis kartanon emäntä.

   Heitä mulle härkä säikki
   lehmä sääki len ’kauta.

   Kyllä mustati menis
   kirjavaiset kelpoas.

   Käy yö tuka käässä
   päivät tukko kainalossa

   käy kujaat kuurusissa
   läävät länkänöissääsi

   sukimassa suoromassa.

   (Suomen kansan vanhat runot VI, 2:5670)


52 The vita of St. Katherine, see Granger Ryan and Helmut Ripperger (eds.), *Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine*, pp. 708–16. Jacobus makes a remark that the emperor, who persecuted St. Katherine, was Maximinus, not Maxentius.


57 Hautala, *Vanhat merkkipäivät*, p. 361.
58 The population of Ingria, on the southeastern coast of the Gulf of Finland, consisted of Izhors, Vôtes, and Finns, until the Second World War, when the area was devastated and its people were dispersed.
64 Sari Katajala-Peltomaa, “Arki, hoiva ja pyhiinvaellukset,” in *Suomalaisten pyhiinvaellukset keskiajalla*, p. 163.
69 Pirjotar pikainen vaimo
jok ei ketätä kehahna
eikä ommella osanut
visko villasa vesillen
kuppaili kuontalonsa ...
(Suomen kansan vanhat runot VII:5, nr. 3936)
70 Pirko ilmallen rania
tuulelleen känteleksen
ahawalen pyllistiksen.
Tulipa tulta tineheiksi
paksuki pahoa sätä.
Kant joirran kohusan
(...)
kulkewallen kumbaliksi
mieliksi metän käwiän.
(Suomen kansan vanhat runot VI:2, nr. 6284)
76 Hautala, *Vanhat merkkipäivät*, p. 328.
77 Malin, *Der Heiligenkalender Finnlands*, p. 162.
This condensed and subjective synopsis is based on the calendar customs published by Hautala in *Vanhat merkkipäivät*.

Part II
The Cult of Saints in Medieval Russia and Livonia
Chapter Five

Varangian Saints and Christlike Varangians in Early Rus’ Christianity

John H. Lind

FIRST, A FEW WORDS about the terms Rus’ and Varangians, both of which for periods in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries appear as ethnic or semi-ethnic terms denoting Scandinavians, although they both had their origin as functional rather than ethnic terms. In this chapter “Varangians” is used to denote Scandinavians or people of Scandinavian descent active in the East, even when these were still known as Rus’, which they were until the mid-tenth century: I only use Rus’ about the Rus’ polity or state, or when I quote contemporary sources where Rus’ in fact does signify Scandinavians. This is done in order to avoid confusion, because the term Rus’ during the period we are dealing with, the tenth-eleventh century, gradually changed its meaning so that it first began to include the Slavic majority population of the Rus’ polity and finally took on its present meaning, denoting the East-Slavic population of Rus’.

This does not mean that the term Varangian/Varangians does not also begin to change its semantic content during the period we are concerned with here. It does, however, still denote Scandinavians. But already in the late eleventh and early twelfth century, Varangian, if specifically linked to Christianity, suggests Christianity in its Latin/Roman form. This process is in fact embodied in the title, where “Varangian saints” are firmly linked to the Greek Orthodox Church whereas the “Christlike Varangians” originate in the Latin Church, although both groups were active in Kiev, albeit a century apart.

Varangian Christianity

When first I got interested in the role Varangians may have played in spreading Christianity in Rus’ and Scandinavia, it was in order to explain
some phenomena I found difficult to understand when observing early Christianity in Rus’ and Scandinavia, but which could perhaps be explained as a result of early Christian Varangians traveling between Byzantium and Scandinavia through Rus’. In that context, I also coined the phrase “Varangian Christianity” to indicate types of influence that could in my opinion be assigned to Varangians.

Foremost among these phenomena was the intriguing presence in the Finnish Christian vocabulary of a number of words that, as linguists agree, can only have their origin in Old East Slavonic, perhaps with Old Church Slavonic as medium. They consist of such fundamental Christian expressions as:

- pappi < pop (попъ) = priest;
- risti < krest (кресть) = cross;
- pakana < pogan (поганъ) = heathen;
- kummi < kum (кум) = godfather;
- raamattu < gramota (грамота) = bible, scripture;
- räähkä < grekh (грехъ) = sin; and
- paasto < post (постъ) = lent.

Traditionally, the Finns are thought to have adopted Christianity as result of a Swedish crusade in the aftermath of the Second Crusade in 1147. To suggest, as Enn Tarvel has done, that this Church Slavonic vocabulary should have been introduced later in the Middle Ages after a corresponding Latin vocabulary had already been in place is hardly feasible. Here we must remember that the crusades were sponsored by a reform papacy wishing to centralize, dominate, and force local Christian usages into compliance with a strict set of rules. In central Europe this included a ban on the use of Church Slavonic, when Pope Gregory VII in 1080 denied Duke Vratislav II of Bohemia the right to use Church Slavonic. The result was that the last vestiges of the Church Slavonic rite within this region of the Western Church were eradicated in 1096, when the Sázava Monastery in Bohemia was “Latinized.”

Therefore the Church Slavonic vocabulary in Finnish must have been introduced earlier than the crusades. Furthermore, for this vocabulary to have survived the enforced Latin mission that followed upon the crusades, a substantial number of Christians familiar with the Old Church Slavonic rite must have been present in the region that was first targeted by the western crusade: Satakunta, with Eura (Luistari) and Vakka-Suomi
That there were indeed Christians in precisely this region at least a century prior to the crusades is today confirmed by archaeological data, and, according to Paula Purhonen, there were no pagan burials later than the first decades of the eleventh century in Laitila-Kalanti. Important with regard to early Christianity in this region is also that during the eleventh century, Finns, according to Pirkko-Liisa Lehtosalo-Hilander, began to bury their dead in separate inhumation cemeteries, some supplied with belfries. This in itself indicates the existence here of an early church organization a century prior to the crusades. Moreover, Viking-age finds in this region, on one hand, show similarity with finds in Scandinavia and, on the other, display Byzantine influence. This indicates that the population here had links to both Sweden and to Byzantium, just as we have evidence along “the road from the Varangians to the Greeks” (the system of rivers linking the Baltic and Black Seas) that people from Finnish territory took part in traffic along this route.

On the Early Spread of Christianity

With regard to early Christianization in what we could call the Scandinavian commonwealth—Rus’ and Scandinavia—it is generally assumed that Scandinavia was Christianized from and by the Western Church, Rus’ from and by the Eastern Church. It is also still—if not as much as earlier—assumed that the baptism of the respective rulers played major roles in this process: Harald Bluetooth in Denmark ca. 965 and, in Rus’, Vladimir Sviatoslavich 988/89. However, in all the hitherto pagan territories where Scandinavians played major roles, archaeological data to a still larger extent suggest that Christianity was quite widespread long before these “official” baptisms. That is the case in Denmark, and more importantly in our context, it was the case in Rus’. It is also assumed, not least in Swedish historiography, that Christianization came about through missionaries, who sought out pagan Scandinavians at home, as if a pagan Scandinavian could not adopt Christianity unless he met up with visiting missionaries. This attitude toward the process of Christianization among the Scandinavians is surprising in at least two respects: First, already Rimbert in his Life of St. Ansgar reports on Scandinavians who adopted Christianity because they

with Laitila-Kalanti, and, perhaps, Finland Proper (Varsinais-Suomi) all in the southwestern part of present-day Finland.
had experienced it abroad, in this case in Doestad. Similar information can be found in the Gutasaga concerning Gotlanders who traveled in the East, were baptized, brought back priests, and eventually received visiting bishops who arrived from the Holy Land through Rus.

Secondly the Viking age, which is the period when Christianity struck root in the entire Scandinavian commonwealth, including Rus’, was also the period when Scandinavians traveled to an extent they had never done before—and to a large extent returned. During these travels they visited ancient Christian centers and became acquainted with Christianity without ever having to meet a missionary.

Among these Christian centers one stands out with regard to the Christian influence it could impart on its Scandinavian visitors: the Byzantine Empire and especially its capital, Constantinople.

By contrast to the Scandinavians active in the West, who in quick succession harassed and plundered churches and monasteries in the British Isles and along the Frankish coasts and rivers before they hurriedly retreated, it is important to bear in mind that those Scandinavians who frequented Byzantium often stayed there for prolonged periods. Most Scandinavians probably arrived in order to join the Byzantine imperial forces, others came as merchants, or they combined aspects of these activities. In any case they acquainted themselves with Byzantine Christianity and adapted to the Byzantine way of life.

In this connection, it is often overlooked or ignored how many Scandinavians must have traveled to Byzantium during the Viking age and its immediate aftermath. That applies first of all to those who came to do service in the imperial armies, either as part of the Rus’ contingents we know about at least from the beginning of the tenth century or, later, as part of the famed Varangian Guard from the late tenth century onwards. All in all, Scandinavians must have gone to Byzantium in their thousands, otherwise Byzantine emperors would not have been able to field armies that could count several thousand Varangians in one battle, as did Constantine IX Monomachos in 1045.

In recent historiography it is often assumed that it was the privileged segment of Scandinavians who first adopted Christianity, so it was from this segment that Christian beliefs filtered down through the society. Also here we should remember that those who joined the imperial armies in Byzantium had to belong to precisely this segment of Scandinavian society. In order to join the Byzantine army Scandinavians to begin with had to possess the necessary military skills; moreover they not only
had to pay their way to Byzantium, but they also had to pay their way into the army because, in order to join the Varangian Guard, they had initially to pay a substantial “entrance fee,” before they could start to earn the kind of riches both in salary and, not least, in spoils from the type of military activities that we hear about in the case of Harald Hardradi. These riches allowed Harald, after he left Byzantium, to buy his way to the royal crown in Norway.20 Widely traveled Scandinavian magnates of this kind were, therefore, probably among the first in their respective regions to adopt Christianity even before the “official” baptisms of the rulers.

The Russo-Byzantine Treaties

Although increasingly important, archaeological data are nevertheless difficult to evaluate with regard to whether a person buried with Christian objects, lying in a certain position, was really a Christian. Therefore it is important that on the subject of early Christianity in Rus’ we do not have to rely merely on archaeological data, nor are we dependent on narrative sources like Rimbert’s *Vita Anskarii* or Adam of Bremen’s chronicle of the bishops of Hamburg-Bremen with their vested interests.

In the early Russian chronicle, *Povest’ vremennykh let* (The Tale of Bygone Years published in an English translation under the misleading title, *The Russian Primary Chronicle*),21 the author had, by contrast to his immediate predecessor, access to the texts of a number treaties Rus’ had concluded with Byzantine emperors in 907, 911, 944, and 971. Their original versions were probably written in Greek, translated into Old East Slavonic before they were included in the chronicle.

It is generally agreed these translations faithfully reflect the contents of the original treaties.22 Moreover, as performative sources these texts are far superior to any other sources that inform us of the spread of Christianity among Scandinavians in this early period.

In the early treaties (907 and 911), both the Rus’ envoys and their ruler Prince Oleg (H-l-g-w or Helgi, in a contemporary Khazar source) are portrayed as pagans, who swear their oaths by their gods and on their weapons, just as Danes, according to Adam of Bremen, did, when they made peace with the Franks in the time of Louis the Pious.23 By contrast, the Byzantines are in these treaties referred to either as Greeks or simply as Christians, as if the two terms were synonymous, and they take their oaths by kissing the cross.24
In the third treaty, from 944, this has changed completely. The treaty contains sixteen articles and lists no fewer than seventy-two or seventy-three names by whom or on whose behalf the treaty was concluded on the part of Rus’. As in the previous treaties, almost all the names of the Rus’ mentioned in the text are clearly of Scandinavian origin.25

By contrast to the previous treaties, the 944 treaty repeatedly, when relevant, distinguishes between those Rus’ who are still pagan and those who are now Christians. Accordingly, the treaty stipulates that “the Christian Rus’ shall so swear according to their faith, and the non-Christians after their custom.” The chronicler ends his quotation from the treaty with a report by the Greek envoys on its ratification by the Rus’ in Kiev,

in the morning, Igor’ (the ruling prince, Ing[v]or in a contemporary Greek source) summoned the envoys, and went to a hill on which there was a statue of Perun. The Rus’ laid down their weapons, their shields, and their gold ornaments, and Igor’ and his people took oath (at least, such as were pagans), while the Christian Rus’ took oath in the church of St. Elijah.

The situation of the Elijah Church, the author of the Povest’ vremennykh let, writing ca. 1110, goes on to expound, “is above the creek, in the vicinity of the Pasyncha square and the quarter of the Khazars. This was, in fact, the cathedral church (sbornaia tserkvi), since many of the Varangians were Christians.”26

On the basis of this text we can conclude that between 911 and 944 a significant number of Scandinavians or people of Scandinavian descent in Rus’ had decided to adopt Christianity, presumably by individual choice, perhaps while staying in Byzantium. Furthermore, the fact that a separate ratification to this international treaty by the Christian Rus’ was now a necessity shows that Christianity by 944 had obtained official status in Rus’ almost half a century before the conversion of its ruler, Grand Prince Vladimir Sviatoslavich.

The Two Varangian Saints

It was only in 988 or 989 that Vladimir, in connection with his marriage to a Byzantine princess, decided to adopt Christianity. According to the Povest’ vremennykh let, this decision was preceded by a period of pagan revival, and it is during this that we first meet our two Varangian saints. Under the year 983, the Povest’ vremennykh let reports that Vladimir
Sviatoslavich, returning to Kiev from a victorious battle, wished to make a sacrifice to the idols (kumiry). It was proposed that lots should be cast for a youth and a maiden, who were then to be sacrificed.

The chronicler then relates the story of a certain Varangian, whose mansion (dvor) is said to have been located where Vladimir Sviatoslavich, soon after his conversion, built the first major stone church in Kiev, dedicated to the Mother of God and also known as the Church of the Tithes (the Desiatinnaia Tserkov’), in which Vladimir was later buried.

This Varangian, adhering to the Christian faith, had arrived from Greece, and he had a son, “beautiful in both face and soul,” on whom the lot fell. Vladimir’s envoys came to the father and asked for the son to be handed over, so that he could be sacrificed to the gods (bozi). In response the Varangian claimed that,

these are not gods, but wood. Today they exist, tomorrow they will rot away. … But God (Bog), Whom the Greeks serve and worship, is one Who created heaven and earth, the stars, the moon, the sun, and man, and gave him to live on earth. What, however, have these gods created? They are themselves created. I will not give my son to demons (besy).

On hearing this, Vladimir’s men armed themselves, marched against the Varangian, and broke down the fences around his house where the Varangian together with his son met them at the door. The men ordered the Varangian once more to hand over his son so that they could lead him to the gods. The Varangian, however, replied, “If they are gods, let them send one among them to take my son. Why do you need him?” Now Vladimir’s men forced the entrance and killed them both, “and nobody knows where they put them.”27 The latter comment is not found in the predecessor of the Povest’ vremennykh let,28 but most likely reflects a wish at the time the Povest’ was compiled (ca. 1110) to locate their relics.

The account of the killing of the two Varangians in the chronicle is followed by lengthy reflections on the humiliation the devil suffered here through the martyrdom of the two Varangians, who are said to have “received the heavenly crown, with the holy martyrs and the righteous.”

The names of the two Varangians are not mentioned in the chronicle text but in the hagiographic tradition they became known and venerated as “Feodor the Varangian and his son Ioann” with July 12 (old style, July 25 present style) as their feast day. No separate Life of the two martyrs has been preserved from the early period. But so-called Prologue Lives
do, however, appear in the early redactions of the Russian translation of Byzantine synaxaria (in Russian known as Prologues), preserved in manuscripts from the thirteenth–fourteenth century onwards. Here the name of the son appears, whereas the name of the father, Feodor, only appears in later redactions from the sixteenth–seventeenth century. On the other hand the early version of the Prologue Life of their implicit killer, St. Vladimir, does seemingly reveal the name of the father, when it claims that on the location where, after the baptism of Vladimir in 988/89, the citizens of Kiev were baptized, “now stands the church of the Holy Martyr Tur or Tury, the first intercessor in favor of our salvation.” This can only refer to the Varangian father, and the name must be interpreted as his original Scandinavian name, corresponding to Norse Þōrr or Þōrir/Þūrir (Thor/Thorir/Thurir). That would fit well with his choice of Feodor (Theodōros) as his baptismal name.

If the report in the chronicle tale is true, that Vladimir Sviatoslavich in the 990s decided to build his first major church (and later burial church) on the site of their martyrdom, that would be our earliest sign of the veneration in Rus’ of the two Varangians. When, during excavations in 1908–1914 under the ruined church, wooden structures appeared, these were immediately thought to be remnants of the Varangians’ manor. Today, however, most archaeologists think that the Church of the Tithes was built on the site of a former pagan cemetery and that these structures are the remains of a chamber grave. Therefore the story of the church on the site of the martyrdom is most likely a later invention added when the Povest’ vremennykh let or its predecessor was compiled in the 1090s or 1110s.

By then, the two Varangians were already in the process of being replaced as protomartyrs in Rus’ by the two dynastic martyrs Boris and Gleb (d. 1015), as they have been since then. Nonetheless, in some early sources we still find the two Varangians singled out as protomartyrs among the Orthodox Rus’. That applies first of all to the source to which we shall now turn our attention: the Paterikon (or Book of Fathers) of the Kievan Caves Monastery.

The Paterikon of the Kievan Caves Monastery

This work is undoubtedly one of the best-known and most important religious, literary works of medieval Rus’. But it is also a work that has had a complex history, combining as it does texts that originate at different times and in different environments. In form it is not strictly a paterikon,
that is, sayings by renowned monks (fathers) of the monastery. Instead, to quote a leading scholar on the subject, Fairy von Lilienfeld, it is a “collection of stories and other texts for the praise of the monastery as a sacred place where so many holy fathers had lived.” Von Lilienfeld moreover found that these stories and texts revealed the Caves Monastery to be, “not only a stronghold of piety, but also of ‘the Constantinople connection,’ i.e., of the ‘Greek faith,’ opposed to the Latin one ...”

The *Paterikon*, as we know it today, is with a few additions based on letters exchanged between a former monk in the Caves Monastery but now bishop in Suzdal’, Simon (d. 1226), and his younger pupil, Polikarp. Polikarp, still a monk in the monastery, disclosed in a now lost letter to Simon that he was not satisfied with his humble position as monk but had ambitions to rise in the ecclesiastical hierarchy to the office of bishop—an ambition that in Simon’s view in itself made Polikarp unfit for the office. In a response, which became the fourteenth tale (*slovo*) in the *Paterikon*, Simon therefore tried to persuade Polikarp to stay in the Caves Monastery by pointing to the holiness of the place due to the many memorable and pious monks who had preceded them in the caves. As models for Polikarp to follow, Simon, already in this letter, added descriptions of the lives of a selection of these monks. To these descriptions he added a further fifteen “tales.” These not only convinced Polikarp to stay in the monastery but inspired him, even after Simon had died, to supply an additional number of tales about monks and events in the monastery, based on sources available to him.

The collection was copied throughout the Middle Ages, but like almost all written sources for the early history of Rus’ (with the exception of the now archaeologically unearthed birch bark letters), all of the many preserved manuscripts of the *Paterikon* are late, from the fifteenth century onwards. These can be grouped in a number of redactions of which two, made in 1460 and 1462 by another monk in the monastery, Kassian, are usually seen best to reflect the original collection. Of these two redactions it is the second Kassian Redaction from 1462, with its total of thirty-eight tales, that forms the basis of modern editions.

Although a late tradition claims that our two Varangian martyrs were buried in the monastery, none of the thirty-eight tales focuses upon them. Nevertheless, they are mentioned in passing in the *Paterikon*’s crucial fourteenth tale, which laid the foundation of the *Paterikon*. After rather lengthy admonitions to Polikarp not to seek worldly glory, Bishop Simon provides a list of monks of the monastery who had later become
The Christlike Varangians

While the mention in the *Paterikon* of the two Varangian martyrs is more or less accidental, other Varangians play a more substantial role not only in the composition of the *Paterikon* but also in the decisive years of the formation of the Caves Monastery, when the two later saints, Antonii (d. 1073) and Feodosii (d. 1074) were active. Basically, the Caves Monastery, according to the *Paterikon*, seeks its origin in St. Antonii’s decision to settle in a cave called the Varangian Cave. The focus of the compilers of the

This claim is interesting in two respects. First, the two princely martyrs Boris and Gleb are not mentioned as martyrs prior to the martyrdom of Leontii. Boris and Gleb, sons of Vladimir Sviatoslavich, were killed in 1015 by an older brother in the struggle for the succession after Vladimir’s death, and today many both in and outside ecclesiastic circles see these two princely brothers as the protomartyrs in Russian Christianity. That they are not mentioned among martyrs before Leontii was killed in the 1070s suggests that their cult, contrary to the opinion of many, did not get off the ground before the three sons of Jaroslav Vladimirovich (d. 1054), Iziaslav, Sviatoslav, and Vsevolod, in a late show of unity in 1072, came together with the ecclesiastic hierarchy to perform a solemn translation of the brothers’ relics to a new church in Vyshgorod. This translation in 1072 exposes their cult as a joint dynastic–ecclesiastic initiative, similar to what happened in other newly converted countries, when murdered or slain kings and princes like Olav in Norway and the two Canutes in Denmark were promoted as martyrs by comparable alliances between rulers and the ecclesiastic leadership. The late date of the Boris-and-Gleb cult also has consequences for the frequent discussion as to whether there is a link, one way or another, between the hagiographical texts of these two martyrs and St. Olav of Norway.

More important in the present context is, however, that the text proves that the two Varangian martyrs were indeed by the 1070s considered not only saints in and by the Russian Church, but they were also considered to be its first martyrs.
Paterikon is, however, not on this stage but on the transformation of this cave hermitage into a major monastery, and this only began with the building in the 1070s of the church, dedicated to the Dormition of the Mother of God. Therefore, it is to this later stage that the Paterikon devotes its first three tales, which formed part of Bishop Simon’s contribution. And it is primarily these three tales that are important in the present context.

In the first tale we hear of the miraculous role a prominent Varangian, called Shimon (Sigmundr?), came to play in the building of this church. The tale starts by listing Shimon’s family relations, at least as these were relevant in his Rus’ context,

In the Varangian land lived a prince by the name Afrikan, brother of that Jakun (i.e. Hakon) the Blind, who lost his golden coat fighting with Jaroslav against the ferocious Mstislav;44 this Afrikan had two sons, Friand and Shimon; after their father’s death Jakun [now back in Scandinavia] expelled both brothers from their lands. Shimon came to our pious prince, Jaroslav, who, receiving and treating him with honour, assigned him as senior to his son Vsevolod, and he received great power from Vsevolod [Grand Prince of Kiev 1076–93].45

In 1068, before attempting to fend off a Polovtsian or Cuman attack on Rus’, the three ruling princes and sons of Jaroslav Vladimirovich, Iziaslav, Sviatoslav, and Vsevolod, joined by Shimon, visited Antonii in his cave to get his blessing. Antonii predicted their defeat but promised Shimon that he would survive and eventually be buried in the church that would one day be built at the monastery. Wounded after the battle, Shimon turned his eyes toward heaven and saw a large church similar to one he had already seen in an earlier vision when he was threatened by shipwreck back in Scandinavia. He now prayed the Lord to save him through the intercession of his Mother and the venerable Fathers Antonii and Feodosii.

Soon after, Shimon told Antonii about his two visions. He also told Antonii that his father back home [in Scandinavia] had made a cross, on which Christ had been portrayed in “a new way such as the Latins venerate” (iakoze Latina chtut). Furthermore, his father had adorned this image of Christ with a girdle of gold and a golden crown.

When Shimon was expelled, he had taken the girdle and the crown from the cross. As he did so, he heard a voice from the image of Christ telling him not to put the crown on his own head but to bring it to a
place that had already been prepared. There, a church dedicated to “my Mother will be built by the venerable Feodosii. In his hand you shall give this so that it can hang over my altar.” Shimon also told Antonii that, with regard to the girdle, it had already appeared in the vision he had had when he was shipwrecked, where the envisioned church was measured by the girdle. Antonii praised Shimon and proclaimed that Shimon’s name hereafter was to be Simon.

At this point, the author lets Antonii summon Feodosii to receive the girdle and the crown. From this point onward, the focus is on Feodosii and Simon, who bestowed rich gifts for the building of the church. During a conversation with Feodosii, Simon asked him to pray for him, his son Georgij, and all his descendants to the last one. Feodosii promised to do so. Simon, however, refused to part with Feodosii unless he got this prayer in writing. Feodosii agreed and wrote him a prayer, and the author significantly added that, “since then it became the practice to place the same prayer in a deceased’s hands. Before that nobody in Rus’ had done so.”

In both the second and the third tale, the *Paterikon* returns to some of the themes linked to Simon, now only referred to in his capacity as Varangian.

In the second tale, craftsmen from Constantinople come to Antonii and Feodosii, guided by the Mother of God, in order to build “Her church,” as mentioned in the first tale. Ordered by her Son, the Mother of God had told them that she had already sent his girdle as a measure for the church. Together with relics to be placed in the foundation of the church, the craftsmen also brought an icon of the Mother of God, which, in the words of Antonii, “nobody can have given except She, her Son, the Lord God and our saviour Jesus Christ, whose girdle and crown has been brought from the Varangians as the measure for the width, length and height of this precious church.”

In the third tale, we find a similar reference to the miraculous origin of the church and the role Varangians played, when we read that even if you read through the books of the Old and New Testaments, nowhere will you find such miracles about holy churches as about this: from the Varangians and from our Lord Jesus Christ himself and from his praiseworthy, both godly and human image is the crown of Christ’s holy head. We have heard the divine voice from the image of Christ that has ordered the crown to be brought to the place made ready for it; and the heavenly voice ordered the measurement of the church, already seen before its creation, to be
made by this girdle. Likewise came the icon from the Greeks with the craftsmen together with relics of holy martyrs, placed under all the walls, where they are depicted over the relics on the walls.49

It should be noticed that these references to Varangians and the Christianity they represent are linked to Latinity, and it would be wrong to say that Shimon’s original Latinity played no role for the early author of the first three tales, but his view on this Latinity is far from negative, as von Lilienfeld would suggest it to be. Thus, despite his Latinity, Shimon is perceived almost as a divine messenger from both Christ and his Mother to Rus’ and to the Caves Monastery.

The two items, the girdle and the crown, which Shimon has taken from an explicitly Latin image of Christ, are adopted in the monastery as just as holy as the icon of the Mother of God, which was brought directly from Constantinople in the second tale. The girdle, as it is stressed in all three tales, was to be used as a measure for the new church. And, with regard to the crown, the choice of words in the third tale, “from the Varangians and from our Lord Jesus Christ himself and from his praiseworthy, both godly and human image is the crown of Christ’s holy head,” almost endows “Varangians” with a Christlike quality.

It is also noteworthy that, whether or not it was in fact a Latin practice to place a written prayer in a deceased person’s hands, the author stresses that this future Orthodox practice was introduced by and taken over from a Latin Christian.

Elsewhere in the Paterikon, Varangians and their faith are also linked with Latinity although this may represent a later chronological overlay. As mentioned above, the cave in which Antonii decided to settle was called the Varangian Cave. This is the subject of the seventh tale, where it is said that the cave had originally been dug out by Varangians. Who these Varangians were, for what purpose they dug the cave, and what they represented is not mentioned here.50 However, the thirty-third tale returns to the question, and here the name “Varangian Cave” is explained by a treasure once found, which was interpreted as a Varangian treasure because it contained “Latin chalices” (s’sudy latin’štii).51 True or not, this story seems to convey a thirteenth-century view that the origin of the Varangian Cave was indeed, like early Christianity in Rus’, linked to Christian Varangians and that these had used the cave before Antonii decided to settle there.

In one of the last and perhaps latest tales, the thirty-seventh, we find a further tale concerning the nature of the Varangian faith, where this is
seen as equivalent to Latinity, although now from an outspoken anti-Latin position. The tale is labeled “The Orthodox Prince Iziaslav’s Query about the Latin.” Here the Varangian faith is reputedly explained by St. Feodosii Pecherskii to Prince Iziaslav Jaroslavich. The attribution to St. Feodosii is, however, false. Rather it is the later abbot of the monastery, Feodosii Grek (1142–1156), who puts across the by-then-acrimonious Byzantine view on the Catholic Church. It may have been this tale that inspired Fairy von Lilienfeld to attribute anti-Latinity to both the Caves Monastery and to the Paterikon.

Concluding Remarks

In addition to the role Varangians played in the first half of the tenth century, when Christianity attained official status in Rus’ as reflected in the treaty Rus’ concluded with the Byzantine emperors in 944, other Varangians later came to play equally important roles in the formation of Christian Rus’: first the two Varangian saints and about a century later the Christlike Varangians.

We do not know for how long Christianity was able to maintain its official status after 944. It may have ended with death in 969 of the first Christian regent, if not ruler, Ol’ga, widow of Prince Igor’. While keeping contacts with Western ecclesiastics, Princess Ol’ga had consented to be baptized in Constantinople, probably in 957 but perhaps already in 945. Her son Sviatoslav (d. 972), however, assuming independent rule upon reaching his majority around 960, is reported in the Povest’ vremennykh let categorically to have refused his mother’s plea to be baptized, and when he signed a further treaty with the Byzantine emperor in 971, he did so by swearing his oath on his pagan gods, as his father, Prince Igor’ did in 944.

If Christianity still had a kind of status in society after the reign of Prince Sviatoslav, it did not save the two Varangians in 983, when they fell victim to Vladimir Sviatoslavich’s reputed pagan revival prior to his conversion a few years later. In this way, they became the emerging Rus’ Church’s first martyrs and were venerated as such.

As Scandinavians returning as Christians from Byzantium, the two Varangians appear to have been typical of those Varangians who one or two generations earlier had made the same journey and thus contributed to the formation of early Christianity in Rus’. When our Christlike Varangians made their impact, the situation was in many respects different. First of
all, Christianity had struck root both in Rus’ and in the Scandinavian homeland. In both places there seems to have been a growing awareness of differences between Greek Orthodoxy and the Latinity of the West. This is evident in the description of the Christlike Varangians in the *Paterikon of the Caves Monastery*. However, from the manner in which these Varangians and the two Varangian saints are presented in the *Paterikon* it is also obvious that this awareness was of little importance to the monks of the Caves Monastery, at least in the eleventh–twelfth century, when they held the early Varangian Christians in high regard, whether these represented the Orthodox Church, as the two martyred Varangian saints did, or they represented, as did the Christlike Varangians, the Latin-Roman Church. Moreover, it was to a large extent these Christlike Varangians whom the authors of the *Paterikon* saw as cofounders of Christianity as it was to be practiced in the monastery: as a blend of influences from both Constantinople and the Latin West, much as I think the term “Varangian Christianity” should be understood.

Finally, on a more general level, the role Varangians played in early Christianity in Rus’ in the tenth and eleventh century, before and after Vladimir Sviatoslavich decided to undergo baptism in 988/89, allows us to draw two important conclusions. First, the baptism of Vladimir Sviatoslavich was not such an epoch-making event as it has been made into, not just by the Church but also by the scholarly world—here it suffices to point to the many symposia that were arranged in many corners of the world, celebrating the millennium of Christianity in Rus’ in 1988/89, followed by a number of major publications. Secondly, the split between Constantinople and Rome in 1054 hardly had any effect on the role Varangians were able to play in the Christianization of Rus’.

NOTES

1 Originally the term Rus’ was linked to the organization of naval warfare in rowed ships among early Swedes with a presumed prehistoric form *rōþr*, while *Varangians* (Old Norse *Væringjar*) was used about persons enlisted by oath in some kind of commercial or military organization, see for instance John H. Lind, “Problems of Ethnicity in the Interpretation of Written Sources on Early Rus,” *Slavica Helsingiensia* 27 (2006): 255–57.

2 A sign of this change can be seen in some questions in a list of inquiries from the middle of the twelfth century, attributed to the monk Kirik (*Voprosyshie Kirika*) and put to Archbishop Nifont of Novgorod (1130–1156). One question concerns
those Orthodox people who bring their children to the “Varangian priest” [in Novgorod, to be baptized]. These were now said to be “dual believers” and were to accept six weeks’ penance. The question shows that it must have been quite a widespread phenomenon for the average Rus’ in Novgorod to go to the Varangian priest, see for instance, John H. Lind, “Darkness in the East? Scandinavian Scholars on the Question of Eastern Influence in Scandinavia during the Viking Age and Early Middle Ages,” in From Goths to Varangians. Communication and Cultural Exchange Between the Baltic and the Black Sea, ed. Line Bjerg, John H. Lind and Søren M. Sindbæk (Århus, 2013), pp. 358–59.


9 As late as one year earlier, 1095, at the consecration of an altar in the monastery, relics of Boris and Gleb (lit. sancti Glebii et socii eius) were placed in the altar; Josef Emler, ed., Fontes rerum Bohemicarum (5 vols., Prague, 1873–93), 2:251.

10 It is true that we find no traces of a similar Christian vocabulary in Scandinavia that is influenced from the East. One reason for this could be that Scandinavians were already acquainted with a Christian vocabulary in related Germanic languages through multiple contacts with Christian populations in the Latin West or the odd vagrant missionary. The Finns did not have the same opportunity to acquaint themselves with a ready-made Christian vocabulary in a related language, see Lind, Darkness in the East?, p. 353.


12 So named in the early Russian chronicle Povest’ vremennykh let (Tale of Bygone Years), ca. 1110, which is published in “Лаврентьевская летопись,” ed. Afanasii F. Bychkov, 2nd edn., in Полное собрание русских летописей 1 (Leningrad, 1926), cols. 30–31.


16 On this and the following see also Lind, Darkness in the East?, pp. 341–67.


20 Blöndal, The Varangians of Byzantium, p. 200.


26 “Лаврентьевская летопись,” cols. 32–37. The fact that both the oath by the Christian Rus’ envoys in Constantinople and the ratification in Kiev by the Christian Rus’ took place in a church dedicated to St. Elijah has led some to doubt the reliability of the account, and after scholars became aware that a St. Elijah church did exist in Constantinople, it was the ratification in a St. Elijah church that was put in doubt, despite the chronicle compiler’s seemingly precise knowledge of its location in Kiev, see for instance Oleksiy P. Tolochko, “Church of St. Elijah, “Baptized Ruses’ and the Date of the Second Ruso-Byzantine Treaty,” Byzantinoslavica, 71 (2013): 111–28. This is discussed in John H. Lind, “Christianity on the Move: The Role of the Varangians in Rus’ and Scandinavia,” in Byzantium and the Viking World, ed. Fedir Androshchuk and Jonathan Shepard (Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia, 16, Uppsala, 2016).

27 “Лаврентьевская летопись,” cols. 82–83. The text is also found in the predecessor of the Povest’ vremennykh let, the so-called Nachal’nyj svod (Primary Compilation), see Новгородская первая летопись старшего и младшего изводов, ed. Arsenii N. Nasonov (Moskva, 1950), pp. 130–31.

28 Новгородская первая летопись, p. 131.

29 A. A. Pichkhadze, V. A. Romadanovskaja and E. K. Romadanovskaja, “Жития княгини Ольги, варяжских мучеников и князя Владимира в

30 For discussion of this, see, in addition to Lukin and Vvedenskii, Adolf Stender-Petersen, “The Varangians & The Cave Monastery,” in Varangica, Adolf Stender-Petersen (Aarhus, 1953), pp. 139–50.

31 “идеже и нынѣ церкви есть святою мученикоу Тоурова, и тьи бысть прьвыи ходатаи нашему спасению,” Pichkhadze, Romodanovskaja and Romodanovskaja, “Жития княгинии Ольги, варяжских мучеников и князя Владимира,” pp. 305–6. That is the version in the earliest versions of the St. Vladimir’s Prologue Life; this is discussed by Aleksei Shakhmatov, “Как назывался первый русский святой мученик?” Известия императорской академии наук 6, no. 9 (1907): 261–64. Based on this and other observations by Shakhmatov and Stanisław Rożniecki, Stender-Petersen also discussed the possible link between this the church of the Holy Martyr Tur or Tury and the mention s.a. 1146 in the Ipatievskaja Chronicle of a “Tuerva bozhnitsa (chapel),” Stender-Petersen, “The Varangians & The Cave Monastery,” pp. 142–44, also referred to by Lukin.

32 Other interpretations have been suggested. These are discussed in Lukin, “Сказание о варягах-мучениках,” pp. 82–84.

33 At the time, the baptismal name was often, if not always, chosen so that it began with the same letter as the given name: Ol’ga/Helga–Elena/Helena; Vladimir–Vasilii; Ingegerd–Irina etc.

34 This and the fact that the Prologue Life, although clearly textually linked to the chronicle version of their martyrdom, does not not include the story of the church on the site of the Varangian’s house, made Pavel Lukin suggest that the chronicle text and the extant Prologue Life both depended on a lost Life, which he tentatively dated to the 1070–1090s, Lukin, “Сказание о варягах-мучениках,” pp. 91–96.
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The additions include first of all the largest by far of all the tales, the Life of St. Feodosii Pecherskii (tale 8) by Nestor, who became a monk in the Caves Monastery between 1074 and 1078. This tale is immediately followed by an account of the translation of St. Feodosii’s relics in 1091, also attributed to Nestor. While in the monastery Nestor also composed an early Life of the murdered sons of Vladimir Sviatoslavich, Boris and Gleb, and some scholars also link Nestor to the compilation of the Povest’ Vremennykh let.

There are several references in the Paterikon to a now lost Life of Antonii (d. 1073), who was the first monk to settle in a cave on the later site of the monastery. In his first letter to Polikarp Bishop Simon also refers to a, likewise lost, Old Rostov Chronicle. The prominent linguist and founder of modern chronicle research, Aleksei Shakhmatov, in his time (1907–1908) argued that Polikarp had at his disposal a lost Chronicle of the Caves Monastery that was also used when the Povest’ vremennykh let was compiled in the monastery ca. 1110. For the Paterikon, Polikarp, and Simon, see Lidiia A. Ol’shevskaia’s three articles, “Патерик киевского печерского,” “Поликарп,” and “Симон” in Словарь книжников и книжности древней Руси XI-первая половина XIV в. (Leningrad, 1987), pp. 308–13, 370–73, 392–96. They are all available on http://pushkinskijdom.ru/Default.aspx?tabid=2048.

Simon lists fifteen bishops by name and tells Polikarp that if he wants to know more he can take a look in the Old Rostov Chronicle, which will bring the number to more than thirty; “after them [those mentioned in the Chronicle] and to us [Simon] sinful it will, I think, be almost fifty.” This calculation suggests that the Old Rostov Chronicle must be dated to around the middle of the twelfth century. Simon’s purpose with such an array of successful monks must be to show Polikarp what a privilege it was for him to be a monk in a such a glorious monastery; however, it is difficult to see why this display of ecclesiastic success should not rather stimulate Polikarp’s ambition to become one of their kind.

(1015) to be “the sole native saints of Kievan Rus’” in the eleventh and the twelfth centuries (p. 74). This view has spilled over into Haki Antonsson and Ildar H. Garipzanov, eds., *Saints and Their Lives on the Periphery: Veneration of Saints in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe (ca. 1000–1200)* (Turnhout, 2010), where Boris and Gleb are repeatedly claimed to be “the first native [or “indigenous”] saints of Rus’” by several contributors: the editors in Introduction, pp. 9–10; Monica White, “Byzantine Saints in Rus’ and the Cult of Boris and Gleb,” p. 105; and Ildar H. Garipzanov, “Novgorod and the Veneration of Saints in Eleventh-Century Rus’: A Comparative View,” p. 117. Whereas our two Varangian saints fail to be mentioned.


44 This is mentioned in the *Povest’ vremennykh let* s.a. 1024, “Лаврентьевская летопись,” cols. 148–49.
45 “Киево-Печерский патерик,” p. 296.
46 “Киево-Печерский патерик,” p. 298.
47 “Киево-Печерский патерик,” p. 300.
48 “Киево-Печерский патерик,” p. 304.
49 “Киево-Печерский патерик,” p. 306.
52 “Киево-Печерский патерик,” pp.482–86. On the attribution to Feodosii Grek, see Gerhard Podskal’skii, Христианство и богословская литература в киевской Руси (988–1237 гг.) (St. Petersburg, 1996), pp. 294–301. Muriel HepPELL, in her translation of the Paterikon, suggests that this tale only came about as a reflection of “the strong anti-Latin sentiment in the Orthodox Church after the Council of Florence in 1439,” Muriel Heppell, The “Paterik” of the Kievan Caves Monastery (Cambridge, MA, 1989), p. xx.
Chapter Six

The Cult and Visual Representation of Scandinavian Saints in Medieval Livonia

Anu Mänd

MEDIEVAL LIVONIA, A HISTORICAL region corresponding approximately to present-day Estonia and Latvia, was incorporated into Latin Christendom comparatively late, during the German and Danish conquest of the late twelfth and the early thirteenth century. Livonia was Christianized at a time when the cult of universal saints dominated Europe. It is therefore not surprising that the majority of the churches built in the region from the thirteenth century until the Reformation were dedicated to well-known, generic saints: above all, to the Virgin Mary, the patroness of the land, but also to SS. John the Baptist, Peter, Nicholas, Martin, Michael, George, James the Greater, and so forth.¹

The church dedications certainly provide rather limited information on the cult of the saints in the region. However, our knowledge of the subject increases considerably when we include other types of textual and pictorial sources, such as calendars; information on the dedications of chapels, side altars, and chantries; records of guilds and confraternities; the visual representation of saints in art and artifacts, and so on. Unfortunately, the number of medieval works of art from Livonia is rather small (e.g., only about ten altarpieces survive, some of them in fragments), and there are also very few extant hagiographic or liturgical texts.² On the other hand, there are excellent archival sources for Tallinn (Ger. Reval), one of the three large Hanseatic cities in Livonia, which provide information on the side altars and chantries in the major churches of the city; on the church furnishings and utensils; on the religious practices of guilds and confraternities; and on the testamentary bequests to altars, masses, and saints’ statues. Similar records on Riga are considerably fewer in number and the medieval archives of Tartu (Dorpat) have been largely destroyed.³ From the rural parish churches, there is comparatively good information
on the altars and other furnishings of those in the Saare-Lääne (Ösel-Wiek) bishopric, thanks to the visitation protocols from 1519 to 1522, and on the Keila (Kegel) church in north Estonia, thanks to the account book from 1472 to 1553. In addition, there exist occasional references to side altars, chapels, and religious confraternities in some smaller towns. On the whole, however, information on the cult of the saints is extremely scarce and uneven, spatially as well as temporally (most of the data originates from the second half of the fifteenth and the first quarter of the sixteenth century).

Considering the geographical closeness of Livonia to Scandinavia and Finland, the intense trade connections and diplomatic contacts, and the fact that from 1219 (1238) to 1346 the northern part of Estonia belonged to the Danish Crown, it is not surprising that the cults of some of the Nordic saints reached Livonia and that the main center of these cults was the city of Tallinn. In the early fifteenth century, a Birgittine convent was founded in Pöide (Mariendal) in the vicinity of Tallinn, where the cult of Nordic saints was also likely to flourish. From Tallinn and/or the Birgittine convent, there is information on the veneration of St. Knud (Canute) of Denmark, St. Olaf of Norway, St. Henry of Finland, St. Eric of Sweden, St. Birgitta of Vadstena, St. Eskil of Strängnäs, St. David of Munktorp, and possibly of St. Magnus of Orkney. The amount and diversity of the information varies greatly: in the case of some saints (such as St. Olaf and St. Knud), their cult can be traced through the centuries and there also exist visual representations of them, whereas in the case of some others, nothing else is known besides the occurrence of their feast in a calendar. In the following, I will explore the textual and pictorial evidence for the veneration of the named saints, survey the associations or social groups who venerated them, and, if possible, indicate the changes and developments over time.

The Cult of St. Olaf in Tallinn

Olaf II Haraldsson, king of Norway from 1015 to 1028, who fell in the Battle of Stiklestad on July 29, 1030, became in the course of the following centuries the most well-known Scandinavian saint. His cult spread widely in the late medieval Baltic Sea region and beyond: churches were dedicated to him from Novgorod in the East to Amsterdam in the West and to Constantinople in the South. Hanseatic merchants, particularly those trading with Bergen and Scania, played an important role in spreading
his cult. There were guilds dedicated to St. Olaf not only in Scandinavia but also in Prussia (Danzig, Elbing, Königsberg), in northern Germany (Lübeck, Rostock), in the Low Countries (Deventer, Maastricht), and also in Tallinn. In the Baltic Sea region, St. Olaf became one of the patron saints of merchants and seafarers. However, he was also venerated by other social groups, including noblemen, craftsmen, and peasants.

The cult of St. Olaf probably reached Estonia soon after the Danish conquest in 1219, although one cannot rule out the possibility that he was also known there prior to that, due to the trading connections, in particular with Gotland. St. Olaf’s Church in Tallinn is first referred to in sources in 1267; the exact date of its foundation is unknown. In earlier scholarship, particularly in the writings of Paul Johansen in the 1950s, it was suggested that St. Olaf’s Church was erected by Scandinavian (Swedish) tradesmen and that it might have stood near the harbor as early as the twelfth century, prior to the foundation of the city. However, there is no textual or archaeological data to support this opinion. It is more likely that the church was erected around the mid-thirteenth century on the initiative of the Danish royal house, since its right of patronage belonged first to the Danish kings and, from 1267, to the Cistercian convent in Tallinn. Over time, the church came to be one of the two parish churches of the city (the other was that of St. Nicholas), and it was thoroughly rebuilt in the fifteenth century. Because of its high tower and the location near the harbor, it also functioned as an important landmark for seafarers.

However, as mentioned above, it cannot be excluded that St. Olaf was already known in Livonia prior to the Danish conquest. The Passio et miracula beati Olavi, a manuscript in the library of Corpus Christi College of the University of Oxford, includes a legend about two youths from Estonia (duo iuuenes de finibus Estonum), who had recently been converted and made a pilgrimage to the church of the blessed martyr Olaf at Nidaros. There, they reported about the growing cult of St. Olaf among the pagan nation and told a story about the father of one of the pilgrims who had been struck by a grave illness but was miraculously cured after praying to the saint. The father then underwent baptism and visited the Church of St. Olaf to make votive offerings. The whereabouts of the church are not mentioned in the text. The Passio et miracula beati Olavi was composed in various phases. This particular legend, found in no other version of the Passio, belongs to additions recorded in about 1180 by Archbishop Eystein Erlendsson and his team. The miracle collection was composed at the time of the institutionalization of the cult of St. Olaf.
It is not clear if this legend (or any other legend in the collection) mirrors any “historical truth”; rather, the primary aim of the compilers has been hagiographic propaganda—to promote the growing cult at Nidaros (Trondheim) and to suggest that it had spread broadly in the neighboring countries and beyond.

Regardless of whether the cult of St. Olaf reached Tallinn prior to or after the conquest of 1219, the date of the first mention of the church in 1267 is the earliest firm evidence for the veneration of the saint in Livonia. Together with the churches in Visby and Novgorod, it is among the earliest churches dedicated to St. Olaf in the Baltic Sea region. With certain reservations it can be claimed that St. Olaf’s Church developed into the main center of veneration of Nordic saints in the city: from at least the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, there were four side altars dedicated to St. Olaf, St. Knud, St. Henry of Finland, and St. Magnus (for details, see below).16

Images of St. Olaf Connected to St. Olaf’s Church in Tallinn

St. Olaf’s Church has been seriously damaged several times over the course of the centuries, most notably in the iconoclastic riots in September 1524 and in the devastating fires of 1625 and 1820; therefore, no medieval altar-pieces, statues of saints, pews, or other furnishings have been preserved. However, there is still one medieval image of St. Olaf in the church—on the boss decorating the stellar vaults of the easternmost bay of the chancel ambulatory (figure 6.1). The boss is carved of limestone and it has a rectangular shape. The saint is depicted in frontal position, seated, dressed in royal attire, wearing a crown and holding his well-known attributes—a battle-ax and an orb. Under his feet is a dragon with a human head—a symbol of the Antichrist.17 Different opinions exist about the dating and the original function of the relief. Some scholars have pointed out that the figure of St. Olaf looks somewhat rustic and that it must be older than the fifteenth-century vaults of the chancel, originating from about 1330 (the dating is based on a scroll inscribed with that year, held by an angel—the symbol of the Evangelist Matthew—on another boss). These scholars also assume that, due to its rectangular shape, it was initially not meant to be a boss but rather a decorative tablet above a portal or a niche.18 According to others, it was a boss made for the vaults of the earlier, fourteenth-
century chancel, and it was moved to its current position after the reconstruction of the chancel in about 1420–1425.\textsuperscript{19} Finally, according to a third opinion, which is based on the iconographic type of the saint and the dragon, the relief originates from about the same time as the new chancel.\textsuperscript{20} Thus, it is likely that the boss with St. Olaf was especially commissioned to decorate the innovative and therefore prestigious stellar vaults and installed in the easternmost bay, which is liturgically one of the most significant places in the church. It is likely that the altar of St. Olaf, which will be discussed below, was located in this bay and that the vaults with the boss “crowned” it.\textsuperscript{21}

Figure 6.1  The boss with the figure of St. Olaf in St. Olaf’s Church of Tallinn, ca. 1425. Photo: Stanislav Stepashko.
Another piece of art is the silver seal of the church, dated by scholars to the second half of the fifteenth century and naturally featuring the patron saint (figure 6.2). St. Olaf is depicted in semi-profile, standing, wearing a crown surrounded by a halo and holding a battle-ax and
an orb. The legend of the seal reads: *Sigillum sancti olaui ecclesiæ reuliensis*. The seal was an object with a great symbolic, material, and legal value and was regarded as a part of the identity of the congregation. The medieval silver seal was in use until the nineteenth century, when the church acquired a new one, also decorated with the figure of its patron saint.22

A third depiction of St. Olaf in connection with this church is found on a charter issued by twelve cardinals in Rome on May 3, 1509, promising a hundred days of indulgence to all Christians who visit the chapel of the Virgin Mary in St. Olaf’s Church on the feasts of the Assumption and the Presentation of the Virgin, of St. Lawrence and St. Olaf and on the dedication day of the church, and who make donations to the chapel.23 It is likely that the document was issued at the request of the church wardens who wished to promote the construction and decoration of the new chapel. The charter is illuminated with the images of St. Olaf, the Virgin Mary, and St. Lawrence (figure 6.3). The last-mentioned saint was prob-

Figure 6.3 The image of St. Olaf in the indulgence charter from 1509. Photo: Stanislav Stepashko.
ably depicted and included in the list because he was the patron of another chapel in St. Olaf’s Church. Because of the popularity of St. Lawrence in the Archdioceses of Lund and Uppsala, the dedication of a chapel to him at St. Olaf’s Church can be another indication of the Scandinavian influence.

St. Olaf and the Tallinn Guilds

The cult of Scandinavian saints was also strongly promoted by Tallinn guilds. The oldest guilds in the city were those of St. Canute (Knud) and St. Olaf, mentioned in 1326 and 1341, respectively. In these records, both associations are referred to as house owners, meaning that they had to be comparatively wealthy. Scholars generally agree that the history of these guilds dates back to the thirteenth century, but due to the lack of documents from that time it is impossible to ascertain the exact time of their foundation or to investigate their initial membership. It is likely that in their earlier stage of development, St. Canute’s and St. Olaf’s guilds united people of different social status and occupation, offering mutual protection and also organizing social life and religious practices. Later, in the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, in the context of the sharpening of social and ethnic divisions, the membership of the guilds became more specialized. In about the mid-fourteenth century, the merchants decided to establish their own association, left the older guilds and founded the Great Guild (until the late fifteenth century known as the Kindergilde). After that, the guilds of St. Canute and St. Olaf developed into umbrella organizations for craftsmen. St. Olaf’s guild became the less prestigious of the two, uniting mainly occupations which involved as much muscle as skill, such as masons, carpenters, rope makers and various carriers, but also butchers, furriers, coopers, and others. The ethnic factor should be mentioned as well, especially because it was closely intertwined with social status. The upper social layers, including the merchants of the Great Guild, were almost exclusively of German origin, whereas among the craftsmen there were also Scandinavians (mainly Swedes) and Estonians. The non-German element in St. Olaf’s guild was probably much larger than in St. Canute’s guild, which united more prestigious crafts. In the statutes of St. Canute’s guild, there is a mid-fifteenth-century stipulation which draws a boundary between their membership and that of St. Olaf’s guild and reflects the superiority of the former over the latter: at the time of the drinking feasts, it was forbidden to invite members of St. Olaf’s
guild as guests, punishable by a fine of five pounds of wax. In 1508, St. Canute’s guild decided that non-Germans would no longer be admitted as members (which probably increased the admission of Estonians into St. Olaf’s guild). It is difficult to ascertain how strictly these norms were actually followed, but in practice, the demarcation line between the two associations was not as rigid, at least not prior to the aggravation of social tensions in the sixteenth century.

St. Olaf’s guild was dissolved at the end of the seventeenth century, and most of its members were admitted to St. Canute’s guild, which then became the sole representative of the craftsmen in the lower city. Unfortunately, the archives of St. Olaf’s guild have not been preserved and thus there is not much information on the guild activities during the Middle Ages, including religious practices. However, as is characteristic of medieval guilds in general, this guild’s patron saint was depicted on various symbolic objects, such as the guild seal, of which several impressions have survived. The seal, dated to the first half of the fourteenth century, depicts St. Olaf seated on a throne, holding a battle-ax and a cylindrical host pyx topped with a cross. Under his feet lies a defeated warrior with a helmet, who, similarly to the human-headed dragon, represents the Antichrist.

The halls of all three major guilds were situated on the same street—the Long Street (lange strate, present-day Pikk)—a major traffic route from the harbor to the city center. The guild halls were not only the centers of social life for their members, but were used for other purposes as well (e.g., for weddings and assemblies and for the storage of goods). The appearance and location of the building was an indicator of the rank and wealth of an association and it formed a part of its social and religious identity. Therefore, the guilds paid great attention to the maintenance and decoration of their halls; the façade in particular was loaded with various symbols. For the St. Canute’s and St. Olaf’s guilds, it was natural to express their identity and to manifest their ownership through the visual representation of their patron saint. Indeed, on the gable of the façade of the ante-hall (vorhus) of St. Olaf’s Guildhall (Pikk St. 24), one can still see a sixteenth-century rectangular limestone relief of St. Olaf, which reminds the viewers of the former owner of the house (figure 6.4). The king is depicted in front view, holding a battle-ax in his right hand and a scepter in his left, and standing on a human-headed dragon. The representation of St. Olaf had multiple functions: to demonstrate the ownership of the guild, to manifest the saint’s protection over the building and the guild members, and to evoke prayers.
The veneration of St. Olaf in Tallinn was certainly not limited to the members of this guild and to the congregation and supporters of St. Olaf’s Church; the cult had a much larger basis. The wealthiest and most powerful guild in the city, the Great Guild of the merchants, had four altars altogether, two in each of the parish churches, and one of these was the altar of St. Olaf in St. Olaf’s Church. However, the guild was not the founder of the altar, which is first referred to in a charter of 1346, according to which Johannes de Bremen, a city councilor of Tallinn, held a right of patronage over a chantry at the altar of St. Olaf, founded by another
city councilor, the late Johannes Masche. It is possible that the altar was already established in about 1325 when Masche donated sixty silver marks to St. Olaf’s Church for a mass to be held for his soul and the souls of his parents. Masche apparently had no sons and therefore the right of patronage passed to his colleague, Johannes de Bremen, and later on (it is not known exactly when) to the merchants’ guild, which had very close connections to the city council.

In the medieval account book (1425–1532) of the aldermen of the Great Guild, records on St. Olaf’s altar occur from 1440 onwards. It turns out the guild had new candles made for the altar at least four times a year: for St. Olaf’s day, All Saints, Christmas, and Easter. According to the decision from 1457, the Great Guild began to keep three identical account books for its charitable suborganization, the Table Guild, in which the rents for the poor table and for three guild altars, including that of St. Olaf, had to be written down.

The Great Guild was not the only association supporting and maintaining this altar—the city council also contributed. However, since the city council regularly paid for the morning mass, in various city books, the altar is occasionally also referred to as that of the morning mass (fromis‐ sen altar) or as the altar of the morning mass of St. Olaf, which has sometimes made it difficult to recognize the connection between them. The altar is mentioned for the last time in the register of the income from the side altars of Tallinn, compiled by the order of the city council in 1525 soon after the Reformation. According to the list, as many as four priests used to serve at this altar, and the annual salary of each of them had reached twelve marks of Riga. This indicates that the altar was among the wealthiest in St. Olaf’s Church. One of the reasons for the strong veneration of St. Olaf among the mercantile elite of Tallinn was probably the fact that in the late medieval Baltic Sea region (or, even more broadly, the Hanseatic region), the saint had developed into one of the beloved protectors of merchants and seafarers, and he was widely venerated as such.

It is not known if the guild of St. Olaf was also among the benefactors of the altar discussed above. On the one hand, it is likely that the guild had its own altar (if not two, as in the case of St. Canute’s guild; see below) and the one dedicated to its patron saint would be the most logical choice. However, since the archives of St. Olaf’s guild have not been preserved and information on the guild altar(s) is not revealed in any of the city books, it is not possible to find out whether or not the guild indeed
supported St. Olaf’s altar. There was also no other side altar dedicated to St. Olaf in the churches of Tallinn. The only known connection between St. Olaf’s guild and a side altar is contained in the register from 1525, according to which the guild used to pay eighteen marks a year to the altar of St. Anne, located in front of the Sacrament. In St. Nicholas’ Church, the guild is known to have supported the Corpus Christi Mass. St. Olaf’s guild also had connections to the Dominican friary’s church, which was dedicated to St. Catherine, but records of their financial support never mention an altar or a chantry. But even if the guild did not have an altar dedicated to its patron saint, the visual sources discussed above prove that the guild held St. Olaf in high esteem and that he was an important identity marker for the association.

No medieval inventory lists survive from St. Olaf’s Church; thus it is not known how this particular side altar was decorated (with an altarpiece, a single statue, or a reliquary?) or whether there were any statues of saints placed at the walls and pillars. The earliest surviving inventory list was composed some years after the Reformation, in 1527, by order of the city council. This inventory mentions a silver statue of St. Olaf, weighing twenty marks minus three Lot (ca. 4120 grams). There is no indication of whether this statue had in Catholic times stood on the high altar, on St. Olaf’s altar, or perhaps in a special niche in the wall, and whether it had contained any relics.

The position of St. Olaf as a highly venerated and popular saint in Tallinn is also confirmed by calendars. The best source for studying the different degrees of liturgical feasts in the city is a Martyrology of Belinus de Padua, printed in Venice in 1509, that most probably originates from the Tallinn Dominican friary. The handwritten remarks added to this Martyrology enable us to reconstruct the local degrees of feasts. One of these additions is the feast of St. Olaf on July 29, which is marked with duplex, i.e., the second highest degree. Since this feast is typically not found in Dominican calendars or in those of the Germans dioceses, its presence here indicates the significance of the saint in the local context, which in its turn comes to influence the local Dominican liturgy. It is also worth remembering that the Dominican convent in Turku (Åbo), which had links to Tallinn, was dedicated to St. Olaf.

There is also another calendar that most likely originates from late medieval Tallinn: it is contained in a medical-astrological manuscript from the first half of the sixteenth century, written in Middle Low German and kept in the National Library of Latvia in Riga. In this calendar, the feasts
are differentiated simply by black and red ink: among the thirty-six feasts written in red, there is also the feast of Olaf *konnyck* on July 29.\textsuperscript{50}

For today’s researchers, the best-known (and the most frequently reproduced) visual representation of St. Olaf in Tallinn is the carved figure of the saint standing in the wing of the high altarpiece of the Church of the Holy Spirit (figure 6.5). This altarpiece, completed in 1483, is, above all, famous for the fact that it is one of the three documented masterpieces produced in the workshop of Bernt Notke in Lübeck.\textsuperscript{51} There can be at least two explanations for the inclusion of the figure of St. Olaf

Figure 6.5  Figure of St. Olaf in the altarpiece of the Church of the Holy Spirit in Tallinn, 1483. Photo: Stanislav Stepashko.
in its iconographic program: first, the altarpiece was commissioned by the city council, who actively promoted the cult of St. Olaf; and second, the hospital church of the Holy Spirit was located in the parish of St. Olaf. For the other parish—that of St. Nicholas—St. Olaf was seen as a rival, and this is probably the reason why one cannot find the figure of this otherwise popular saint in the magnificent high altarpiece of St. Nicholas’ Church.52

Thus far, I have studied the cult of St. Olaf on the level of social groups (such as merchants and craftsmen) and associations (such as the guilds and the city council). However, the sources also allow us to study the religious preferences of some private individuals. In 1516, the knight Hennink Passow (also Parssow) made his will in Tallinn. He was a Danish vassal, formerly in the service of the Teutonic Order, the lord of the Lagedi and Kolga manors in northern Estonia, and he also owned real estate in Tallinn, including a house on Pikk Street. He was one of the very few noblemen who became a member of the Great Guild. In his will, Passow expressed the wish to be buried in St. Olaf’s Church and bequeathed fifty marks, his horse, armor, sword, and saddle to the new (i.e., St. Mary’s) chapel of the church, so that “the holy lord St. Olaf would pray to God for me” (dat de hilghe her sunte Olaf ghot vor my bidden mach).53 Of course, it cannot be ascertained if his affection toward the saint was influenced by his Scandinavian origin or by the general popularity of the saint in the city, including among his fellow guildsmen. However, this example, as well as the evidence presented above, indicates that St. Olaf was venerated by various social layers and ethnic groups: by noblemen, merchants, artisans, and clerics, by people of German, Scandinavian, and Estonian origin.

The Cult of St. Olaf in Rural Parishes

The cult of St. Olaf was not limited to Tallinn, but can also be traced in coastal Livonia and on the islands (figure 6.6), that is, in the areas where the population included Swedes and/or where there were strong trade connections with Scandinavia, most notably with Gotland.54

The only other church dedicated to St. Olaf in addition to that in Tallinn is the church on the island of Vormsi (Swed. Ormsö). The oldest part of the church is the chancel, which has been dated by scholars to about 1400. The present nave was built in 1632. It is not known if the church of 1400 was the first one at that place or if there had also existed an earlier one, perhaps of wood.55
On the island of Saaremaa (Ger. Ösel), in the westernmost parish, Kihelkonna, there was an altar of St. Olaf in the parish church, referred to in a visitation protocol from 1522. The same record also mentions a chapel, where the chest of a guild was kept, to which the peasants had a key. The Kihelkonna parish church was dedicated to St. Michael, but the record can perhaps be interpreted such that not only a side altar but also the chapel, as well as the guild, bore the name of St. Olaf. The people of Saaremaa had close trade connections to Gotland, and it is known that there was a harbor in Kihelkonna in the Middle Ages. Thus, it cannot be excluded that there existed a guild of St. Olaf uniting local peasants and seafarers.

The medieval visual evidence likewise originates from the islands. A small wooden figure of St. Olaf (figure 6.7), most likely produced in Lübeck in about 1490, has been preserved from the church on the island of Ruhnu (Swed. Runö). The hands of the king have been lost, so that it is not known what he was holding, but there is a fragmentary dragon at
his feet. If the king is wearing armor, it is well hidden by a large red cloak. Thus, the sculpture emphasizes the royalty of the saint and not his image as a warrior. The present wooden church in Ruhnu was built in the 1640s; thus, the sculpture must have originated from an earlier chapel or have been brought to the island from somewhere else. From medieval times until 1944, the island was inhabited mainly by Swedes; thus it is not surprising that the church possessed a representation of St. Olaf.

Figure 6.7 Figure of St. Olaf from the island of Ruhnu, ca. 1490. National History Museum of Latvia. Photo: Merike Kurisoo.
In the Saaremaa Museum in the town of Kuressaare (Arensburg) there are two wooden figures from about the 1420s that represent holy kings. One of them, wearing a hat, has lost both of his arms; the other wears a crown and holds a round object (an orb or a ciborium?) in his left hand (the right arm is missing and the feet are damaged). It is not known from which church and altarpiece they originate. The damage and the lack of attributes have not enabled scholars to identify the holy kings with certainty; it has been suggested that they belonged to a group of the Three Magi. However, one should also consider the possibility that the figure with the crown and the round object represents St. Olaf. He is not looking downwards like a Magi admiring the infant Jesus. This naturally raises the question about the identity of the first king. Are we dealing here with the only known case in Estonia in which the two (or even three) Scandinavian holy kings have been represented together? An argument against this interpretation is that it seems unlikely that St. Knud (or St. Eric) would have been depicted without a crown, simply wearing a hat. The problem remains to be solved by future studies.

In post-medieval written sources, mainly from the seventeenth century, some chapels of St. Olaf have been recorded in the coastal parishes of western and northwestern Estonia and on the islands. It is probable that the history of at least some of them reaches back to the Middle Ages. One of these was St. Olaf’s chapel on the lands of the Saastna manor in Karuse parish. A visitation protocol from 1593 reports about the “idolatry” that was going on there, attracting people from Gotland, Saaremaa, and Kurland. In 1647 the chapel is described as one of the places where the heathen practices are most vigorous in Estonia. In 1692, the pastor of Karuse writes about an old devotional site—a statue that had previously stood at the seaside, erected by “the papists” for the protection of travelers. He complains that although the pillar with the statue was torn down after the Reformation, the peasants still make pilgrimage to its site, and bring offerings on St. Olaf’s eve.

From 1644 a record survives of a chapel in Väike-Lähtru in the parish of Martna, where the peasants used to gather annually on St. Olaf’s day to “practice idolatry.” The custom is reported to have continued even after the Great Northern War (1700–1721).

The present wooden chapel of St. Olaf at Nõva most probably originates from the eighteenth century, but it had an earlier predecessor, mentioned at the end of the seventeenth century. It has been assumed that the history of the Swedish population in this area reaches back to the Catholic
period. Until 1653 Nõva belonged to the Lääne-Nigula parish, but in that year it became part of the parish of Risti in Harjumaa.65

In 1627, a wooden chapel of St. Olaf is mentioned at Kärdla, on the island of Hiiumaa (Swed. Dagö).66 This chapel (and another one at Kõpu, patron saint not mentioned) belonged to the Reigi church. It is not known how far back its history reached.

On the islands of Suur-Pakri and Väike-Pakri (Swed. Rågöarna), located near the northwestern coast, there were wooden chapels, dedicated to St. Olaf, which were replaced with stone ones in the nineteenth century.67 It is not known when the first chapels were erected on the islands.

Finally, at the top of the Sõrve peninsula in the southwestern Saaremaa, a shoal in the sea not far from the Saare chapel has been called by the name of the saint—Olafgrund. The patron saint of this medieval chapel is not mentioned in the sources, but there is a possibility that it was St. Olaf.68

Thus, it seems that some of the chapels listed in this section could have originated from the Middle Ages, while others were erected in the early modern era, mainly in the seventeenth century. Some chapels, even if in ruins, continued to be held as holy places by local peasants, who are reported in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to perform “idolatry” there, that is, to continue the folk practices of Catholic times.

The Cult of St. Olaf in Riga

In the Middle Ages, the saint was also known in Riga, the largest Livonian city, although his cult there was not nearly as strong as in Tallinn: no church, chapel, altar, or chantry was dedicated to him. The feast of St. Olaf (or in fact any other Scandinavian saint) can be found neither in the early fifteenth-century calendar, which is included in the missal of the Cathedral of Riga, nor in the breviary of the Riga diocese from 1513.69 However, one of the smaller guilds of Riga, probably of devotional character, bore the name of St. Olaf. The documentary evidence for this guild is quite scarce, as is generally the case with the minor guilds and confraternities. The references originate from the years 1441–1470, and are contained in the account book of the treasurer of the Brotherhood of the Black Heads.70 According to these laconic and rather uniform entries, St. Olaf’s guild rented the New House (i.e., the Black Heads’ house) for their annual festive gathering, the drinking feast (drunke), which took place on the feast of St. Olaf.71 Unfortunately, these records do not
reveal anything about the nature and membership of this guild. Thus, it cannot be ascertained whether the guild in Riga had any connection to merchants and seafarers like the guilds of St. Olaf in Prussian towns. The Black Heads’ house was also rented for similar purposes by other minor guilds and confraternities, for instance, by those of the Holy Blood and St. Mary Magdalene, by the company of the beer carriers, and some others. The annual rent paid by these associations was two to three marks, whereas St. Olaf’s guild usually paid no more than six or seven ferdings. This indicates that the guild was either a poorer or a smaller association than the others. There are no payments of this kind after the 1470s, when the Black Heads’ house was reconstructed. This does not mean that St. Olaf’s guild and the other minor guilds mentioned in the treasurer’s account book ceased to exist; more likely, they simply had to find another place for their annual gatherings. According to the new statutes of the Black Heads’ house (also called King Arthur’s Court) from 1477, the house was open to city councilors, burghers, all common merchants, and seafarers.72 This declaration probably indicates that the Black Heads wanted to draw a stricter boundary between the mercantile elite of the city and the “others,” and that the guild members of St. Olaf fell in the latter category. However, there could also be other reasons for the discontinuation of the rental payments in the account book. All the minor guilds and confraternities were dissolved during the Reformation.

The Cult of St. Knud (Canute) in Tallinn

In contrast to St. Olaf, whose cult spread widely in the late-medieval Baltic Sea region, the cult of St. Knud in Livonia seems to have been limited to Tallinn only. The main promoter of this cult was the guild of St. Canute, which, as noted above, was first mentioned in the sources in 1326.

In the territories of medieval Denmark and Sweden, there were over fifty guilds of St. Canute, for example in Visby, Ringsted, Malmö, Lund, and elsewhere. Initially, that is in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries, they were most probably merchants’ guilds (or, as suggested by Kurt Villads Jensen, crusaders’ guilds73), but, as recent research has shown, their later history varied greatly not only over time but also from town to town.74 The guild in Tallinn differed from those in Denmark and Sweden in the sense that it developed into an umbrella association for craftsmen.

Very likely, St. Canute’s guild in Tallinn originally united people of different social strata and only later developed into a composite guild for
craftsmen. As mentioned above, in the late Middle Ages, St. Canute’s guild became the more prestigious one of the two craft guilds, uniting the more highly regarded craftsmen, such as the goldsmiths, coppersmiths, blacksmiths, bakers, tailors, shoemakers, and so on. However, even in the late fifteenth and the early sixteenth century, it was not solely an association for craftsmen: some stipulations in its statutes also mention merchants and shippers. In the early sixteenth century, a society of merchants (koplude lach) turns up in the guild documents. Most probably it united retail traders who, from 1423, were no longer admitted to the Great Guild of the merchants. During the drinking feast at Christmas of 1508–1509, a nobleman and local authority—the commander of the Teutonic Order in Tallinn—was admitted to the guild. Thus, it is important to bear in mind that the membership and the nature of the guild underwent constant development. Only after the Reformation did the guilds of St. Canute and St. Olaf transform into purely occupational associations.

St. Canute’s guild was dissolved as late as 1920. Thanks to its long and continuous activity its archives have to a great extent been preserved. The main sources for the study of the medieval history of the guild are its statutes and the account book from 1437 to 1596.

The first question of interest is naturally the identity of the patron saint of the guild—King Knud the Holy, who was killed in Odense in 1086, or Duke Knud Lavard, who was murdered in the woods of Haraldsted in 1131. This question has also turned out to be rather complicated to answer in the case of some Danish guilds of St. Canute. Without going into detail, it is sufficient to note here that the cult of Knud Lavard was strongly promoted by his son, King Valdemar I, and the earliest guilds of St. Canute were dedicated to the duke. However, in the second half of the thirteenth and the first half of the fourteenth century, due to the changing political and religious circumstances, the cult of King Knud overshadowed the cult of Knud Lavard, and the guilds, too, began to venerate the king, thus replacing their patron saint, and founding altars and masses in his honor.

The written sources from Tallinn do not provide an answer to the question about the patron saint, because all the surviving documents mention simply Knud, not specifying whether it was the king or the duke. The identity of the patron saint is closely connected to the date of foundation of the guild, which, however, is not known. The boldest suggestion was made by a Baltic German scholar Heinz von zur Mühlen, who proposed that the guild was founded some time between 1238 and 1241, i.e., dur-
ing the last years of King Valdemar II, the grandson of Knud Lavard.\textsuperscript{79} In this case, the original patron saint of the guild could have been Duke Knud. However, nowadays scholars doubt that St. Canute’s guild (or any other guild) in Tallinn existed that early. It is more likely that the guild was founded in the late thirteenth century, in which case it is possible that the patron saint was, from the very beginning, King Knud.\textsuperscript{80}

This opinion is above all supported by visual evidence. There exist several symbolic objects and artworks that belonged to the guild, and all of them depict King Knud. The oldest of these is the guild seal, known to us from seal impressions, and dated by scholars to the first half of the fourteenth century (figure 6.8).\textsuperscript{81} There, the king is seated on a throne whose sides are decorated with lion’s heads, holding royal insignia—a scepter and an orb. The legend reads: \textit{SIGILLVM CONFRATERNITATIS SANTI KANVTI DE REVALIA}. The second piece of evidence is a colored pen-and-ink drawing from about 1486 on the title page of the guild statutes (figure 6.9). There, the king holds a scepter in his right hand and in his left a shield with the coat of arms of Denmark—three blue lions on a yellow background. This drawing most probably became a visual model for the

![Figure 6.8 Seal impression of St. Canute’s guild in Tallinn, first half of the fourteenth century. Photo: Estonian History Museum.](image-url)
later representations, because a similar type of crowned king with a scepter and a shield with three lions was followed in almost all the known depictions of King Knud in Tallinn until the dissolution of the guild in 1920.

Perhaps the only exception to this pattern is a rectangular limestone relief from 1516 (figure 6.10), which was placed in a gabled niche above the portal of the St. Canute’s Guildhall and stood there until the reconstruction of the building in the 1860s. There, the king holds an orb in his right hand but his shield is not decorated with three lions, but with a white cross on a red background, i.e., with the lesser coat of arms of Tallinn. Analysis of the multiple paint layers indicates that the earliest surviving layer can be dated to the first half or the middle of the eighteenth century and that the current one was applied after 1830. It has also been suggested that the relief could have initially been monochrome, but that the smooth surface of the shield indicates that it was more probably meant to be painted. In this case, the shield would most likely have been decorated with the three lions. In 1754, the Danish antiquary Søren Abildgaard visited Tallinn and made color drawings of several stone reliefs and other architectural details, including those around the portal of the St. Canute’s

Figure 6.9 Image of King Knud in the statutes of St. Canute’s guild, ca. 1486. Photo: Tallinn City Archives.
In his drawing, the king is polychromic (some of the colors differ from the current ones) and his shield is already decorated with the cross. It is likely that Abildgaard happened to document the earliest traceable paint layer, which has survived under the later ones. However, despite the lack of paint layers from the sixteenth century, there is documentary evidence which indicates that the relief was indeed originally polychromic: in 1520, the guild paid sixteen marks to the artist Michel Sittow for the painting of the decorative disks on the gable (i.e., on the façade) of the guildhall, and two marks to Reinolt for the painting of Knud. The context leaves no doubt that “Knud” refers to the limestone relief under discussion.

In about the mid-sixteenth century, two door-side stones were placed at the entrance of the guildhall. The circular plate at the top of one of them is incised with the coat of arms of the city, the other with the coat of arms of the guild (figure 6.11a). The latter is dominated by the
king’s shield with three lions. Above the shield, almost in the manner of the “helm” or “coronet,” one can see the bust of King Knud with a crown and a scepter. His feet and the lower end of his robe are visible below the shield. The king is seated on a throne whose sides form an architectural frame to the shield. The door-side stones of limestone remained in place until the reconstruction of the guildhall in the 1860s (figure 6.12); at this time their circular upper parts were moved to the back side of the house, where they can still be seen. Nowadays, there are no visible traces of polychromy on the reliefs; however, from Abildgaard’s drawing of 1754 one can conclude that at that time, they were decorated in color (figure 6.11b).

Finally, there survives a wooden sculpture of King Knud from about 1540, i.e., from the post-Reformation period (figure 6.13). It represents the king in fashionable Renaissance clothing. The figure holds a scepter (the upper part of which was lost in World War II) and a shield with three lions. Originally, the sculpture stood in the guildhall; nowadays it belongs to the Art Museum of Estonia and is displayed in the Niguliste Museum.

In addition to the extant works of art, the guild has also possessed other images of St. Knud, mentioned in the medieval account book. Although the entries there are very brief and generally non-descriptive, certain conclusions about the identity of the saint can still be made. In
1467, the guild paid six marks for (the making of?) a lion “below St. Knud.” The lion can undoubtedly be associated with the king. Even earlier than that, a silver-gilt statue of St. Knud turns up in the account book, first mentioned in 1446. The statue was kept in the guildhall and it was one of the valuable objects to be delivered to a new alderman. In 1495, the guild had a new silver-gilt statue of St. Knud made: it cost sixty marks and weighed six marks and three and a half Lot (1293.5 grams) together with the throne. The throne indicates that the figure was that of the king.

Thus, the extant artworks and also the reference to the silver Knud, seated on a throne, support the idea that the patron saint of the Tallinn guild was King Knud. Of course, it cannot be excluded that a similar process took place in Tallinn as in Malmö and some other Scandinavian towns:

Figure 6.12 Façade of the St. Canute’s Guildhall prior to the reconstruction in the 1860s. Drawing by Georg Friedrich Geist, first half of the nineteenth century. Photo: Tallinn City Archives.
the original patron saint of Canute’s guild was Knud Lavard, but in about 1300, he was replaced with King Knud. However, since the foundation date of the guild is not known, it remains a matter of dispute. It is also relevant to keep in mind that in the late Middle Ages, the cult of the two Knuds often became conflated, and some Scandinavian guilds simply used the name Knud. 91

In the late Middle Ages, St. Canute’s guild was a wealthy organization that had its own altar in both parish churches. The foundation of these altars cannot be dated precisely. The altar of St. Knud in St. Olaf’s Church is first mentioned in 1449, that in St. Nicholas’ Church in 1471. 92

Figure 6.13 Figure of King Knud, ca. 1540. Formerly in the St. Canute’s Guildhall, now in the Niguliste Museum. Photo: Stanislav Stepashko.
The latter was occasionally also referred to as the Virgin Mary’s altar, probably because it was decorated with a statue of the Virgin. According to the list of side altars from 1525, the guild used to support the altar of St. Knud in St. Olaf’s Church with twelve marks a year. At least from the fifteenth century, but probably also earlier, the guild regularly paid for the masses in honor of St. Knud in both parish churches, and for the intercessory prayers for the living and the dead. It is not known on which date the masses were celebrated. The payments for the masses ceased after the Reformation, which culminated in the iconoclastic riots of September 1524.

Although the liturgical veneration of St. Knud in Tallinn was brought to an abrupt end after the Reformation, the king remained an important symbol for the guild. The medieval seal continued to be used, the relief with the image of King Knud remained in place above the portal, and the guild commissioned a new statue of the king in about 1540. In the 1670s, the guild had a new seal engraved, again with the image of the king. In the mid-1860s when the guildhall was rebuilt, its new façade was decorated with two large sculptures of cast iron—Martin Luther and King Knud. Both of these were essential for the guild’s identity and self-representation. At that time, Estonia was already part of the Russian Empire, thus the figure of Luther was a visual testimony of the religious identity of the guildsmen. King Knud was an emblematic figure, symbolizing the long and continuous history of the guild. As the guild’s emblem, he continued to be depicted on various representational and prestige objects. In the silver collection that formerly belonged to the guild, there survive two nineteenth-century standing cups (from 1848 and 1860), engraved with the figure of King Knud, as well as a pendant shield from 1913, which was made for the 500th anniversary of the tailors of St. Canute’s guild and decorated with the king’s image in relief. In all these three silver objects, the king’s iconography follows the same pattern as the previously mentioned artworks: he holds a scepter (and in two cases an orb), but his most distinctive attribute is the shield with three lions. This pictorial tradition is characteristic of Tallinn: in the painting and sculpture of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Denmark, King Knud does not carry such a shield.

The Cult of Other Nordic Saints

St. Henry (Fin. Henrik) was, according to a legend, a bishop in Uppsala, who accompanied King Eric of Sweden on his crusade to Finland in the
mid-twelfth century and was martyred there. The centers of his cult were Nousiainen and Turku, where he became the second patron saint of the cathedral, after the Virgin Mary. Until the late fourteenth century, his veneration was mainly concentrated in the dioceses of Turku and Uppsala, but by the end of the Catholic era, he was also known in other Scandinavian dioceses.

Considering the geographical closeness between Tallinn and Finland, the economic relations, and the presence of Swedish and Finnish craftsmen and other inhabitants in the city, it is not surprising that the cult of St. Henry reached the southern shore of the Gulf of Finland.

In the parish church of St. Olaf in Tallinn, there was an altar dedicated to St. Henry. It is not known when or by whom it was founded: the earliest known record of it survives from 1405 in a book of the city’s rents. The record indicates that the city council either had the right of patronage over the altar or that the financing of the altar was organized through the council.

In 1442, when the merchant Gert van der Linden made his will, he bequeathed a capital of 300 marks to support a chantry in St. Olaf’s Church, the annual interest of which (18 marks) had to cover the running costs. From the later documents it becomes apparent that the chantry was connected to St. Henry’s altar and that the right of patronage over it stayed in the family. In 1449, the executors of Gert’s will, among them his nephew and heir Evert van der Linden, confirm that the annual interest for the chantry at St. Henry’s altar is 24 marks, and that Evert donated a missal for it, and the chantry priest (her Hinrick Ispinckrode) a chalice and a paten. In his will in 1455, Evert bequeathed his veroneken (veil of Veronica) to St. Henry’s altar. The last mention of the right of patronage in connection with the heirs of van der Linden occurs in the 1470s.

There is no hint in the sources of why the family decided to support St. Henry’s altar. Both Gert and Evert van der Linden were burghers of Tallinn and members of the Great Guild. Gert van der Linden originated from Westphalia, most likely from Dortmund. Evert was a son of his brother, the Lübeck merchant Herbord van der Linden. Evert had business partners in Lübeck, Danzig, and Narva.

In the municipal account books, there are regular entries about St. Henry’s altar until the first decades of the sixteenth century. Like several other side altars, it is mentioned for the last time in 1525–1527, when the city council made a list of the side altars and their income in preparation for its confiscation for the benefit of the Gemeine Kasten, established after the Reformation.
The only other piece of evidence for the cult of St. Henry in Tallinn is a reference from 1518 to a silver statue of the saint, which was given as a security to goldsmiths for a loan of 100 marks. The statue weighed about 1.35 kilograms and it was kept by the alderman in the guild's chest. The owner of the statue is not mentioned in the source, and it is thus not known if it belonged to a private individual or an institution. As in the case of St. Knud, there is no trace of the veneration of St. Henry anywhere else in Livonia.

In the subchapter about St. Olaf's cult in Tallinn, it was briefly noted that the Great Guild had four altars, two in each parish church. The second altar that belonged to them in St. Olaf's Church (in addition to St. Olaf's altar) was dedicated to St. Magnus. The altar and the chantry are first referred to in connection with the guild in 1426, but the time of foundation and the precise location in the church are again unknown. The account book of the Great Guild includes remarks about some valuables that were donated to the altar of St. Magnus, such as the silver foot of a cross, a chain with the Agnus Dei pendant and prayer beads. The altar is last recorded in the list from 1525, where it is falsely indicated that it had also been called the altar of St. Henry (i.e., confused with the altar discussed above).

In none of the written records about this altar is it indicated to which of the several saints called Magnus was it dedicated. In the two calendars that can be connected to Tallinn there are no feast days for Magnus. The calendar in the Missal of Riga includes the feast of St. Magnus of Anagni on August 19, but it was among the feasts of low degree. In the context of Tallinn, the cult of two other saints seems much more plausible: St. Magnus of Füssen, who was occasionally regarded as a fifteenth member among the Fourteen Holy Helpers and enjoyed popularity in the German territories, or St. Magnus of Orkney (Earl Magnus Erlendsson), who suffered martyrdom in about 1115, who was venerated in Scandinavia, and whose visual representations can be found in Swedish churches. Considering the fact that the altar was located in St. Olaf's Church and that the right of patronage belonged to the Great Guild who strongly supported the cult of St. Olaf, it cannot be excluded that the guild also promoted another Nordic saint. However, because of the lack of firm evidence, the question of which St. Magnus was the patron saint of this altar remains unanswered.

The cult of St. Birgitta of Vadstena (1303–1373) in the northern part of Livonia is, above all, connected to the foundation of the Birgittine...
convent in Mariendal (Lat. Vallis Mariae), in the vicinity of Tallinn, in the early fifteenth century. In the vernacular, the convent was known as the *sunte Birgitten kloster,* and the Estonian place name Pirita was derived from Birgitta’s name. The Birgittine houses were all dedicated to the Virgin Mary, but St. Birgitta was regarded as a copatron. This is expressed, for example, in a document from 1420 and in the inscription of the fifteenth-century seal impressions of the convent. The iconography of the seals is inspired by a Nativity vision of St. Birgitta (Revelations 7:21): the Virgin Mary and Birgitta are worshiping the Child, who is lying on the ground, naked and glowing. There is also a lighted candle, an ox and an ass, and the Virgin’s mantle and shoes, which she had taken off before giving birth.

The convent was founded on the lands of the Teutonic Order and was strongly supported by the nobility in northern Estonia (Harju-Viru). However, the new ecclesiastical institution also gained popularity among the city-dwellers, who actively made donations to the convent in their wills. A visual testimony of St. Birgitta’s veneration in Tallinn is her depiction in the reredos of the high altar of St. Nicholas’ Church (the figure of Birgitta is visible when the altarpiece is fully open), which was commissioned from the workshop of Hermen Rode in Lübeck and completed in 1478–1481. The figure of St. Birgitta is standing in the same row as St. Mary Magdalene, St. Gertrude of Nivelles, and St. Elizabeth of Thuringia. She is easily recognizable by her attributes—an open book and an inkpot.

A fragmentary calendar survives from the Birgittine convent; only the months of May and June remain. The calendar was in use from about 1474 to 1544, but was composed even earlier, perhaps prior to the 1450s. The fragment appears to be similar to the calendar followed at the motherhouse in Vadstena in the Diocese of Linköping. The feast of the translation of St. Birgitta on May 28 is marked there as *totum duplex,* i.e., with the highest degree.

The veneration of St. Birgitta reached other towns in the coastal areas of Livonia, too. In Riga, in the parish church of St. Peter, there was a chapel and a chantry in her honor, mentioned in 1495. In the Cathedral of Haapsalu (Ger. Hapsal)—the center of the Saare-Lääne bishopric—a canon founded a chantry of St. Birgitta at the altar of the same saint in 1521.

In the fragmentary calendar from the Pirita convent, three more feast days of Swedish saints can be found: the feast of King Eric on May
Figure 6.14 Figure of St. Birgitta in the altarpiece of St. Nicholas’ Church in Tallinn, 1478–1481. Niguliste Museum. Photo: Stanislav Stepashko.
18, marked with *totum duplex*, the feast of bishop and martyr St. Eskil (of Strängnäs) on June 12 (*festum simplex*), and the feast of confessor St. David (of Munktorp) on June 25 (*memoria*).\(^{125}\) For the last two, this is the only trace of their feast days being celebrated in Livonia. It is questionable if they were at all known outside of the Püerta convent.

St. Eric of Sweden, on the other hand, could have been more broadly venerated, particularly if one considers the Swedish population in the coastal areas of Livonia. The cult of St. Eric, which in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries remained largely within the Archdiocese of Uppsala, began from the 1430s to spread throughout Sweden and also elsewhere in the Baltic Sea region; in Danzig, for instance, there existed a chapel and a confraternity in his name.\(^{126}\) The latter can be explained by the fact that Danzig was, along with Lübeck, among the most important trading partners of Stockholm (as well as of Turku). The chapel of St. Eric in the Carmelite Church was erected at the initiative of the confraternity, which consisted predominantly of merchants of Swedish origin and those trading with Stockholm. The foundation charter from 1438 has survived in two copies, and one of these names St. Henry of Finland as a copatron. The altarpiece of the chapel also depicted both St. Eric and St. Henry.\(^{127}\)

Somewhat surprisingly, no information survives on chapels, altars, or chantries dedicated to St. Eric in Livonia. His feast can be found in the calendar from the first half of the sixteenth century, which most probably originates from Tallinn, but there it is not marked with red, that is, it was not a feast of high degree.\(^{128}\) In spite of the scarcity of sources, it can be assumed that St. Eric was known in Tallinn and perhaps also elsewhere in the coastal areas, at least among the Swedish population, although his popularity cannot be compared to that of St. Olaf.

**Concluding Remarks**

Although the territory of Livonia was rather small, it is possible to trace certain regional differences in the saints’ cults. These can be seen in the different dioceses with their individual liturgical calendars, the North versus the South, and particularly the islands and coastal areas versus the continental Southeast. With the exception of St. Olaf and St. Birgitta, the veneration of Scandinavian saints seems to have been limited mainly to Tallinn and the Birgittine convent in Püerta. Thus, the geographical factor, the commercial networks, and the presence of Scandinavian population
in Tallinn, in the coastal areas and the islands, must have played a decisive role in the spreading and promoting of these cults.

However, it should not be assumed that the veneration of Nordic saints reached Livonia only from the Scandinavian countries, Gotland and Finland. Especially in the case of Riga, there is a possibility that the cults spread there from several directions, including the important Hanseatic cities in Prussia, particular Danzig.

St. Olaf was undoubtedly the best known of the Scandinavian royal saints, and his veneration spread widely in the countries around the Baltic and Nordic seas. It is noteworthy that in Livonia he was popular in the major harbor towns (Tallinn and Riga) and in the coastal areas. This suggests that his cult was above all promoted by people dealing with seafaring and long-distance trade. However, by the late Middle Ages, Olaf had acquired the status of a universal saint and was venerated by various social groups: merchants and craftsmen, knights and peasants.

The veneration of some Scandinavian saints, particularly St. Olaf, could have been even more widespread in the northern and western coastal areas than is known so far, and presumably he was not unfamiliar in inland Livonia as well. It should not be forgotten that information on the patron saints of the side altars and chantries or on the religious guilds simply has not survived from most of the rural parishes and small towns. It is likely that especially in the Duchy of Estonia, which until 1346 belonged to the Danish Crown, dedications to St. Olaf and perhaps to some other Scandinavian saints were more frequent than surmised.

The main centers of the cult of Nordic saints in Tallinn were the Church of St. Olaf, the guilds of St. Olaf and St. Canute, and also the Great Guild of the merchants. For the guildsmen, their patron saints were important identity markers: the masses in the church and the rituals in the guildhall helped to create social cohesion and to strengthen common values. The images of St. Olaf and St. Knud were not only found in the sacred space but also on the façades of and inside the guildhalls and on the symbolic objects, such as the seals and silverware. The decoration of the gables and portals of the guildhalls shaped and influenced the local urban environment. The guildhalls, as important public buildings, were part of the symbolic communication of the time. They expressed the identity, social status, and religious beliefs of the owners. After the Reformation, when the liturgical veneration of the saints was brought to an end, St. Olaf and King Knud, as patrons of the guilds, retained their function as historical symbols, and their images continued to be displayed on the façades and representational objects.
NOTES

1 This article was written under the auspices of the research project no. IUT18-8, financed by the Estonian Research Council, and of the ESF EuroCORECODE programme’s grant “Symbols that Bind and Break Communities” (CULTSYMBOLS). For a general overview of the veneration of saints in the region, see Anu Mänd, “Saints’ Cults in Medieval Livonia,” in The Clash of Cultures on the Medieval Baltic Frontier, ed. Alan V. Murray (Farnham, 2009), pp. 191–223.


3 Information on the saints venerated in Riga can be found in: Hermann von Bruiningk, Messe und kanonisches Stundengebet nach dem Brauche der Rigaschen Kirche im späteren Mittelalter (Riga, 1904).


6 I use “Scandinavian” and “Nordic” as synonyms in order to include Finland, which during the medieval period was part of Sweden.

7 For a brief overview, see Mänd, “Saints’ Cults in Medieval Livonia,” pp. 209–11.


9 Ekroll, “The Cult of St. Olav,” pp. 58–61. It is noteworthy that, in several towns, the guild of St. Olaf united merchants and seafarers trading with a certain
Scandinavian district or town, e.g., the Schonenfahrer (travellers to Scania) in Maastricht, the Wiekfahrer in Rostock, and the Bergenfahrer in Lübeck.


(Tallinie) w XIII i XIV wiekach” [St. Olaf’s Church in Tallinn in the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries], in Ecclesia et civitas: Kościół i życie religijne w mieście średniowiecznym [Ecclesia et civitas: Church and religious life in medieval cities], ed. Halina Manikowska (Warsaw, 2002), pp. 192–93.

17 Anne Lidén, Olav den helige i medeltida bildkonst: Legendemotiv och attribut [St. Olaf in medieval pictorial art: Narrative motifs and attributes] (Stockholm, 1999), pp. 239–40. For different types of the figure under Olaf’s feet, see ibid., pp. 220–30.


20 According to Lidén, the boss can be dated to ca. 1430. Lidén, Olav den helige, p. 347.


24 The chapel is first mentioned in the mid-fourteenth century. Libri de diversis articulis 1333–1374, ed. Paul Johansen (Tallinn, 1935), no. 393 (between 1350 and 1360). According to a register of the side altars from 1525, the chapel had housed two altars. TLA, coll. 230, inv. 1, no. Aa 15a, fol. 7v.

25 St. Lawrence was the main patron of the cathedrals in Lund and in Uppsala.

26 Das älteste Wittschofbuch der Stadt Reval (1312–1360), ed. Leonid Arbusow (Reval, 1888), nos. 322, 526.


29 Margus, Katalog des Stadtarchivs Tallinn IV, p. LXXXI, § 75.

30 For example, the two guilds celebrated the annual festival of the popinjay shooting in common. Mänd, Urban Carnival, pp. 128, 133, 140. For the changing relations in the sixteenth century, see Aleksander Margus, “Rahvus- ja sotsiaalvahekordade teravnemine Tallinnas XVI sajandi esimesel poolel” [The accentuation of national and social divisions in Tallinn in the first half of the sixteenth century], Vana Tallinn, o.s. 4 (1939): 83–104.


32 In 1806, the house was bought by the Brotherhood of the Black Heads and connected to the Black Heads’ house on Pikk Street 26.


34 LEKUB 2, Reg. 1002, no. 843. See also Mänd, “Oleviste kiriku keskaegsest sisustusest,” pp. 7–8.

35 LEKUB 2, Reg. 844, no. 716.

36 TLA, coll. 191, inv. 2, no. 16, p. 41.


39 TLA, coll. 230, inv. 1, no. Aa 15a, fol. 5v (1518): “Sunthe Olewes der Vromisszen altar dar synt—4 prester thogeweszen. Eyn yslick hefft gehadt des yars—12 mrck.” Most frequently, the city accounts mention simply the payment for the morning mass and omit the word “altar.”


41 For example, they are listed as two different altars by Kala, “Tällinn naad ja katoliku kirik,” p. 156.


There was also another altar of St. Anne in the church, in front of the chapel of the Virgin Mary (Ibid., fol. 4v).

45 TLA, coll. 230, inv. 1, no. Aa 245, fol. 45v.


47 For the Turku convent and the other dedications to St. Olaf in Finland, see Jyrki Knuutila, Soturi, kuningas, pyhimys. Pyhan Olavin kultti osana kristillisystymistä Suomessa 1200-luvun alkupuolelta 1500-luvun puolivälille [Warrior, king, saint. The cult of St. Olaf as part of the Christianization of Finland from the early thirteenth to the mid-sixteenth century] (Helsinki, 2010), pp. 61, 65–66.


59 Raam, *Gooti puuskulptuur Eestis*, pp. 24–25; Karling, *Medeltida träskulptur i Estland*, p. 73, fig. 64, 75–76, 262–63, no. 8. They are still known as the “Holy king with a crown” (oak, h. 98 cm, inv. no. SM-295/K-77) and the “Holy king with a hat” (oak, h. 102.5 cm, inv. no. SM-299/K-78).

60 Karling, *Medeltida träskulptur i Estland*, pp. 73, 75.


63 EAA, coll. 1187, inv. 2, no. 5165, fol. 61r.


71 DSHI, coll. 120, no. 5, pp. 72, 85, 113; Mettig, “Über die St. Olavsgilde in Riga,” pp. 18–19.


77 TLA, coll. 190, inv. 1, no. 46 and no. 60. The statutes have been published: Margus, *Der alte Schragen der St. Kanutigilde*, pp. LXX–LXXXIV.
82 Nowadays, the relief belongs to the Art Museum of Estonia (inv. no. EKM S 298, measurements 61.5×38.5×14.5 cm).
83 A white cross in the red background was the only coat of arms of Tallinn until 1564: in that year, by orders of King Erik XIV of Sweden, three lions began to be used, first on the coins and then on other representational objects. Thus, from the second half of the sixteenth century onwards, Tallinn had two coats of arms, the greater with the three lions and the lesser with the cross. For details, see Ivar Leimus, “Einige Anmerkungen zur Geschichte der Revaler (Tallinner) Wappen und Siegel,” *Steinbrücke: Estnische Historische Zeitschrift* 1 (1998): 55–61.
85 Kurisoo and Aaso-Zahradnikova, “The Stone King Canute,” p. 182.
88 TLA, coll. 190, inv. 1, no. 60, fol. 31r: “It. noch an den papegoen bome gebuwet—6 mr. vnd den louwen vnder sunte Klute (!) de steit 6 mr.” It is not clear
from the context if the figure of St. Knud with the lion had anything to do with
the pole for the annual shooting of the popinjay competition or if the two expen-
ditures just happened to be listed in one sentence.

89 TLA, coll. 190, inv. 1, no. 60, fol. 8v. See also fol. 9v, 51v, 53r, 54r. In 1492,
it was recorded that the silver statue weighed slightly over two marks and four
Lot (ca. 470 grams), whereas in 1495, it was only twelve Lot (156 grams), i.e., no
larger than a badge (fol. 53r, 58r).

90 Mänd, Geselligkeit und soziale Karriere in den Revaler Gilden, pp. 64–65,
source quotation in notes 110–11.

91 Olesen, Die St. Knutsgilde und die heiligen nordischen Könige, pp. 32,
34–35; Wallin, Knutsgillena i det medeltida Sverige, pp. 49–51, 54–55.

92 LEKUB 10, no. 582 (“sunte Kanutes altare to sunte Oleve”); TLA, coll.
190, inv. 1, no. 2 (“to der vicarien S. Kanutes altar yn S. Nicolaus kercken”).

93 TLA, coll. 230, inv. 1, no. Aa 15a, fol. 8r: “Sunthe Knuthes althar bolan-
gende de broder des Knuthen gyldestauen—12 mrck des yars.”

94 The dedication of the masses to St. Knud is specified from the 1480s (TLA,
coll. 190, inv. 1, no. 60, fol. 53r, 54v, 61v, 63r, etc.), the masses without naming
the patron saints are recorded also earlier. See also Mänd, Geselligkeit und soziale

95 Soom, Die Zunft handwerker in Reval, p. 83, fig. 3; Margus, ed., Archiv der
St. Kanutigilde, fig. 3.

96 Margus, ed., Archiv der St. Kanutigilde, fig. 5.

97 Anu Mänd, Höbedakamber Niguliste kirikus / The Silver Chamber in St.
Nicholas’ Church / Die Silberkammer in der St. Nikolaikirche (Tallinn, 2002),

98 For St. Henry and his Vita, see Tuomas Heikkilä, Sankt Henrikslegenden
(Helsinki, 2009).

99 Das Revaler Pergament Rentenbuch, no. 410: “Desse mark geldes horet to
sunte Hinricks altaer to sunte Oleue.”

100 See also Das Revaler Pergament Rentenbuch, no. 574 (1418), 735 (1428),
740 (1428).

101 LEKUB 9, no. 911, p. 615.

102 TLA, coll. 230, inv. 1, no. Bl 1, fol. 1r, published in LEKUB 10, no. 566.
See also Das Revaler Pergament Rentenbuch, no. 1007 (1453): “Dit gelt hort to
erner vicarie to sunte Hinrikes altare in sunte Olaues kerken, dar uan de leenware
tohoert Euerde van der Linden vnde synen rechten eruen.”

103 LEKUB 11, no. 385. In his will the altar is anomalously called her Hin-
rikes altar, perhaps because of the first name of the chantry priest.

104 Das Revaler Pergament Rentenbuch, no. 1092 (1472): “[..] vnd dit
vorgescr. gelt denet vnd horet to eyner vicarie in sunte Olaues kerken by namen
sunte Hinriks altare, dat wandages salige Gerd van Lynden dar to gegeuen hefft.
[..] vnd de lenwar hijr van horet tho Euerde van der Linden vnd synen rechten
eruen.”

106 *Kämmereibuch der Stadt Reval 1463–1507*, ed. R. Vogelsang (Cologne, 1983), no. 2514, 2522, 2644, 2677, 2710; TLA, coll. 230, inv. 1, no. Ad 32 (1507–1533), fol. 10r, 17r, 21r, 29r, 36r, 42r, 52r.


109 *Das Revaler Pergament Rentenbuch*, no. 554.

110 TLA, coll. 191, inv. 2, no. 16, pp. 149 (1502), 163 (1508); Mänd, “Suur-gildi ajalugu kuni Liivi söjani,” p. 90.

111 TLA, coll. 230, inv. 1, no. Aa 15a, fol. 11r.


116 E.g., LEKUB 5, no. 911; LEKUB 10, no. 334, 582; LEKUB 11, no. 385, 395, 397, 442.


Mänd, *Symbols that bind communities*, p. 131, see also p. 259, fig. 25–26. As a sketch of the attributes behind the sculpture indicates, there has originally also been a quill in the ink-pot.

Paul Johansen, “Kalendrikatkend Pirita kloostrist” [Fragment of a calendar from the Pirita convent], *Vana Tallinn*, o.s. 3 (1938): 24–27 at 27.

Johansen, “Kalendrikatkend Pirita kloostrist,” p. 26, fig. 1 and 3.


The National Archives (Rigsarkivet) in Copenhagen, coll. Øsel stift, Registrator 2B (1520–1538), fol. 6r.

Johansen, *Kalendrikatkend Pirita kloostrist*, p. 26, fig. 1 and 3 (St. Eric), fig. 2 and 4 (St. Eskil and St. David).


Mänd, *Ootamatu leid Riiast*, pp. 72, 74, 80.
FROM THE TENTH TO the thirteenth century, the countries around the Baltic Sea were subjected to a process of Christianization that did its best to supersede the old pagan beliefs and worldviews, replacing them with a new Christian way of thinking. At the same time, some of these countries also became subjected to an equally zealous process of colonization that often set aside the old rulers and installed new ones together with new political structures. These processes taken together changed the identities of the local people dramatically, as paganism gradually was replaced by a Christian way of thinking and new political structures came into being. As a consequence (or perhaps rather as a part of the process) the people living in these regions felt an urgent need to reinterpret both their present and their past so as to make them fit into these new religious and political structures and emerging identities. Thus, histories had to be written (or rewritten) in order to reconstruct local history in line with the changes that had taken place (and were taking place) in the various regions.

This important process of rewriting history happened whenever a new territory became absorbed into Western Christendom—and it was not just history writing for history’s own sake (to recount what had happened). Rather, it arose out of a need to articulate their new identities and thus to proclaim that the inhabitants of the territory belonged within Christendom, not by their own merits, but because it was in accordance with the will of God and part of his plan for all mankind.

This rewriting of history among newly Christianized peoples was in a sense regarded as a continuation of the biblical narratives because it demonstrated that God was still governing and directing history. In this
way it has been argued, that “all history was regarded as the history of the salvation of mankind,” rendering a distinct theological perspective to an important part of medieval historiography. These medieval chronicles offer not only a unique insight into some very important periods of transformation in the history of Europe, they also offer a first-hand account of how different local “foundational stories” were constructed by the various authors within a Christian worldview.

One of the key elements in the construction of these Christian foundational stories was the need to promote local holy men, or “champion[s] of the sacred,” who played a key role in the transition from paganism to Christianity. They were, so to speak, living proof that the history of a particular region was in fact unfolding in accordance with God’s will, and they were therefore portrayed by the historiographers and chroniclers as truly holy men responding to a divine calling and thus on an equal footing with the holy men of the biblical narratives.

In the minds of these chroniclers, this way of thinking implied that newly Christianized peoples in the regions around the Baltic Sea had experienced some recent events that were in reality an echo or a reiteration of the biblical narratives, demonstrating that the history of the newcomers was also a part of God’s plan and the overall holy history that would eventually serve the salvation of all mankind. It has been argued that saints played a particularly important role in the creation of these local Christian myths or foundational stories by establishing, through their saintly lives, a connection between the local and the universal within the greater Christian world. In some cases, important and universally recognized saints’ cults would be drawn into the new regions to play their part in the process of Christianization at a regional or very local level and thus lay the foundations for the new religious identities of the local people. In other cases, new and local saints would emerge from within the local societies themselves through the rewriting of local history, thereby acting as connecting figures between the newly converted people and the established Christian world.

A third type of chronicles, however, seldom refers to any saints at all in the construction of a local “foundational story.” Instead, they used other literary strategies in their texts.

One such example is found in the chronicle of Henry of Livonia. In this particular text, the cults of saints only play a minor role, inasmuch as the chronicler only makes a very few direct references to any established saints or saints’ cults playing a part in the process of Christianization in
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these regions.13 This chronicle was written not long after the events it describes—actually, the later part of the chronicle seems to have been composed almost immediately after the events portrayed. As such, Henry himself was more or less a part of the events and thus became a player in his own narrative. This proximity in time obliged Henry to look for his “champion[s] of the sacred” outside of the well-established group of universal or local saints already acknowledged by the Roman Church.14 In line with the third type of chronicles, he rather picked his champions of the sacred from among the more recent figures who were playing their part in the contemporary process of Christianizing the pagan peoples in Livonia and Estonia, as witnessed by Henry himself. These were the characters Henry believed to be the key players in a process that was drawing these lands and their history into the overall history of Christendom.

Henry makes almost no reference to foreign saints playing a part in the process of Christianization in this particular region. One notable exception is, however, the Virgin Mary, who is portrayed in the chronicle as the supreme guardian of Livonia, intervening on behalf of the truly Christian people living among pagans and schismatic Russians.15 Henry has a very powerful description of how Bishop Albert, during the meetings of the Fourth Lateran Council in Rome in 1215, pleaded for the Pope and the assembled prelates to acknowledge Livonia as the land of the Virgin Mary and to throw their support behind the crusaders and missionaries who were risking their lives in Livonia as much as those who traveled to the Holy Land, the country of the Son. In the words of the bishop, “the Son loves his Mother and, as he would not care to lose his own land (terram filii), so, too, he would not care to endanger his Mother’s Land (terram matris).”16 Thus Livonia was not just a country among other countries—it was the country of Virgin Mary, the mother of Christ and thus was placed on an equal (or nearly equal) footing with Jerusalem and the Holy Land. In Henry’s mind, that obviously placed Livonia (and Estonia) on the highest level of holy places within Christendom. In his attempt to create for his own region the ultimate local foundation story and sanctified beginning, Henry ignores similar claims from other European frontier regions that they, too, should be regarded as the land of the Virgin Mary.17

Alongside his references to the Virgin Mary, there are some hints in the chronicle that might indicate that Henry actually intended to promote some upcoming saints (or protosaints) from within the ranks of missionaries and the newly converted locals in Livonia and Estonia. One example is the story of a monk named Siegfried, who lived among the Livs
in the parish of Holme, serving them as their priest. According to Henry, “Siegfried was most devotedly carrying on the cure of souls committed to him ... and, persisting in the service of God day and night, he imbued the Livonians with the example of his good manner of life.” In this, Siegfried might not have been very different from other priests working piously among the newly baptized in Livonia. What made Siegfried different is the miracle that allegedly happened when the monk died in 1203, after having for years carried on God’s work among his parishioners. Henry explains in his chronicle how the converts took the dead body of Siegfried to the church in Holme, as was the custom when one of the Christians had died. They also made him a coffin “out of good timber,” as the chronicler says, but immediately discovered “that one plank cut for the cover was a full foot too short.” The parishioners then tried to add another piece of wood to the board, only to discover “that the first plank, lengthened not by human but by divine skills had, according to their desires, been made to fit the coffin perfectly.” Siegfried was then buried and the jubilant people of the parish praised God “who worked such miracles for his saints” (qui in sanctis suis talia facit miracula). As can be seen from the chronicle, Henry carefully underlined Siegfried’s presumed sanctity and his acclamation as such by the parishioners (and also by the chronicler himself). Nothing, however, is known from other sources about Siegfried’s possible saintly status and most likely no saint’s cult ever emerged around this apparently holy man.

At a later stage in the chronicle, Henry makes another reference to a possible emerging local cult of saints that seemingly leads to some sort of formal acknowledgment within the Church of Riga—at least for a brief period of time in the early thirteenth century. At the end of his chronicle Henry explains that a papal legate, William of Modena, in 1225 visited the church of Üxküll with the purpose of venerating the two first bishops of Livonia, Meinhard and Bertold. Earlier in the chronicle Henry had described “the bishops Meinhard and Berthold, of whom the first was a confessor and the second a martyr who ... was killed by the same Livonians” (episcoporum Meynardi et Bertoldi, quorum primus confessor, secundus martyr,..., ad eisdem Lyvonibus occisus occubuit). That Henry actually considered the two bishops worthy of a liturgical celebration and veneration that normally only befell acknowledged saints becomes apparent when he describes how William recalled “the memory of the first holy bishops” (ubi primorum sanctorum episcoporum memoriwm commemorans). The use of the expression “memoriam commemorans” seems to me
to indicate that Henry is in fact referring to a liturgical celebration of the deceased bishops, thereby acknowledging them as saints. The narrative of the chronicle might thus be viewed as an attempt from Henry’s side and (perhaps also from the Rigan Church) to promote the two bishops as official saints within the Roman Church, in the hope that the visit of the papal legate might promote their case and thus secure for the Livonian Church a properly sanctified beginning through the promotion to saintly status of Meinhard and Bertold. A peculiar element in this, however, is the absence of any miraculous deeds by the two bishops in the chronicle of Henry of Livonia. Henry does not refer to any miracles that might be associated with Meinhard and Bertold, though such accounts would certainly strengthen their saintly candidacy. Scholars have pointed out that there were in fact some known miracle stories associated with both bishops. These are found in works contemporary with Henry’s chronicle, for example the work of Arnold of Lübeck, who wrote around 1210, and the later Livonian Rhymed Chronicle from approximately 1290. These texts may represent contemporary and well-known miracle narratives associated with these two bishops that were circulating at the time of Henry’s writing. The Livonian Rhymed Chronicle claims that the piety of Meinhard, who “gave all his food to the poor,” led to the miraculous restoration of dwindling food supplies in a time of famine, thus attributing miracles to the saint during his lifetime. The chronicle of Arnold of Lübeck, on the other hand, describes Bertold as a martyr and explains that the dead bishop, who had been killed in a hard-fought battle between crusaders and the Livs in the summer of 1198, was found the next day lying on the battlefield with his body well preserved and completely unaffected by the weather and by roaming animals. According to Arnold, all the other corpses on the battlefield were already decaying, infested as they were with flies and maggots because of the very warm weather. Albert also claims that Bertold was buried in the Cathedral of St. Mary in Riga, but that was obviously an error inasmuch as we know from other sources that he was not moved from his initial resting place in the church of Üxküll to the Cathedral of Riga until much later, in the fourteenth century. Only at this time do we know for certain that Bertold had been laid to rest in the most important church in Livonia together with Bishop Meinhard. This “translation” of both the dead bishops also seems to indicate that they were in fact venerated as saints among the local congregations.

These narratives from the various sources lend some support to the idea that the first two bishops of the Livonian Church may in fact
have been venerated as saints during the early years of the Rigan Church. Apparently, however, they were soon superseded by other official saints in the liturgy and calendars of the churches in the provinces of Livonia and Estonia, and thus they left no lasting imprint on the foundational story.29

In the Livonian chronicle, however, there are other champions of the faith who appear to be essential to Henry in his attempts to construct a sanctified beginning in Livonia and Estonia in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, and these are the martyrs. Throughout the chronicle, martyrdom plays an important part in the construction of a proper foundational story that would prove to everyone that the Christianization of the people of Livonia and Estonia did in fact happen in accordance with God’s holy plans. In Henry’s mind, these martyrs from among the ranks of the new converts, the crusaders, and especially from among the ranks of the priests and monks, are the true workers in the Lord's vineyard. Important in this context is the fact that these martyrs not only functioned as a sort of protosaints, thus paralleling the saints’ cults of other foundational stories, but through their deaths they also sanctified the very ground on which they had died, thus creating a Christian place (or several Christian places) out of a pagan space, literally claiming more and more land for the Roman Church.30 In recent research it has been much debated whether or not these claims of martyrdom by the chronicler of the crusaders are to be read as if people actually believed the deceased to be proper martyrs, or at least hoped for the official recognition by the church of the holiness of the deceased. Professor Housley has convincingly argued that the various claims of martyrdom probably have to be understood, as he says “in a celebratory rather than technical sense.”31 This definitely seems to be the case in Henry’s chronicle. Therefore, the rest of this chapter will examine the martyr narratives in the chronicle of Henry of Livonia, analyzing the ways in which the chronicler uses these accounts of martyrdom as components in the construction of a sacred history for Livonia and Estonia.

Martyrs from among the Local People

In connection with mentioning that Bishop Bertold was a martyr buried in the church of Üxüll, Henry states that this particular church also became the burial place of two local Livs named Kyrian and Layan.32 These two men were new converts and had tried to persuade their kinsmen not to fight the Christians and instead to accept Christianity themselves. As a
consequence, both were killed by their former companions after having been tortured because they refused to denounce their newly acquired Christian faith. Henry explains: “there is no doubt that they received eternal life with the holy martyrs for such martyrdom” (De quibus non est dubium quin cum sanctis martiribus pro tanto martyrio vitam receperint eternam). The martyrdom of these two men is also mentioned by Arnold of Lübeck, and probably also confirmed by the Danish Archbishop Anders Suneisen in a report addressed to Pope Innocent III.34

In a similar way, Henry also refers to another of the local converts, who was killed by the marauding Estonians in 1215, portraying him as a martyr. This time it was a Christian from among the Letts, by the name of Thalibald. He was one of their elders, and is mentioned several times in the chronicle. Henry states that Thalibald and his family had hidden themselves in a nearby forest because of the plundering Estonians when he decided to come back to their village for a bath. That was not a wise decision with the Estonians roaming the countryside, and when Thalibald showed up in his village the Estonians immediately seized him and tortured him, demanding that he should give them all his money. Eventually he was burned to death—according to Henry they were “roasting him like a fish” (tamquam piscem assaverunt), and the chronicler goes on to state that “[s]ince he was a Christian and one of the number of faithful Letts, we hope that his soul is gladly rejoicing for such a martyrdom in eternal happiness in the company of the holy martyrs” (Et quia Christianus fuit et de fidelium Lettorum numero, speramus animam ipsius lete pro tanto martyrio in eterna leticia in sanctorum martyrum societate gaudere). According to Albert Bauer, the editor of the scholarly edition of the chronicle, the text has some obvious references to liturgical texts in this part of the narrative, seemingly stressing Henry’s urgency to make a literary connection between the sanctified past of the Universal Church and those events that have taken place in Livonia and Estonia during his own lifetime, thus rendering this an equally holy history.36

Apart from these examples of local converts who ended up as martyrs, Henry seems to show a preference for those fellow clerics who were martyred as a consequence of their devotion to missionary work among the pagans and the newly converted people of Livonia and Estonia. As mentioned above, some of these martyred clerics are likened to the ideal workers in the Lord’s vineyard, thereby appearing as the foremost representatives of a sanctified beginning in Livonia and Estonia. Obviously this powerful biblical image is clearly central to Henry’s attempt to argue that
the events in Livonia and Estonia were part of the divine plan, and thus an echo of biblical narratives. In Livonia and Estonia, the clerics eventually managed to transform the once pagan space into Christian places by baptizing the people, erecting churches, and dividing the countryside into parishes, thereby supressing the old pagan beliefs and eradicating their old places of worship. Thus Livonia and Estonia gradually but inevitably became a part of Christendom according to the narrative of Henry of Livonia, and the whole process of conquest and Christianization was perceived by the chronicler as a continuation of that holy history that had begun in biblical times and had continued down through the history of the Church, reaching into Henry’s own time.

The human participants in this holy history were thus first and foremost the priests and the missionaries. According to Henry, they had obeyed God’s command to take upon themselves the task of converting the pagan people living along the fringes of Christendom. Thus, they also generated the highest number of martyrs: they were in reality the true champions of the faith and therefore also the main characters in this constructed Christian myth of a sanctified beginning. In one of the last chapters of the chronicle, Henry describes how the papal legate William of Modena proclaimed that this God’s vineyard (vineam Dei) had been gloriously planted by the Rigan Church and watered with the blood of the faithful of the Church (gloriose plantatum et ecclesiam fidelium sanguine multorum irrigatam). The most prominent among these martyrs were those whom Henry considered loyal to the Church of Riga.

The Ideal Worker in the Lord’s Vineyard

The first cleric to be martyred according to the chronicle was a priest named John, portrayed by Henry as the ideal priest and shepherd to his flock. According to Henry, John worked among the Livs in Holme until 1206, when he was killed by the very same people whom he had served as a priest. The people of Holme and nearby Üxküll had been among the first in Livonia to accept missionaries in their midst. In the early 1180s, Bishop Meinhard and his followers had settled in these two villages and built the first known churches in the country. Still, many people in the area continued to harbor deep resentment toward Christianity at the time John was living among them. The simmering unrest eventually turned into open rage, culminating in an attack by some of the locals on John and his followers. As Henry says, the people of Holme “are quick to shed blood.”
In addition to condemning the people of Holme for their ungodly ways, Henry is also making an obvious reference to St. Paul’s letter to the Romans, chapter 3, verse 15, in which the apostle scorns the bellicosity and the thirst for blood of all the ungodly people who are incapable of doing good. The attack on John is thus interpreted within the grand biblical narrative, equating the events in Livonia with the events of the New Testament and making them a pair in the ongoing holy history that Henry believes is unfolding before his very eyes. Not only did the people of Holme kill their own priest, they “took their Priest John, cut off his head, and cut the rest of his body into pieces” (caput eius abscidunt, corpus reliquium membratim dividunt). During the same incident the Livs also killed two other clerics named Gerhard and Herman. Henry does not, however, go into any specific details with regard to the deaths (or for that matter, the lives) of these two clerics. Instead, he is rather detailed about John as the ideal priest. According to Henry, John was an Estonian by birth, from the province of Vironia. As a boy, he had been carried off and enslaved by the Livs from whom he was later ransomed by Bishop Meinhard. The bishop then sent him to his own home monastery in Segeberg, Saxony, because he wanted to “imbue him with sacred letters” (sacris litteris). It was a very common practice among missionaries throughout the Middle Ages to educate young boys from the pagan lands in the hope that they might eventually return to their native lands as priests and missionaries to preach in their native language. Some of these boys might have been kept as hostages by the newly arrived Christians before they were sent to some monastery or cathedral school abroad. Others, like John, were ransomed by the missionaries from enslavement by one of the local pagan tribes. In that respect, John seems to have been treated like most of these boys, and eventually he returned to Livonia (not to Estonia) in the company of Bishop Albert. There he was ordained as a priest and sent to Holme, where he converted many of the local people before he was eventually killed in 1206. It is therefore hardly surprising that Henry seems to consider his death an ideal end to a godly and devout life. John and his fellow clerics are depicted as true “confessors of the faith” (pro fidei confessione) who, through their cruel death, “attained eternal life through the martyr’s palm” (per martyrii palmam ad vitam pervenit eternam). Compared to some of the other martyrs’ deaths mentioned in the chronicle, Henry is not very detailed about John’s actual killing. The priest is decapitated and his body mutilated, but no other torments are mentioned. Instead Henry is clearly more fascinated by John's birth, his upbringing, and his life until
he is eventually killed by the people of Holme. In this life, Henry sees the
ideal life of a servant in the Lord’s vineyard, from his birth and early life
among pagans, his rescue through the intervention of Meinhard, and his
upbringing in a monastery, which prepared him for his service as a priest
among those who were once his captors. To Henry, this seems to be John’s
greatest virtue: that he seemingly personifies an ideal progress from *paganus* to *Christianus*. In this way, John has gone through a double deliver-
ance: first he was liberated from the captivity among the pagans, then he
was liberated from paganism through his baptism and his acceptance of
the Christian faith, followed by his education in *sacris litteris*. John (this
was clearly his baptismal name) could then return to Livonia as a priest
and a missionary to continue the work Meinhard had begun. Therefore,
Henry can proudly proclaim that John “converted many in the parish of
Holme from the cult of idols” (multos convertit ab ydolorum cultura)
before he was eventually killed and earned his martyr’s palms.47

However, it was not only Henry who appreciated John as a true
worker in the Lord’s vineyard. In the chronicle, we are told that other
priests came to Holme some time after John and his followers had been
killed, to retrieve the body of their deceased fellow priest. The bones were
then taken to Riga and “[t]he lord bishop with his chapter devotedly bur-
ried his body and bones ... in the church of Blessed Mary of Riga” (Cuius
corpus et ossa ... in Riga in ecclesia beate Marie domnus episcopus cum
suo capitulo devote sepelivit).48 It is not explicitly said in the chronicle
that John was venerated as a martyr or as a saint. The entire construction
of the narrative, however, seems to indicate that is was actually Henry’s
intention to propagate the idea that John was a true martyr and a genuine
saint “in the making,” revealed through his life and death. The narrative
bears a great resemblance to other genuine saints’ vitas in which the body
and bones of a known martyr and saint are buried in a nearby local church,
thereby creating an important and powerful religious center that acquires
a certain holiness through the presence of that particular saint.49 In the
chronicle, Henry seems to suggest that the Cathedral of Riga first became
the grave of a local martyr when John was buried there. At the same time,
it should not be forgotten that Bishop Bertold, who had been killed some
years prior to this incident, was definitely venerated as a martyr accord-
ing to Henry, and was probably also reburied in the Cathedral of Riga
together with Bishop Meinhard. Other sources tell us that these two bish-
ops were first buried in the church of Üxküll and only later transferred
to Riga. Therefore, the burial of a presumed martyr was a very important
step forward in Henry’s effort to construct a narrative that would present the Church of Riga as truly in accordance with the grand narrative of the Bible and the traditions of the church fathers. At the same time, Henry seems to be using the term “martyr” in the celebratory sense that Housely suggests was common among crusader chroniclers. These chroniclers did not make formal claims with regards to these alleged martyrs; instead they used these implied martyrs as an essential part of their own narratives to accentuate the real holiness of their local history.

The next secular priest martyred by the locals according to the chronicle was named Salomon. According to Henry, Salomon had, in 1212, been sent to the Estonians in the southern province of Saccala. In the previous year, the bishop had sent an army of crusaders, together with their Livonian and Latvian allies, to attack and conquer the main stronghold in Fellin. In the chronicle, there is a very lengthy and detailed description of the battle of Fellin. In the end, the Estonians were forced to surrender to the crusaders and, according to Henry, they interpreted their defeat as a sign of the superiority of the Christian God over their own pagan ones, and thus submitted themselves to the stronger deity. In the chronicle, Henry makes the Estonians come forward with this proclamation: “we acknowledge your God to be greater than our gods. By overcoming us, He has inclined our hearts to worship him. We beg, therefore, that you spare us and mercifully impose the yoke of Christianity [iugum Christianitatis] upon us as you have upon the Livonians and the Letts.”

To Henry, this is the perfect scene: the pagans had been defeated by the crusaders and their allies, and as a consequence the pagans (more or less voluntarily) accepted Christianity. Following the peace negotiations, the Estonians agreed to accept priests into the fort, and “[t]he priests sprinkled all the houses, the fort, the men and women, and all the people with holy water [aspergentes aqua benedicta]. They performed a sort of initiation and catechized [cathezizantur] them before baptism because of the great shedding of blood which had taken place.” Apparently too much blood had been spilled during the fighting and therefore only an initial catechization and sprinkling with holy water was carried out. The actual baptism had to wait almost a year, until Salomon and his companions arrived in Fellin in 1212: “[h]e was to minister to them by preaching the Word and by celebrating the sacrament of baptism [ut eis predicationis verbum ministraret et baptismi sacramentum], which they had long since sworn they would receive.” Henry thinks it important to stress once again that the Estonians themselves had agreed to be baptized. When the
priests arrived in Fellin, they were greeted by the Estonians but Henry sarcastically notes that it was greetings merely from “the mouth and not from the heart, as Judas hailed the Lord” (salutatusque est salutatione oris et non cordis, qualiter Iudas Dominum salutavit). Once again, Henry equates the events in Livonia and Estonia with those of the Bible, comparing Salomon and his companions with certain elements in the Passion of Christ. The Estonian people, on the other hand, were collectively allotted the role of the treacherous Judas in Henry’s version of this narrative.

Some of the Estonians actually underwent baptism as they had promised, but according to Henry, a rebellion was being fomented among the rest. Salomon and his companions therefore decided to return to Riga. One of the Estonian chiefs, by the name of Lembit, followed the fleeing priests, and during the night he and his band attacked the group and immediately killed both Salomon and his two interpreters, Theoderich and Philip, together with the rest of the group. There is no doubt in Henry’s mind that these men were killed because of their Christian beliefs (pro fide Christi occubuerunt) and should therefore be received into the company of martyrs (in martyrum ... consorcium transmigraverunt). Thus Henry can present yet another group of potential saints, who like true workers in the Lord’s vineyard had shed their blood to fertilize the ground, thereby inserting the events in Livonia and Estonia into God’s holy history.

It is interesting to notice, however, that Henry seems to change his focus slightly at the end of this particular narrative. Until the point when the priests are murdered, he has referred to Salomon almost exclusively as the head of the group. No doubt he was the most senior person among the clerics, but Henry then goes on to explain a bit more about one of Salomon’s companions, the one who was named Philip and presented as one of the two interpreters. Phillip’s background seems similar to that of John, about whom we learned in the preceding paragraph. He was a Lithuanian by birth (de gente lettonum) and therefore he knew the local languages very well. This was essential to the process of Christianization. According to Henry, Philip had been raised by Bishop Albert as a member of his household (curia) in Riga. During his upbringing, he had proved himself to be a devout Christian and therefore he had been sent “as an interpreter to teach the other people” (ut interpres ad ceteras gentes docendas mitteretur), thereby earning his martyrdom. Now he, like John, had completed his life and his transformation from pagan boy to devout Christian adult by becoming a martyr (et sicut martyrii particeps factus est), by which he of course “merited the blessedness of eternal rest” (sic et
It is evident that Henry has a special veneration for Philip, presenting him (like John) as the ideal priest and co-worker in the Lord’s vineyard, watering the soil with his blood. Both of them had transformed themselves from pagans to devout Christians, priests and even martyrs, thus earning the Church of Riga a place in the holy history according to Henry.

Henry is not entirely clear about whether he firmly believes that these clerics have been received into the company of martyrs, or whether he only hopes so. At first he states that he hopes (*speramus*) that they all “passed over in the company of martyrs,” then later in the paragraph he seems more certain of their status, especially with regards to Philip, who “was made a partaker of martyrdom” (*et sicut martyrii particeps factus est*). This ambiguity in the chronicle makes it very difficult to draw firm conclusions about how Henry views the ultimate sanctity of the men whose martyrdoms he describes. Both groups are seemingly considered essential in the literary construction of a sanctified beginning or Livonia and Estonia.

**Martyrs from among the Monks and Knightly Brethren**

In the chronicle, Henry makes no other detailed reference to the martyrdom of secular priests. Other accounts of martyrs are nonetheless found in the chronicle. Henry refers to an incident involving one of the Sword Brethren, and several cases involving some of the Cistercian monks who were very active as missionaries. On several occasions in the chronicle their violent deaths are portrayed as martyrdom in accordance with the old traditions of the Church.

Arnold, the only knightly martyr mentioned in the chronicle, a member of the Sword Brethren, was actually killed during the siege of Fellin in 1211—the very same siege that became the preamble to the martyrdom of Salomon and his followers one year later. According to Henry, Arnold was killed when he was hit by a stone from one of the catapults used during the battle. During the earlier stages of the campaign, Arnold had spared no pains to be in the forefront of the attack day and night (*ibidem nocte et die laborans*), striving only to defeat the enemy in the Estonian stronghold. This eagerness in battle seems to be one of the main reasons for portraying Arnold’s death as something more than one of the usual casualties that would occur during any military campaign. Henry is very specific in stating that Arnold, through his death, entered into the company of martyrs (*in martyrum consorcium transmigravit*).
The siege of Fellin in 1211 is not the first occasion on which Henry mentions Arnold’s merits. As early as 1206, Henry records that this particular Sword Brother had proved himself to be a remarkably brave man during a battle between the Christian forces from Riga and their enemies around the castle of Holme. During this particular battle, Arnold was the first among the knights to throw himself into the midst of battle, despite the numerical superiority of the enemies.\(^{64}\) A few years later, in 1210, Henry again describes Arnold’s exceptionally courageous behavior when he, during a battle against the Estonians, grabbed a battle standard that presumably displayed the image of the Virgin Mary. Such standards are mentioned several times in the chronicle. Arnold then summoned his fellow knights to fight bravely against their pagan foes. In this particular case, Henry makes Arnold paraphrase a sequence from the Book of Maccabees, proclaiming “[l]et us come together, brother Germans, and see if we know how to fight; let us not flee from them and thus bring shame upon our people” (Tunc Arnoldus frater milicie sumpto vexillo: “Conveniamus,” inquit, “fratres Th euthonici, et videamus, si pugnare queamus, et nonfugiamus ab eis et non inferamus crimen genti nostre”).\(^{65}\) Henry most certainly chooses this adjusted quotation from the Book of Maccabees very carefully; this particular biblical text describes how God’s people are fighting a holy and just war against the enemies of God. That was exactly the case in Livonia in the early thirteenth century, with the new chosen people being the Church of Riga and the Christian army fighting on its behalf against the enemies of God.\(^{66}\) Moreover, the biblical text describes how Judas, who was the leader of the Maccabees, was killed in a battle that he had begun in spite of the numerical superiority of his enemies.\(^{67}\) Through this careful choosing of his textual references, Henry seems to predict the death of Arnold the following year. In this way, this particular Sword Brother is also inscribed into the holy history that continues to be played out in Livonia. Arnold is thus portrayed as a proper godly warrior and hero who undauntedly fights God’s war in spite of the numerical superiority of the enemies (in this case the pagans). Therefore, when Arnold dies in a battle fought against the enemies of the Rigan Church, Henry is obviously convinced that he had become a martyr inasmuch as he has committed himself entirely to God’s war and the propagation of the Christian faith. In that way, in Henry’s view, he also joins the ranks of the biblical role models.

The next examples of martyrs mentioned by Henry are all Cistercian monks engaged in missionary work among the various peoples in and around Livonia and Estonia. One of these monks was Friederich of Selle,
who was sent to the castle of Fredeland by Bishop Albert to provide for the newly converted Livs living around that castle—among them were also the kinsmen of the aforementioned Thalibald. Fredeland had been built in the province of Treiden by Bishop Philip of Ratzeburg in the hope that “the district would be made peaceful by this fort and that it would be a refuge for the priests and all his men” (per idem castrum terram pacificare et sacerdotum et omnium virorum suorum ibi esse refugium). According to Henry, Friederich had been granted the right by the pope to leave his monastery and dedicate himself entirely to the work of the gospel (ad opus ... ewangelii). To Henry, it is important to point out that Friederich’s work among the converts (and also that of the Rigan Church) was completely in harmony with papal plans and thus also supported by Rome. The narrative of the chronicle takes place in the year 1215, during Easter week, and we are told that Friederich “celebrated the mystery of the Lord’s passion” on Palm Sunday. Friedrich was a very pious man who celebrated the Lord’s Passion with tears running from his eyes (Dominice passionis mysteria multis lacrimis celebrans). After having celebrated mass also on Easter Sunday, Friedrich decided to leave for Riga. Traveling with him was a scholar of his (scolare suo) and some servants from among the Livs. They had decided to travel by boat and thus sailed down the Livonian Aa toward the sea when they were suddenly attacked by Estonians from the island of Oesel (mod. Saaremaa). Friederich and his companions were overpowered by these Oselians, who placed them in their own pirate ships (Henry refers to the Oselian ships as pyraticis). The people from Oesel then took their prisoners to the nearby estuary of the river Adje (Adia River), probably because they felt safer there, and there Friedrich’s ordeal began.

Henry is very detailed in his description of what happened then. At first the Oselians began to mock and sneer at Friederich, “sing, sing priest” (Laula, laula, pappi) they shouted, all the while beating him with their clubs. Then the real torture of the prisoners began: “the Oselians sharpening hard, dry wood, inserted it between the nails and the flesh and tormented every member with the points. They set the wood afire and tortured them cruelly. At last they killed them by hacking with their axes between their shoulders.” Following this gruesome description of the torture inflicted on Friederich and his followers, Henry cites Psalm 128, verses 3–4, on the sufferings that God’s servants have to endure before God himself will avenge them. Read in context, however, it seems more plausible that Henry is in fact making a reference also to the Passion of Christ that Friederich had commemorated just a few days prior to this incident,
during his celebration of Easter. Now it is Friederich who has to follow in the footsteps of the Lord and endure the mockery, sneers, and beatings, not of the Jews, but of the pagans. Eventually, Friederich and his followers are all tortured and killed, just like Christ. In Henry’s eyes, there could hardly have been a more worthy and ideal way for a missionary priest to complete the celebration of the Easter (and end his life) than through this downright *imitatio Christi*. It comes as no surprise that Henry states that the souls of Friederich and his companions “beyond any doubt” have been sent “to heaven to the company of the martyrs” (et in martyrum consor-cium animas absque omni dubio in celum transmiserunt).  

So Henry was certain that the souls of the slain Christians were now among the martyrs in heaven. Their bodies, however, were left unburied by the Oselians, a point that stresses the barbarous behavior of the latter. This provides Henry the opportunity to cite another Psalm, namely Psalm 78, verses 2–3: “the flesh of thy saints for the beasts of the earth. They have poured out their blood as water, roundabout Jerusalem, and there was none to bury the dead” (carnes sanctorum tuorum bestiis terre, effuderunt sanguinem eorum tamquam aquam in circuitu Ierusalem, et non errant, qui sepeliret). Through this comparison between the Bible and the events in Livonia, Henry puts Friederich and his companions on an equal footing with biblical figures and biblical events: it is still God’s work that is carried out, even if it is now taking place in the lands of Livonia and Estonia and not in the Holy Land proper.

Although the mockery and beatings endured by Friederich and his companions may be seen as a parallel to the sufferings of Christ leading up to his crucifixion, their mode of death does not as easily follow the biblical model. The chronicle’s very detailed description of the torture that the Oselians inflicted on the Christians seems to be more an eyewitness account than literary construction. That assumption seems to fit Henry’s own description, inasmuch as he states that he has spoken to some of the Livs who had accompanied Friederich during his last journey. The Oselians spared these men from torture and instead took them to Oesel as captives. On their return (perhaps they were ransomed or freed during a raid), the men were able to provide an eyewitness account what had befallen Friederich and his companions.

Not all the martyr narratives in the chronicle are as lengthy as the one presented above. A shorter example is that of a hermit (*heremite*) who originally came from the monastery of Dünamunde, but in 1218 was living by himself on a small island in the River Dvina not far from the
monastery. It appears that he was anticipating his own martyrdom (*ibidem martyrii sui agonem expectabat*). Like Friederich, the hermit was killed by marauding Oselians and happily entered the company of martyrs (*feliciter ... in sanctorum communionem transmigravit*), according to Henry. 78

More in line with the lengthy descriptions mentioned above are Henry’s accounts of the martyrdom of the two Cistercians, Theoderich and Segehard. Theoderich eventually became a bishop in Estonia and was one of the central figures of the Rigan Church until he sided with the Danes in the northern provinces of Estonia and became more or less a rival to Bishop Albert in Riga. Segehard was a monk who became involved in the missionary work among the still pagan Semgalls living south of Riga. 79 Both were killed by pagans in 1219 and are described as martyrs by Henry. However, while Theoderich is portrayed in a rather ambiguous way because of his alliance with the Danes, Henry presents Segehard as an obvious contrast both with regard to his martyrdom and his loyalty toward Riga. The two episodes therefore lend themselves to a closer examination of how Henry constructs his narrative.

The martyrdom of Segehard took place among the Semgalls living south of the River Dvina, in an area where the Rigan Church had not yet been challenged by any foreign power. Presumably, the renewed Danish efforts to subdue the northern Estonian provinces in the summer of 1219 had urged the Germans to try to extend their power into these southerly regions. The center of the renewed mission was the area around the castle Mesothen (Mezotne), on the banks of the River Aa (Lielupe). 80 Henry very carefully explains that the initiative for the renewed missionary work in fact came from the Semgalls, and not from the bishop. The Semgalls asked Bishop Bertold for military assistance against marauding Lithuanians and hostile kinsmen. In return, the bishop demanded that the Semgalls accept Christianity. The emissaries of the Semgalls agreed, and Henry goes on to explain how the bishop and his men went to Mesothen together with a sizable force of knights, crusaders and priests to commence the Christianization of the Semgalls by baptizing and instructing them in the teachings of the gospel (*recipientes doctrinam evangelicam*). He notes that some three hundred men, in addition to women and children, were baptized during the initial process of Christianization among the Semgalls. 81 As such, the narrative in the chronicle seems trustworthy in its description of how the missionary work evolved, not always as a consequence of war and conquest, but often also following meticulous negotiations and the forming of alliances against mutual enemies.
During the German mission, a small army that was on its way by boat, with additional men and supplies from Riga, was ambushed by hostile Semgalls. Together with the army was also the aforementioned Cistercian monk, Segehard, from the monastery of Dünamunde. He had been sent from the monastery to the castle in Mesothem to serve as a priest under the auspices of Bishop Bernhard of Lippe, who was to incorporate the new land into his bishopric as soon as the Semgalls had accepted Christianity. Segehard never reached the castle; he was among those killed during the surprise attack on the army. When the Semgalls attacked, the men from Riga were resting on the riverbank and had no way to flee. When Segehard realized that the attacking Semgalls would definitely kill him, he sat down and shrouded himself in his cloak, awaiting the stroke of the pagans’ swords. Henry tells his audience that Segehard, in the instant of his death, commended his spirit to the Lord (et in manus Domini spiritum commendans). According to the editors of the 1955 German edition of the chronicle, this was a reference to yet another Old Testament Psalm—Psalm 30, verse 6. Another, more obvious reference seems, however, to be the Gospel of St. Luke, in which the last words of Christ are precisely the words of Segehard. Thus Segehard (or rather Henry) makes the words of Christ his own, thereby drawing another parallel between the Passion of Christ and the sufferings of the missionaries in Livonia. What happened in Livonia is somehow equal to the biblical narratives inasmuch as those events seemingly took place within a similarly sanctified time. It is therefore hardly surprising that Henry points out that the spirits of Segehard and the other Christians killed alongside him now rest firmly with Christ, rejoicing in the company of all the other martyrs (quorum anime in martyrum societas sine dubio cum Christo gaudebunt). Henry even goes one step further, exclaiming that Segehard’s and the other missionaries’ “business was holy, for they, when called, came to baptize the pagans and to plant the Lord’s vineyard—and planted it with their blood. Their souls, therefore, are coequal with the saints in heaven” (eo quod vocati venerunt ad baptizandum paganos vineamque Domini plantandam, quam sanquine suo plantaverunt; ideoque sunt eorum anime sanctorum in celis coequales). Once more, Henry underlines that a certain element of sanctity rests on the Rigan Church and its servants among the clerics and monks, that equates them with the figures of the Bible.

One could argue that, in the grander picture, the venture into the land of the Semgalls was no success, inasmuch as the attack on the castle in Mesothem and the ambush on the small army from Riga forced the
remaining crusaders and missionaries to abandon the enterprise altogether and return to Riga without fulfilling the Christianization of the Semgalls. Moreover, those among the Semgalls who had accepted baptism soon lapsed back into paganism when the Christians from Riga fled the land. If we study the text a little more closely, however, we will see that in this narrative Henry has in fact legitimized any future military campaigns and crusades launched from Riga into the lands of the Semgalls, because they were now to be considered apostates who could (and should) rightfully be forced to accept Christianity again, according to the laws of the Church. Furthermore, Henry now has portrayed the lands of the Semgalls as a part of the Lord’s vineyard that can only be cultivated rightfully by the Church of Riga and not by any other secular or ecclesiastical power in the region—and that would be the case even if the Church of Riga for the moment was prevented from exercising its pastoral care among the rebellious Semgalls.

Thus in the wider perspective, this story about the failed attempt to convert the Semgalls and the martyrdom of Segehard is also important because it in a way counters the Danish campaign against the Estonians the very same year of 1219. An army of crusaders commanded by the Danish King Valdemar II had landed in the northern province of Estonia at the place were Tallinn is now located, to enforce his claims on these lands and also to Christianize the local population.

Henry writes in relative detail about this campaign by the Danish king. In particular, he describes how King Valdemar rather foolishly allowed himself to be tricked by the local Estonians into believing that the Danes would be received peacefully, whereas the Estonians secretly prepared to attack the crusaders and nearly succeeded in defeating them during a surprise attack on the crusaders’ camp. In later Danish historiography, it was God who saved the Danish crusaders from the attacking Estonians, when he made the Danish national flag, Dannebrog, appear in the sky and slowly descend on the fighting crusaders, thereby granting them the victory. Henry has no reference to such a miraculous intervention on behalf of the Danish (and in his mind, intruding) crusaders. According to Henry, the Danes were saved only by the timely intervention of their Wendish allies, who had been hiding from the attacking Estonians until they themselves carried out a counterattack that drove the Estonians from the camp. Henry also explains that the Estonians, during their surprise attack, came upon Bishop Theoderich in one of the army’s tents. Believing that he was the Danish king, the Estonians imme-
diately killed the bishop. From early on in the chronicle, Theoderich is portrayed as one of the key characters in the process of Christianization in Livonia during the last years of the twelfth century and the early decades of the thirteenth, and also a person who was loyal to the Rigan Church. According to Henry, it was Theoderich who founded the Order of the Sword Brethren (even if this is questioned by modern scholars), and he was also closely associated with the Cistercian monastery of Dünamunde, where he was made abbot. Theoderich is also portrayed in the chronicle as a devout missionary, who worked tirelessly to convert the local pagans to Christianity. Henry even associates certain miracles with Theodorich’s work during his early years in Livonia. In 1219, however, Theoderich had switched his allegiance from the Rigan Church to the Danes, becoming bishop of Estonia. That made him a dubious person in Henry’s eyes, and when the bishop was killed by the Estonians, the chronicler is slow to recognize his death as a martyrdom, in contrast to his interpretation of some of the other deaths of clerics and monks in Livonia and Estonia. It is only later in the chronicle that Henry, rather as a passing remark, notes that he hopes that Bishop Theoderich through his death has “passed into the company of the martyrs” (in martyrum ... consorcium transivit). Obviously, Henry is not eager to portray Theoderich as the ideal worker in the Lord’s vineyard because of his alliances with the Danes—which is contrary to the description of Theoderich in the earlier chapters in the chronicle. Therefore, Henry seems to downplay Theoderich’s martyrdom in a way that parallels his later description of the killing of some Swedish crusaders and clerics by the Oselians in the province of Rotalia. The Swedish King John Sverkersson had led an army into this part of Estonia in 1220, settling in Leal. In Henry’s mind, that was nothing but an infringement on the rights of the Rigan Church, which had long been cultivating this part of the Lord’s vineyard. Like the Danes in the northern part of Estonia, the Swedes were foreign and illegitimate workers who had illegally entered this particular part of the Lord’s vineyard, which had up to now been ministered to by the Rigan Church. Furthermore, Henry states that Bishop Albert of Riga had appointed his own brother, Hermann, as bishop of this particular area, which was now wrongfully occupied by the Swedes—and that was an appointment that already had been approved by the pope, according to Henry. The Swedes in Rotalia were soon punished for their wrongdoings. When the main part of the Swedish army had left, the remaining crusaders and clerics (among them also a bishop) were besieged in Leal by maraud-
ing Oselians, who viciously killed nearly everyone and captured the castle. Only a few escaped and sought refuge in a nearby Danish castle.\textsuperscript{100} And, even if Henry notes that the dead Swedes hopefully “entered the company of martyrs” (\textit{in martyrum ... consorcium transmigravit}) he still considers their fate to be a heavenly punishment for their wrongdoing toward the Church of Riga.\textsuperscript{101} In a later chapter, Henry praises the Virgin Mary for guarding Livonia against any evildoers who wrongfully enter her land. Among those, Henry specifically mentions the fate of the Swedes and the troubles of the Danish king: “Might I not speak of the Swedes, who entered the Rotalian province which was subject to the banner of the blessed Virgin—for were they not slaughtered by the Oselians? Did she not, if one may say so, trouble the king of the Danes with a long and marvelous captivity in the hands of a few people, when he wished to trouble Livonia with his rule?”\textsuperscript{102}

In my opinion, these descriptions by Henry of the equally ill-fated attempts to convert the Semgalls by the Rigan Church, the Danish invasion of Estonia—both in 1219—and the Swedish campaign into Rotalia in 1220, should be understood as part of the same narrative, as they are most likely an attempt from the chronicler’s side to confer the greatest possible legitimacy on the work of the Rigan Church, while condemning the attempts by Danes and Swedes to encroach on the rights of the Germans in Riga. In this particular setting, the narrative about Segehard’s martyrdom among the Semgalls creates a counter against the incursion of the secular and ecclesiastical powers from Denmark and Sweden, thus rendering legitimacy to the Rigan Church. The chronicler also demonstrates through these narratives that there was in fact a sanctified beginning for Livonia and Estonia, whose primary agents were the German clerics who were the true tillers of this vineyard of the Lord.

\textbf{Some Final Remarks}

The examples presented above of the various depictions of martyrdom in the chronicle of Henry of Livonia are not exhaustive—there are other examples to be found in the text. The cases brought forward in this chapter, however, are the most comprehensive examples found in the text, and they enable us to study how Henry uses these events in his construction of a sanctified beginning for Livonia and Estonia. As pointed out in the article, some scholars have stressed the importance of saints and saints’ lives in this process of medieval historiography and early Christian myth
making. In this chapter, I have suggested that Henry seems to have used a slightly different approach, inasmuch as he found his champions of the faith not among local or universal saints, but rather among those individuals who proved themselves to be the true tillers of the Lord’s vineyard in Livonia and Estonia, eventually watering the ground with their own blood through martyrdom. In Henry’s eyes, they were the true champions of the faith, creating an important link between this part of the world and those regions that had long since taken up their place within Christendom.

Henry is especially concerned with those martyrs who came from the ranks of the clerics. In the chronicle, these clerics (both secular priests and monks) are presented as if their lives and deaths were a reiteration of the biblical narratives, thus constructing a genuine Christian myth that would grant this particular region a place within Western Christendom, and at the same time promote the development of new identities among the local people. In this process, Henry relies heavily on the authoritative texts he has at hand, mostly the Bible and various other Christian religious texts. This dependence on well-known and authoritative literary sources is not to be taken as the evidence of a mediocre chronicler unable to form a readable narrative in his own words; rather it demonstrates Henry’s eagerness to place his narrative firmly within the overall history of Christendom by adapting old authoritative texts to a new cultural and religious milieu.

NOTES


2 It is important to notice that the shift from pagan to Christian religious beliefs was by no means instant or definitive. Rather, the process took time and often produced syncretistic religious worldviews that would last for centuries among parts of the local populations, strongly influencing the creation of new identities for the local people. See for example Heiki Valk, “Christianisation in Estonia: A Process of Dual-Faith and Syncretism,” in The Cross goes North. Processes of Conversion in Northern Europe, AD 300–1300, ed. Martin Carver (Woodbridge Suffolk, 2003), pp. 571–79; see also Tiina Kala, “Rural Society and Religious Innovation: Acceptance and Rejection of Catholicism among the Native Inhabitants of Medieval Livonia,” in The Clash of Cultures on the
Medieval Baltic Frontier, ed. Alan V. Murray (Farnham and Burlington, 2009), pp. 169–90.


9 Undusk, “Sacred History,” p. 64.


16 All quotations in English from Henry of Livonia’s chronicle are from James A. Brundage, The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia. Henricus Lettus (New York, 2003), here p. 152. There are two very useful Latin editions of this chronicle both of which are used in this chapter: Leonid Arbusow and Albert Bauer, eds., Heinricis Livländische Chronik. Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum ex Monumentis Germaniae Historici Separate Editi. Heinrici Chronicon Livonae (Hannover, 1955); Albert Bauer ed., Heinrich von Lettland, Livländische Chronik (Darmstadt, 1959). References to the Latin text are made to either edition with the specific mentioning of chapter and verse, here HCL XIX, 7. With regard to the Virgin Mary in the chronicle please also see Mänd, “Saints’ Cults,” pp. 194–96.


18 Brundage, p. 44; HCL VII,6.


20 Brundage, p. 44; HCL VII,6. In the Arbusow/Bauer-edition of the chronicle from 1955 the editors makes a reference to Psalm 67:36 as a likely textual source for this reference by Henry to Siegfried’s saintly status, p. 23. The Psalterium Romanum, however, seems to have a slightly different wording in Psalm 67:36 (mirabilis Deus in sanctis suis) suggesting that Henry might have adjusted
the text slightly to fit his needs so as to underline Siegfried’s potential sanctity. See also Tamm, “Martyrs and Miracles,” pp. 144 and 146–48.

21 HCL X,6.

22 HCL XXIX,5; see also Jensen, “How to Convert a Landscape,” pp. 162–64.


32 HCL X,6.
33 Brundage, p. 57; HCL X,5.
35 HCL XIX,3.
36 Brundage, p. 144; HCL XIX,3; Bauer 1955, pp. 125, note 3 with a reference to page 99, note 5.
39 HCL XXIX,2.
40 Brundage, p. 58; HCL X,7.
41 St. Paul is of course quoting Isaiah 59:7–8.
42 Brundage, p. 58; HCL X,7.
43 Brundage, p. 58; HCL X,7.
45 Brundage, p. 58; HCL X,7.
46 Brundage, p. 58; HCL X,7.
47 Brundage, p. 58; HCL X,7.
48 HCL X,7.
51 Housley, *Contesting the Crusades*, p. 41.
52 HCL XIV,11.
53 Brundage, pp. 106–7; HCL XIV,11.
54 Brundage, p. 107; HCL XIV,11.
55 Brundage, p. 119; HCL XV,9.
56 Brundage, p. 119; HCL XV,9.
57 HCL XV,9.
58 HCL XV,9.
60 Brundage, p. 119; HCL XV,9.
In a recent article Marek Tamm has tried to differentiate between those of the deaths who Henry definitely labelled as martyrs and those he just hoped to be martyrs. As stated above, it is my opinion that the ambiguity of the chronicle makes such verdicts extremely difficult. Tamm, “Martyrs and Miracles,” especially p. 152. With regard to the difference between a celebratory and a formal claim to martyrdom, see Housley, *Contesting the Crusades*, p. 41.

62 HCL XIV,11.
63 HCL XIV,11.
64 HCL X,8.
65 Brundage, p. 101; HCL XIV,8. First Book of Maccabees, Chapter 9, verses 8 and 10.
68 HCL XVIII,3 and 8.
69 Fredeland (or Vredeland) literally meant “peace in the land” or “pacifying the land” and was also known by the name Treyden/Treiden. Brundage, pp. 135–36; HCL XVIII,3.
70 HCL XVIII,8.
71 Brundage, p. 140; HCL XVIII,8.
72 HCL XVIII,8.
73 Brundage p. 141; HCL XVIII,8.
74 Brundage p. 141.
75 Brundage p. 141; HCL XVIII,8.
76 HCL XVIII,8.
77 HCL XVIII,8.
78 HCL XXII,8.
79 HCL XXIII,2 and 4.
80 HCL XXIII,3.
81 HCL XXIII,3.
82 HCL XXIII,4.
83 Brundage p. 176; HCL XXIII,4.
84 Arbusow/Bauer 1955, p. 158, line 3.


The Danes might not have been utterly defeated in 1219 as the Swedes were in 1220, but the Danish king was taken captive by some of his German vassals not long after the campaign in Estonia, and that was, according to Henry, also a punishment inflicted upon the king by the Virgin Mary for his wrongful intrusion into the lands of the Rigan Church.
Part III
Saints’ Cults and the Creation of Regional and National Identities
Chapter Eight

St. Canute Lavard around the Baltic Sea

Nils Holger Petersen

This chapter discusses the Baltic Sea-area manifestations of the cult of the Danish Royal saint, Canute the Duke (ca. 1096–January 7, 1131), in Danish, Knud Lavard. Canute was murdered by his cousin, Prince Magnus, and on June 25, 1170 after a papal canonization bull issued in 1169 he was translated into his new shrine in the Benedictine abbey church in Ringsted, on the island of Zealand, where he had been buried soon after the murder. In Danish historiography, the canonization of Canute has often been seen in the context of church politics: Duke Canute’s son Valdemar, born exactly a week after the murder, became king of all of Denmark as Valdemar I in 1157 after a civil war that ultimately was a consequence of the murder and the political turmoil that arose from it. In the following years, Valdemar launched a campaign for the canonization of his father and was eventually successful in obtaining a papal bull to this effect.

In modern Danish scholarship the ensuing translation solemnities for Canute the Duke have been seen as representing a turning point in Danish medieval history, manifesting a new era of the Christian Danish kingdom. Canute’s uncle, King Canute IV (d. 1086) had been canonized at the beginning of the century at roughly the same time as the pope approved the establishment of a Danish archbishopric in Lund (in Scania, in present-day Sweden). Carsten Breengaard has argued that the aims of the Danish church in connection with the ecclesiastical events in 1170, which also comprised the crowning of King Valdemar’s seven-year-old son Canute as the future King Canute VI, concerned the establishing of new social norms to “criminalize insurrection and the involvement of the king in feuding.” While St. Canute the Duke stands as an important figure
in Danish medieval history, his cult did not spread outside of Denmark, except for the area where Denmark had its strongest political influence during the following centuries. Arguably, the cult of Canute the Duke did not have a great impact, even in Denmark, until around the time of the Danish Reformation. In this chapter, I shall attempt to understand this in light of theories of cultural memory put forward by Jan Assmann and Aleida Assmann.

Cultural Memory, History, and St. Knud Lavard

The research behind this chapter was part of the EuroCORECODE project, *Symbols that Bind and Break Communities: Saints’ Cults as Stimuli and Expressions of Local, Regional, National and Universalist Identities*, sponsored by the European Science Foundation. This project concerns the ways and extent to which the cults of saints and their receptions in later (also non-Catholic) cultures inform us about regional, national, and possibly even universal identity formations. The subproject carried out at the University of Copenhagen has the title “Saints, Identity and Cultural Memory in Regions around Øresund-Gotland, from ca. 1100 to the Present Day.” Jan and Aleida Assmann’s work on “cultural memory,” drawing also on Maurice Halbwachs’ concept of mémoire collective, constitutes an important background for the project and also provides, more specifically, a terminological framework for the discussion of the development of the cult(s) of Canute the Duke.

The Assmanns’ concept of a “cultural memory” is designed as a term for communal—even institutional—influence on the formation of individual historical consciousnesses and identities. Jan Assmann, taking his historical point of departure in early oral cultures, points out that in such cultures rituals were the basis for a cultural memory. In the course of the rise of written cultures, it is a fundamental point for Assmann that interpretation gradually becomes more important, although as he emphasizes, all rituals have a double aspect of repetition and actualization:

In connection with the writing down of traditions, a gradual transition takes place from the dominance of repetition to the dominance of actualization, from a “ritual” to a “textual coherence.” In that way a new connective structure has been established. Its connective power is not imitation and conservation but interpretation and memory. Hermeneutics replaces liturgy.
In Christian medieval devotions based on appropriations and interpretations of biblical texts, developed in ritual contexts over centuries, the interactions between textual interpretation and ritual function are complex, and these two aspects of preserved liturgical ceremonies and of how they were considered in the Middle Ages do not exclude each other. Rather, the two aspects were integrated to establish a constant innovation of types and genres in medieval public celebrations during this long and not at all unified period. Assmann’s brief summarizing statement, however, may stand as a heuristic point of departure for discussing devotional practices as we know of them in their positions between the two poles: the ritual repetition and the interpretation of biblical and other narratives and texts as part of these ritual repetitions, which in reality changed substantially over the centuries.

Historical ideas of “memory” and “history” in more recent times, not least those of Friedrich Nietzsche and the already-mentioned Maurice Halbwachs on either side of the turn of the twentieth century, as well as the modern French historian Pierre Nora, form an important backdrop for both Jan and Aleida Assmann. The latter has pointed out how the two concepts have often been regarded either as in sharp opposition to each other or as basically equal. In her opinion, ideologically based or value-filled memories, or reconstructions of memories, make the cultural memory of a particularly defined social group distinctly different from a more scientific, objective notion of history. Conversely, in some modern critical understandings of history, the claim that the scholarly writing of history as a purely rational, disinterested, objective endeavor is not only difficult to achieve, but in principle not possible, has led to the opposite idea of a kind of equivalence between history and memory, whether individual memory or cultural memory of a social group. In order to overcome this dichotomy, Aleida Assmann has made the following proposition:

The important step to get beyond the alternative of a polarisation or an equalisation of the notions of memory and history consists in perceiving the relationship between inhabited and uninhabited memory as one of two complementary modes of memory. We shall use the notion “functional memory” (Funktionsgedächtnis) to refer to the inhabited memory. Its most important characteristics are its dependency on a group and its selectivity; and that it is value bound and future oriented. In relation to this, the historical sciences constitute a memory of a second order, a memory of memories which includes what has lost its vital relationship to
the present. This memory of memories I propose to call “storage memory” (Speichergedächtnis). Nothing seems more common to us than the constant process of forgetting, the unrecoverable losses of valued knowledge and vital experiences. Under the wide roof of the historical sciences such uninhabited relics and collections, which have become ownerless, can be preserved, but they can also be prepared again in such ways that they may offer new possibilities for being connected to the functional memory.7

Aleida Assmann’s double notions of functional and storage memories correspond, as she herself points out, to a high degree at least on a structural level to certain fundamental thoughts about the use of memory in the Middle Ages, notably as expressed by Hugh of St. Victor in the early twelfth century. Aleida Assmann refers not least to Hugh’s notion of arca sapientiae, the storage of knowledge by memory in the chest or box of the heart (the seat of memory in the Middle Ages) as this notion was developed especially in Hugh’s De arca Noe morali.8

Aleida Assmann’s notions have obvious applications within the study of saints’ cults. The ways saints are remembered in their cults represent, often in rather extreme ways, versions of inhabited or functional memory. Conversely, a cult in the process of losing its importance and being marginalized, possibly even forgotten in the society in which it has its place, exemplifies a process of de-inhabitation of the cultural memory into a state of storage memory. From that state, as Aleida Assmann points out, it may possibly be reconnected to a state of functional memory since the narratives as well as the events and objects that form part of the storage memory are not completely forgotten but have only become uninhabited, seemingly irrelevant to the group for which it formerly served a function. Stated differently, one might say that while a saint’s cult that forms an important part of the identity of the community (or of communities) venerating the saint may become less important for that identity or even lose this function altogether, it may regain this function under certain circumstances.

Aleida Assmann’s notions thus form a framework within which to conceptualize the changing roles of saints and saints’ cults in (groups within) a society; however, the notions of functional and storage memory should not be seen as a simple dichotomy since it is evident that different degrees of inhabitation and functionality exist. The storage memory is basic to a functional memory, and it is a precondition for a potential refunctionalization of a stored memory. What in a particular historical
The situation may lead to such a reinhabitation requires detailed investigation of the historical situation in question. Explaining why the cult of Canute the Duke in the later decades of the fifteenth century was no longer repressed as it had been during the previous two centuries, Lars Bisgaard has pointed to the political solution concerning the relation between the duchy of Schleswig and the kingdom of Denmark in 1460. This provides an adequate argument in the context of Bisgaard’s investigation, but it does not explain why, at this point, it would have been relevant to refunctionalize the cult, which seems to have become uninhabited during the previous two centuries. It seems unlikely, however, that this question can be answered authoritatively. Even so, it is the aim of this chapter to contextualize and discuss the question of the reinhabitation of the memory of Knud Lavard around 1500 and to suggest possible answers.

The Establishing of the Cult of Canute the Duke

Canute was son of King Eric the Good of Denmark, who set out on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1103 after having secured the establishment of the first Nordic Archbishopric in Lund through negotiations with Pope Paschal II, thus freeing the Scandinavian countries from the ecclesiastical dominance of Hamburg-Bremen. King Eric never reached Jerusalem as he died in Cyprus en route; he was succeeded on the throne consecutively by two of his brothers. Eric’s young son, Canute, was brought up in one of the principal families of the kingdom, the dynasty of Hvide. As Canute grew up, he became an important figure in Danish politics. According to the Chronica Slavorum by Helmold von Bosau (mid-twelfth century), Canute had been sent to Duke Lothar of Saxony (crowned German king in 1125 and Holy Roman emperor in 1133) for further education. However, by 1113 he was back in Denmark, and probably around 1115 he was made praefectus of Schleswig, near the Danish-German border, by his uncle King Niels (king of Denmark 1104–1134), the father of Canute’s future murderer, Prince Magnus. As King Lothar’s vassal Canute had also been made ruler (“knes”) of the Slavonic Obotrites in Saxon Holstein, south of the Danish border, in 1129. Altogether, Canute the Duke was a powerful young man in the years prior to his murder, appearing as a strong future candidate for the Danish throne, which, at the time, was not hereditary.

The story about the murder of Canute was primarily remembered and told from the perspective of those who supported him and who won the civil war that followed the murder. Unsurprisingly, the preserved
narratives are not in total agreement in all details. However, the overall picture, also accepted generally by modern historians, is that the main motivation for the murder was the fear of Magnus and his followers that Canute would be a strong competitor for the throne. Toward the end of the royal Christmas celebrations of 1130/31 in Roskilde, a main royal seat at the time, to which Canute had been invited, Magnus managed to arrange a private meeting with him in Haraldsted Forest some distance away. There, on January 7, 1131, Magnus murdered Canute. Within a few years, it appears that Canute had begun to be regarded as a saint, not least by the monks at the nearby Benedictine monastery in Ringsted. The monastery had been established in 1135, and had taken over the late eleventh-century Church of St. Mary, in which Canute’s body had been buried. It is likely that a vita was composed as early as the 1130s, probably by Robert of Ely, thought to have been an English monk at the Ringsted monastery. Only fragments of this book have been preserved; quite likely, it was one of the sources behind the St. Canute legend as it can been pieced together from the readings at Matins for the Offices of St. Canute the Duke as preserved in a unique thirteenth-century manuscript, now in the University Library of Kiel (Kiel Univ. Lib. MS S.H.8 A.8°). The manuscript contains the offices and masses for the two days on which Canute the Duke was celebrated, June 25, the day of his translation, and January 7, the day of his murder, possibly as copies of what was composed for the feast of the translation in 1170 or within the following decades. The legend and some of the liturgical songs were edited more than hundred years ago; recently the full liturgy has been edited, textually by Michael Chesnutt in 2003 and again together with transcriptions of the music in 2010 by John Bergsagel. Michael Chesnutt argued that a complicated process of adaptation and composition must lie behind the version preserved in the aforementioned thirteenth-century manuscript. John Bergsagel maintains the traditional understanding that the manuscript offices are best understood as copies of what he assumes must have been composed in connection with the translation in 1170.

On June 25, 1170, Canute the Duke’s remains were translated to the high altar of what was then the monastic church in Ringsted, where he had already been buried (now known as St. Bendt’s Church), in accordance with the mentioned papal bull issued by Pope Alexander III on November 8, 1169, which a delegation sent to Rome had managed to obtain. As mentioned above, Valdemar the Great (as he is usually called in Denmark) became ruler of all of Denmark only after several years of civil
war (1146–1157) between several competitors for the Danish throne. During the early years of his reign, relations between the church and the king were not harmonious. Archbishop Eskil of Lund and King Valdemar supported rival papal candidates during the schism between Alexander III and Victor IV. Eskil spent some time in exile during the 1160s. It appears that he may originally have opposed the canonization of Canute the Duke as remarks in the legend, in lessons six and eight for matins in the office for the translation, which refer—unspecifically—to a time before Valdemar was king of all of Denmark, seem to imply:

Then, forming a plan to the honour (as they saw it) of Valdemar’s father and Sven’s uncle, they decided to transfer his remains from the grave to a bier. When word of this reached Archbishop Eskil, he tried to divert the young men’s wish from their declared purpose, not because he opposed their motives but out of reverence for the Holy See; and he issued an episcopal prohibition against it being done. However, displaying obstinacy to save face, they persisted in what they had begun and placed his bones, which had previously lain in the grave, on a bier.¹⁵

The remark about the “obstinacy” of the king and his cousin would seem to reflect an already existing local cult in Ringsted. In the eighth lesson for the translation, then, the acceptance of Eskil is related as Valdemar, now king, returns to his original plan:

Returning, I tell you, to his original purpose, when he saw how the miracles of his father, the glorious martyr, increased in number, he devoted himself to the cause of his translation and prudently consulted Archbishop Eskil in the matter. Proceeding sensibly, Eskil fulfilled the wise king’s wish. And sending a delegation under the leadership of Archbishop Stefan of Uppsala he legally obtained what he had justly sought from the supreme Pontiff Alexander.¹⁶

In the end then, Eskil accepted and presided at the canonization solemnities in Ringsted.¹⁷ This event may thus also possibly have marked the reconciliation between king and archbishop. Altogether, as already mentioned, it can be seen as the culmination of the establishment of the Danish royal house as protectors of the Roman Church in Denmark. Moreover, the event solidified the rule of the dynasty of King Valdemar, since the celebrations in Ringsted on June 25, 1170 were not only about St. Canute the Duke but also included the crowning of Valdemar’s young
son as future king of Denmark, the first of several attempts to transform the Danish throne, otherwise awarded by election, into a hereditary one.

The ceremony that combined the translation of Canute the Duke with the coronation of Canute VI promoted St. Canute as an official saintly protector of the kingdom. It is worth emphasizing how the orientation of Canute the Duke through his upbringing was far more international than that of his cousin and murderer, Magnus. Canute the Duke was an ideal royal saint, and, as Karsten Friis-Jensen has recently pointed out, this is how Saxo Grammaticus’ influential narrative about Canute the Duke in his *Gesta Danorum*, constructed the memory of the young duke. Friis-Jensen writes:

> [...] it is evident that Saxo shows a thorough fascination with Christian sainthood, in spite of his classicising ideals. But the sainthood of St. Canute in Saxo is a very complex entity indeed. It contains elements of the miraculous, of ancestor worship and a family’s need for legitimacy, and finally of national assertiveness in times when Danish expansion took the form of crusade-like conquests in the eastern Baltic.\(^{18}\)

The aspect of St. Canute the Duke as a protector for the Danish expansion policy has been highlighted by Thomas Riis and others.\(^{19}\) However, while it seems well founded that the cult of Canute the Duke was appropriated in this way, the theological representations of Canute in the thirteenth-century offices and masses on the whole do not seem to emphasize him as a figure justifying expansion and holy war; he is rather constructed in a Christological light, as a pious, humble leader protecting and helping the weak.\(^{20}\) This image seems to be more in line with Carsten Breengaard’s understanding of the translation event. He argues that the event should not be seen primarily in the light of dynastic policy or as the victory of the crown over the church nor as a compromise in the contemporary conflict between Archbishop Eskil and the king but rather in a wider social context:

> This conflict had no bearing on the conditions under which the Church existed, whereas the latter was precisely the subject of the council at Ringsted in 1170. On the other hand, the Ringsted council had nothing whatever to do with an ideological confrontation between *regnum* and *sacerdotium*; it is argued that the central issue at this council was a hallowing of those social values which the clergy had long been preaching as the fundamentals of a Christian community.\(^{21}\)
If Breengaard is right, the emphasis of the preserved thirteenth-century offices would seem to lend some further support to Bergsagel’s (and the traditional) view that the manuscript is a copy of offices composed originally at the time of the canonization, since the offices do not in a marked way reflect the appropriations of the cult in terms of a nationalist policy of expansion or crusading, but rather celebrate the Christian values which were manifested by Knud Lavard to the benefit of the Danish nation.

### Cults of St. Knud Lavard

As pointed out above, the presentations of St. Knud Lavard vary in the different sources. Among such different accounts, one of the most important is the so-called Roskilde Chronicle (*Chronicon Roskildense*), probably finished less than a decade after the murder of Knud Lavard, and thus long before his canonization, except for a chapter added later, which must have been written in the very early thirteenth century. This chronicle gives a less one-sided presentation of the various protagonists in the narrative; in particular, it is very favorably inclined toward Prince Magnus, without condoning the murder. The last chapter briefly mentions Valdemar’s victory in the civil war and Eskil’s crowning of King Valdemar. Knud Lavard is positively described in the chronicle, although only in passing, and the murder is seen as instigated by the devil. Although the canonization of Knud Lavard is not mentioned in the chapter that was added later, Knud is twice referred to as a saint and martyr, in the capacity of his being Valdemar’s father. Interestingly, the oldest manuscript containing the Roskilde Chronicle is the thirteenth-century manuscript containing the offices and masses of St. Knud Lavard, and both parts of the manuscript are written by the same hand.

In addition to the chronicles mentioned thus far and the preserved liturgy of the time, a number of other versions of the offices of Knud Lavard exist, but from much later. In particular, a number of printed liturgies, breviaries, and missals are preserved around 1500 in liturgical books, mainly from Denmark but also from other Nordic countries. Variations between these late offices themselves and also between the thirteenth-century version and the later ones are quite considerable. This is particularly apparent with regard to the day or days on which the feasts of St. Knud Lavard were celebrated.

In the aforementioned letter to Archbishop Eskil announcing the canonization, the pope had specifically pointed to June 25 as the dies
natalis of St. Knud, rather than to the day of his death, which is not even mentioned in the papal letter:

Accordingly, therefore, insofar as we have received the mentioned king’s and your petition to canonise him, and assuming his merits by the mercy of God and the blessed apostles Peter and Paul, we have inscribed him in the list of the saints in accordance with the general council of our brothers, deciding by apostolic authority that you shall celebrate his dies natalis seven days before the kalends of July [i.e. June 25].

According to Saxo, Knud had (finally) been convinced by his men to carry a sword before going to Haraldsted Forest to meet Magnus on January 7, which he also tried—in vain—to draw as Magnus and his men assailed and killed him. According to this narrative, Knud did not fulfill the requirements for being a martyr, and this might be taken as a possible explanation for why the pope did not mention Knud as a martyr, pointing to June 25 as his saint’s day. The legend, on the other hand, explicitly mentions that Knud Lavard refused to wear a weapon as he went to Haraldsted Forest and thus was killed without any attempt to defend himself. June 25, the day of the translation, also happened to be the day on which King Niels was murdered in Schleswig by angry townsmen in 1134, as he fled after having lost the battle at Fodevig (where Magnus was killed). Thomas Riis has speculated that Valdemar may have wished to have the celebration of Knud on that very day as a means of preventing a possible request for the canonization of King Niels.

As is obvious from the thirteenth-century offices, both January 7 and June 25 came to be celebrated, since the manuscript contains a full office and a mass for each of the two days, the In passione sancti Kanuti on January 7, and the In translacione sancti Kanuti on June 25. Many parts of the sung texts are the same for both days, as, for example, the Introit to the masses, indicated jointly for both days and explicitly characterizing Knud as a martyr in the rubric and the beginning of the sung text:

\[
\text{Introit on the holy day either the day of his passion or his translation:} \\
\text{Let us all rejoice in the Lord; celebrating the solemn day of his} \\
\text{passion in honour of Knud the martyr angels rejoice and praise the} \\
\text{Son of God [...].} \]

As already implied, in the preserved manuscripts and printed versions, liturgical items often do not agree between the various offices and masses
in different localities and at different times. Mainly, I refer to the work of Michael Chesnutt and, most recently, Jan Brunius who, based on the recently catalogued fragment collection at the State Archives in Stockholm, *Catalogus codicum mutilorum* (CCM), available in a database, has published a survey of Nordic saints in medieval mass books including the preserved and now catalogued fragments. These, as summarized very briefly, confirm the impressions based previously on the few earlier known manuscripts and the surviving printed material. 30

I shall briefly mention a few examples confirming this: the incipit of the Introit in the Ringsted office, as we have just seen, is *Gaudeamus omnes* whereas the printed *Missale Lundense* of 1514 has *Letabitur iustus* and yet another Introit for the feast of the translation, *Justus non conturbabitur*.31 Also, the collect prayers and many other items do not coincide with what is found in the masses of the Ringsted offices. In Sweden there are very few sources for the cult of Knud Lavard. However, in Västerås in eastern Sweden (northwest of Stockholm, southwest of Uppsala), Knud Lavard was celebrated and a number of records of masses and offices in his honor are preserved throughout the Middle Ages, mainly for January 7, but in one case seemingly for June 25. Otherwise there are only scant notices of celebrations for Knud Lavard in Sweden.32

In Lund, as already indicated, both feasts for St. Knud Lavard were celebrated, as was generally the case in Denmark.33 In its calendar for January, the *Missale Aboense* (1488) indicates a feast for St. Canute the King on January 7, although the *dies natalis* for Canute the King was July 10.34 Finnish scholars have explained this as a result of coincidences involving not only the two Canutes but also St. Henry of Finland, which in the end made Knud Lavard lose the day to Knud the King.35

A different type of calendar indicates the celebration of a “Canutus” on January 7, the day of Knud Lavard’s martyrdom. This is the so-called Gotland Runic Calendar of 1328, written on parchment and preserved only through Ole Worm’s early seventeenth-century transcription. Worm published the calendar, in the belief that it was Danish, in his *Fasti Danici* of 1626; in more recent times its provenance has been relocated to Gotland.36

A much wider and, as it seems, much more important reception of the cult of St. Knud Lavard, and very likely the main phenomenon behind the scattered records of the cult mentioned here, occurred through the establishing of guilds in the saint’s honor.37 The medieval guilds have been studied for more than a hundred years, and preserved statutes of medi-
eval Danish guilds were published around 1900 by the Danish historian Camillus Nyrop. Since then, a number of historians have tried to understand the activities and the social and legal functions of these guilds. Guilds in honor of St. Knud Lavard were established quite early and seem to have been major and powerful centers for the promotion of the saint as well as possibly of trade and other financial and social agendas. Guilds of a St. Knud (it is not always clear which of the two saints) existed during the Middle Ages in a number of places around the Baltic Sea most of them—at least in periods—belonging to Denmark. These include Ystad as well as Malmö (both in present-day Sweden), Visby on Gotland, Ringsted on Zealand, of course, and importantly also in Schleswig and Flensburg in the duchies in the Danish–German borderlands, as well as in the Estonian town of Tallinn, known as Reval during the medieval period.

One problem that—as just implied—is reflected in many preserved statutes is that it can often be impossible to determine whether a St. Knud guild (a Knudsgilde in Danish) was in honor of Knud Lavard or Knud the King. Often references are simply to St. Knud which makes it impossible to know which of these two related martyr saints, both canonized during the twelfth century, was meant. The general opinion in the present is that the guilds seem originally to have been founded in honor of Knud Lavard. Beginning in around 1300, however, Knud the King seems to have regained his position as the main Danish saint, and he may in several cases have replaced Knud Lavard as patron of the guilds. As Lars Bisgaard has noted, some historians have suggested that guilds by this time could no longer distinguish between the two identically named saints, so that the two saints were conflated. Bisgaard connects this mysterious change of patron to the highly contentious political conflicts concerning the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein from around the second half of the thirteenth to the mid-fifteenth century. These caused the perception of Canute Lavard, in the words of Bisgaard, to change “from the venerable father of Valdemar I to a dubious ancestor of the dukes in Schleswig.” Consequently, his cult may have been suppressed by the Danish kings during this period. An official repression of the cult of St. Knud Lavard during this time may also be reflected in the lack of visual representations of Knud Lavard during this period, and in the greater number of preserved offices for King Knud than for Knud Lavard. A certain renaissance of the cult of Knud Lavard may have taken place in Denmark around 1500, especially on Zealand.
One of the earliest sources for the establishing of the Knud guilds, written by King Valdemar I in ca. 1177, is a letter addressed to a group of “Gotland-travellers” who have recently established a guild, which the king praises and also wants not only to protect and support but even to join:

For this reason, we embrace the connection with your brotherhood and partnership, which you have established with a healthy intention and a most useful foresight in honour of the martyr St. Knud, with the grace of much favour [...].

Therefore, we instruct your community, that the annual alms, which are received in this fraternity, either with you in Gotland or in all towns of our kingdom, wherever the company of blessed Knud is celebrated, shall be transferred to the place of this martyr by faithful men, [...].

Historians have understood this to concern a guild in honor of Knud Lavard; this seems reasonable in view of King Valdemar’s particular connection to this cult, but also because the source for the letter is a copy from the sixteenth century preserved in Ringsted in a collection of letters concerning royal gifts to the shrine of Knud Lavard. The letter seems, on the one hand, to point to the religious importance of this brotherhood for the promotion and support of the cult of St. Knud Lavard. On the other hand it may also be indicative of the guild’s political significance, since the king declares that he wants to be a member and “we will be part of everything in which your lawful institution will consent with the determination of our authority.” The letter mentions trade and possible disagreements with opponents, which led Lauritz Weibull in particular to regard the guilds of St. Knud as having been trade organizations from the beginning.

In any case, whichever social functions such guilds had, they also had a religious and festive practice connecting them to their patron saint. The beginning of a preserved fragment (from an eighteenth-century transcription) of statutes dated 1231 for a confraternity specifying St. Knud Lavard as its patron not only mentions the patron saint, but specifically calls attention to the saint’s passion. This seems to provide a close identification between saint and confraternity, emphasizing a contemporary aspect of functionality: “Statutes for the society of St. Knud of Ringsted, martyred in the forest of Haraldsted, which senior and wise men once invented for the use of this society; they established these to serve the members in good as well as difficult times.” Interestingly, a guild explicitly dedicated
to St. Knud the King could hold its councils on specified feast days, which included both of Knud Lavard’s feast days, as well as the feast day of St. Knud the King, as seen here in statutes from a Malmö guild around 1300:

Also, we have assigned the following four days for celebrating the general council [...] The first day is the Feast of St. Knud the day after the Feast of St. John the Baptist; the second is the birthday [saint’s day] of St. Knud the King and Martyr; the third the Feast of St. Knud the day after Epiphany, and the fourth on the second drinking day of the society.49

Similarly, the statutes for a guild in Malmö (ca. 1350), where it cannot be determined which of the two saints Knud was the official patron, indicate days for holding masses during the year for deceased brethren and for the preservation of the guild on feast days including the days of martyrdom of both Knuds:

Concerning masses to be held. For the preservation of the guild and the freeing of the souls of the dead brothers, we submit that five masses should be held every year; the first on Pentecost [...] the second time on the day of St. Knud the King [...] the third time on St. Knud’s day which comes after Christmas [...].50

The last day must refer to St. Knud Lavard’s day of martyrdom on January 7, the day after Epiphany. The guilds in honor of St. Knud, whichever Knud that might have been, provide us with the insight that, at least as time went by, the distinctions between the two Knuds were not always clearly marked, but also that in a number of cases the feast days of both were marked, remembered, and celebrated, regardless of which Knud was the (main) patron. One would imagine, however, although this is not specified in the preserved documents, that the mass formulas would have depended on the day of the celebration, and that the reference to the days of St. Knud Lavard would have necessitated a mass for Knud Lavard, thus making an actual forgetting or repression of the cult difficult.

This situation brings to mind the celebration of St. Knud the King on St. Knud Lavard’s day of martyrdom, January 7, in Turku.51 That it was possible to substitute one Knud for the other, deliberately or not, in Turku as well as in some guilds, points to a loss of the functional memory of the Saints Canute, making it unimportant to the communities in question which of the saints actually was celebrated.
Tallinn has preserved much material on its guild of St. Knud and how members of the guild played a crucial role in the local Lutheran Reformation. Whether it could originally have been founded as a guild in honor of St. Knud Lavard seems doubtful. In any case, the cults of the two saints Knud played a substantial role throughout most of the Baltic Sea region. On the other hand, it is much less clear to what extent these cults and the saints themselves were remembered in close connection with the historical narratives, indeed to what extent there was a consciousness of the protagonists of the cults, at least after the beginning of the fourteenth century. The overall picture points in the direction of the already-mentioned idea of a general de-inhabitation of the cultural memory of St. Knud Lavard underway toward the end of the thirteenth century.

Refunctionalizing St. Knud Lavard?

Summarizing the tentative results of the previous section, Canute the Duke seems in the later Middle Ages to a great extent to have disappeared from the functional memory of the Canute guilds. The same may have been the case more generally in late medieval Denmark, possibly—as mentioned earlier (and suggested by Lars Bisgaard)—because of royal suppression of his cult. However, the name of St. Canute and a cult of this saint clearly continued to exist in some places, something which also entailed the preservation of the feast days of St. Canute the Duke. But the memories of his identity and of the narratives about him seem in these situations to have become uninhabited and to no longer have clear ties to contemporary concerns. The area around Ringsted is probably an exception to this, since the shrine and the cult of Canute the Duke remained in force there until the Reformation. Similarly, the pilgrims’ chapel in nearby Haraldsted, ruins of which are still extant, was closely associated with the cult of Knud Lavard.

The way a guild was identified through its patron and its purpose as recorded in its statutes must be assumed to have had an important share in the perceived identities of its members. At a point where this collective identity was no longer explicitly connected to a functional memory of the patron saint, the same would have been true for most individual members of the guild. They would most likely no longer perceive their identity as connected to Knud Lavard’s doings, his life and death or the texts and music celebrating his feast days, even if the guild had originally been founded in his honor, and even if Knud Lavard masses were still sung on
(some of) the special feast days of the guild. The collective as well as the individual memory of Knud Lavard, in such situations, had then become a storage memory, because behind the name and the practices of the guild, it would still be possible to trace back to historical information and to retrieve the background for the lost corporate identity of the guild. The memory was not deleted; it had become uninhabited for (at least most) members.

As also briefly touched upon earlier in this chapter, there are signs of a reinhabitation of this memory in Denmark around 1500. As Bisgaard has emphasized, there was no longer any reason to repress the cult, but the question remains as to whether there were particular reasons to revive it. The documentation for a purported revival shortly before the Danish Lutheran reformation (officially imposed by Christian III in 1536) is too scant to allow any strong conclusions to be drawn. Altogether, however, across the Reformation, an overall picture shows that the cult is represented in all Danish printed liturgical books of the early sixteenth century and that there was a literary and historical interest in the traditional narrative about the murder of Canute the Duke in the sixteenth century after the abolishment of the actual cult. The late sixteenth-century saint’s play, *Ludus de sancto Canuto duce*, which is likely a rewriting of an earlier—now lost—saint’s play from Ringsted, and the Lutheran church minister and historian Anders Sørensen Vedel’s rewriting of an earlier ballad about Knud Lavard (also preserved from the sixteenth century) in accordance with post-Reformation sensibilities are remarkable manifestations of such an interest. Again, several centuries later, reinhabititations of the memory of St. Knud Lavard occurred in Danish poems, songs, novels, and plays during the so-called Romantic medieval revivals of the nineteenth century, as well as in other literary treatments of Knud Lavard up to this day. Such reinhabititations depend on new historical circumstances; they are concerned with an interest in identity, appropriating figures of the past as models for moral identification. The more specific circumstances for wanting to refunctonalize the narratives of such figures, including Knud Lavard, are primarily to be approached through interpretation of the reapprpropriated narratives in their cultural contexts.

The Danish literary critic Hans Brix has sought to explain why the *Ludus de sancto Canuto duce* came to be preserved in a manuscript dated to 1574. He found the background in the political turmoil of the 1520s, without being very explicit about the reasons for a particular interest in Knud Lavard at that time. The *Ludus* has clear local ties to Ringsted (the copyist
of the manuscript was a senior teacher at the Latin school in Ringsted), and an interest in the cult in Ringsted in the late fifteenth century is not strange, since the local memory may simply never have become uninhabited, which could explain the interest in Knud Lavard even after the Reformation. The continued presence in the church of the shrine of Knud Lavard and the painted depiction of the saint in the vault above the intersection of the nave and transept would most likely have been able to keep a functional memory living in Ringsted throughout the Middle Ages.  

A likely scenario could be that the possible revival of the cult around 1500 and the interest in the figure of Knud Lavard had its origin in the local milieu of Ringsted, where his memory was (probably) not uninhabited. The early sixteenth century was a period of particular political and religious turmoil in Denmark, culminating in a civil war and finally in the Danish Reformation in 1536. Thus, the narrative about an honest Christian, a hero of the past, a holy person, innocently killed because of a struggle for royal power, may well have been seen as worth a revival during these decades.

Altogether, there are good reasons to think of a post-Reformation re-inhabitation of the memory of Knud Lavard as part of a quest for a national historical identity at a time when some traditional religious values and traditional narratives based on the saints’ calendar of the Roman Church were endangered for theological (ideological) reasons. The Ludus seems to corroborate this, since it represents Canute the Duke primarily as a Christian hero and contains none of the traditional cultic characteristics of a saint’s play. It is impossible to say whether this is the result of a rewriting of a pre-Reformation saint’s play at the time of the copying of the manuscript almost forty years after the Reformation.

In any case, around the same time, in the second half of the sixteenth century, the Lutheran humanist Anders Sørensen Vedel deliberately worked to establish a Danish historical identity. Because Norway was ruled by the Danish Crown, aspects of Norwegian identity might also be considered to contribute to a larger sense of Danish historical identity. Vedel did this partly by translating Saxo’s Gesta Danorum into Danish (for the first time, published in 1575) and partly through collecting and rewriting ballads sung among the nobility. Many of these ballads were about historical heroes of the past; some of these were medieval royal saints like Knud Lavard, Knud the King, and the major Norwegian saint King Olav (venerated throughout and beyond the Nordic region during the Middle Ages). Vedel published a volume of Danish ballads, A Book of 100 Ballads,
in 1591. Vedel’s refunctionalization of these tales of saints, including that of Knud Lavard, involved a critical reassessment of the narrative. This entailed the purging of what Vedel explicitly viewed as Catholic superstitions, as well as an emphasis on the moral and heroic aspects of the narrative, so that Knud Lavard appeared as a figure to identify with in the new Lutheran Danish context.59

New historical situations can make a stored memory vital or at least useful again. Such favorable historical circumstances may not occur everywhere in the same way, or even at all. Knud Lavard’s memory did not, naturally, have a similar relevance all around the Baltic Sea as in Denmark after the Reformation, and thus it did not become inhabited again outside Denmark; here, however, I have tried to refunctionalize this storage memory as a resource for understanding the exemplified difference in the development of the memory of this saint around the Baltic Sea.

NOTES


2 This collaborative research project was carried out by groups at five European universities (2011–2014) funded by the research councils of the respective countries. I herewith gratefully acknowledge the support of the Danish Council for Independent Research: Humanities (FKK).

3 Two other chapters in this volume also form part of this subproject, see the articles by Tracey R. Sands and Martin Wångsgaard Jürgensen in this volume. See also Anu Mänd’s chapter in this volume, which is part of the subproject carried
out at the University of Tallinn: “Shifting Identities: Communities in Medieval and Early Modern Livonia (c. 1200–c. 1700) through the Prism of Saints.”


For modern references, see note 1 above.


The main medieval liturgical textual source materials, detached, however, from the liturgical context, were printed in M. C. Gertz, ed., *Vitae Sanctorum Danorum* (Copenhagen, 1910), 2:189–247. These include the Matins lessons, some texts of liturgical songs as well as the few preserved fragments from the almost completely lost vita of Canute the Duke by Robert of Ely, probably written in the 1130s, and also Pope Alexander III’s canonization bull (1169). In Michael Chesnutt, *The Medieval Danish Liturgy of St. Knud Lavard* (Copenhagen, 2003) the full text of the liturgy is edited and compared to other (much later) preserved printed liturgies for St. Knud Lavard around 1500. Finally, and most recently, the above-mentioned thirteenth-century manuscript has been published in facsimile with full transcriptions of text and music in Bergsagel, ed., *The Offices and Masses of St. Knud Lavard*, 2 vols., with introductions and commentary.


In Book 14 of Saxo’s *Gesta Danorum* it is made clear that Eskil presided over the solemnities in Ringsted on June 25, 1170. See the net edition of Saxo’s *Gesta Danorum* (14.40.12) maintained by The Royal Library, Copenhagen: http://www2.kb.dk/elib/lit/dan/saxo/lat/or.dsr/14/40/index.htm. As pointed
out by Dubois and Ingwersen, “St. Knud Lavard: A Saint for Denmark,” p. 154, the somewhat later Older Zealand Chronicle (Vetus chronica Sialandie), mid-thirteenth century, claims that it was the bishop of Roskilde, Absalon, who carried out the solemnities. Olrik, Knud Lavards Liv, pp. 284–85, combines the two statements, believing that Absalon assisted Eskil. Saxo’s account must be preferred, not only because it was written closer to the event, but also because of Saxo’s connection to Absalon, his patron. He would surely have mentioned it if Absalon had been the presider, cf. Karsten Friis-Jensen, “In the Presence of the Dead,” see esp. p. 202, and also p. 197 concerning the relations between Eskil and Valdemar.


Breengaard, Muren om Israels Hus, English summary, p. 332, see the full discussion on pp. 263–319.


See the Royal Library’s aforementioned net edition of the Gesta Danorum (13.6.6 and 13.6.9): http://www2.kb.dk/elib/lit/dan/saxo/lat/or.dst/13/6/index.htm. See also Friis-Jensen, “In the Presence of the Dead,” p. 203.


Riis, “The Historical Background,” p. xx.
Latin text and music in Bergsagel, ed., *The Offices and Masses*, 2:40, see also the facsimile edition in vol. 1, f. 39 r–v: “Officium in die sancto utrumque in passione et in translacione: Gaudeamus omnes in Domino, diem festum celebrantes in honore Kanuti martiris de cuius passione/translacione gaudent angeli et col·laudant filium Dei [...].”


See *Missale lundense* (Paris, 1514), “De sancto Kanuto duce et martyre,” f. 184 r. and “De sancto Kanuto duce translatio eiusdem,” f. 199 r–v. I have consulted the online version of the Royal Library, Copenhagen on 9 February 2013. See also Chesnutt, *The Medieval Danish Liturgy*, p. 36.


See Chesnutt, *The Medieval Danish Liturgy* (as in note 21).

Brunius, *Atque Olavi*, pp. 35–36. The provenance of this missal is Åbo, Finland (today most often referred to as Turku).


Nils Lithberg and Elias Wessén, eds., *Den gotländska runkalendern* (Stockholm, 1939), p. 2 and facsimile of p. 1 verso from Worm’s original copying of the runes preserved in a manuscript now in the Royal Library, Copenhagen. See also Elias Wessén’s Preface, pp. vii–xiv.


See Bisgaard, “The Transformation of St. Canute Guilds,” p. 82, and also the brief summary of St. Knud guilds still in activity after the Lutheran reformation and their histories in Wallin, *De nordiska Knustgillena*, pp. 11–17.

41 Bisgaard, “The Transformation of St. Canute Guilds,” p. 88. Bisgaard here claims that “no mural in the two-hundred-year period 1250–1450” of Knud Lavard is extant. However, at least one exception to this must be mentioned: the famous picture of St. Knud Lavard in the western vault of the intersection of the nave and transept in St. Bendt’s Church in Ringsted (the Church where St. Knud Lavard’s shrine was placed on its high altar). This has been dated to probably shortly before 1300 by the art historian Søren Kaspersen in the volumes about Danish murals in the Middle Ages published by the National Museum of Denmark, see Søren Kaspersen, “Dynastipolitik,” in Danske Kalkmalerier, vol. 2, Tidlig Gotik 1275–1375, ed. Ulla Haastrup (Copenhagen, 1989), pp. 84–87.

42 This is difficult to know since very little information about Danish liturgy between the thirteenth century and the printed liturgical books of the early sixteenth century is extant. However, measured by the situation in Swedish liturgical books and manuscripts, Knud Lavard was definitely celebrated much less than Knud the King, see Brunius, Atque Olavi, pp. 33–38 and the tables pp. 108–14. It must be remembered in this context, that during the fifteenth century the three Scandinavian kingdoms were united in the Kalmar union under the Danish Crown (agreed in 1397).

43 See the presentation in Chesnutt, The Medieval Danish Liturgy, pp. 67–76, of preserved poems, prayers, and, not least, the saint’s play Ludus de sancto Canuto duce, preserved, however, only from after the Danish Lutheran reformation in a unique manuscript dated to 1574 (as indicated in the manuscript), but possibly based on a pre-reformation play. Anders Sørensen Vedel’s late sixteenth-century rewritings of ballads, and the slightly earlier texts on which he based them, may be taken as a sign of a fairly active interest in Knud Lavard and other historical figures at this time. See Petersen, “The Image of St. Knud Lavard in his Liturgical Offices and its Historical Impact” (note 20, above). This could be difficult to account for if it does not derive from a relatively active cult of the saint around 1500. Further, visual representations of Knud Lavard in Danish churches are known again after 1460, see Bisgaard, “The Transformation of St. Canute Guilds,” p. 88.

44 C.A. Christensen, Herluf Nielsen and Lauritz Weibull, eds., Diplomatarium Danicum (Copenhagen, 1976–77), 3:93–95, quotation, pp. 94–95: “Inde est quod uestræ fraternitatis ac societatis connexionem, quam in honore sancti Kanuti martyris salubri consilio atque utili<ssi>ma prouidentia incoastis, magni faueris gratia amplectimur […]”. Properea praecipimus uniuersitati uestræ, quatenus eleemosynæ annuales, quæ proueniunt de cadem fraternitate, siue apud uos in
Gutlandia, siue in uniuersis ciuitatibus regni nostri, ubi conuiium beati Kanuti celebratur, ad locum eiusdem martyrpis per fideles homines transferantur [...].”


46 Christensen, Nielsen and Weibull, eds., *Diplomatarium Danicum*, 3:94: “[...] et in omnibus, in quibus uestra consenserit licta institutio, nostre authoritatris consensu participabimur.”

47 See Weibull, “St Knut i Österled,” pp. 88–89. See also the critical discussion in Gilkær, “In honore sancti Kanuti,” pp. 136–41: without denying that the tradesmen would often be members of these guilds, Gilkær doesn’t accept the claim that trade was the main objective at this point. Gilkær rather points to the common religious function of the Knud guilds up to the mid-thirteenth century. See further Bisgaard, “The Transformation of St. Canute Guilds,” pp. 77–78 and 83–84, pointing also to legal aspects of the guilds in the formation of municipal government.


49 Nyrop, *Danmarks Gilde- og Lavskraaer fra Middelalderen*, I, 70–71: “Hos autem quatuor dies sequentes ad celebrandum synodum deputavimus generalem [...]. Prima dies est festum sancti Canuti in crastino sancti Johannis Baptistæ, secunda natale sancti Canuti regis et martyrpis, tertia festum sancti Canuti in cras-tino epiphaniae et quarta in secunda die potationis convivii [...].”


51 See above at note 34–35.

52 See the discussion in Anu Mänd’s article in this volume. See also Wallin, *De nordiska Knutsgillena och reformationen*, pp. 15, 96, 111, and 128–47.

53 See above at note 43.

54 In general, the notion of a saint was not abolished by Lutheran reformers; saints were to be remembered but not venerated. See Carol Piper Heming, *Protestants and the Cult of the Saints in German-Speaking Europe, 1517–1531* (Kirksville, MO, 2003) and Nils Holger Petersen, “The Marian Feasts Across the Lutheran Reformation in Denmark: Continuity and Change,” in *Words and Matter: The Virgin Mary in Late Medieval Parish Life*, ed. Jonas Carlquist and Virginia Langum (Stockholm, 2015), pp. 199–219.

55 See above, note 43.
In the above-mentioned Copenhagen project, this reception history is studied, see Petersen, “The Image of St. Knud Lavard in His Liturgical Offices and Its Historical Impact” (see note 20). Here the sixteenth-century literary receptions of the Knud Lavard history (mentioned in this chapter) are discussed along with the modern treatments of Knud Lavard in Axel Juel’s play *Knud Lavard* (Copenhagen, 1932) and Maria Helleberg’s recent novel *Knud Lavard* (Copenhagen, 2011). Also included is B. S. Ingemann’s first historical novel, *Waldemar den Store og hans Mænd* (*Valdemar the Great and His Men*, 1824). This narrative poem, written in changing meters, follows the protagonist Duke Valdemar and his struggle to become king of Denmark and to secure the throne for his lineage. Although the action of the novel takes place after Knud Lavard’s death, he is an important reference throughout the narrative. St. Knud Lavard is seen as the ideal royal and saintly figure. At crucial points in the narrative, it is made clear that Christian salvation for the country has been embodied in the royalty manifested in the figures of St. Knud Lavard, Valdemar, and the future King Knud, who was crowned on the day of Knud Lavard’s translation, June 25, 1170. Each such—since the Middle Ages mainly artistic—representation of the Knud Lavard narrative appropriates or reinhabits the established medieval narrative, functionalising the memory of Knud Lavard in a new cultural context.


Concerning the painting in the vault, see above note 41.

See further the discussion in Petersen, “The Image of St. Knud Lavard in His Liturgical Offices and Its Historical Impact” of the *Ludus de sancto Canuto duce* and Vedel’s rewriting of a Knud Lavard ballad. The appropriations of St. Knud Lavard across the Reformation will be treated along with other topics concerning sainthood across the reformation of the Scandinavian countries in Martin Wångsgaard Jürgensen, Nils Holger Petersen and Tracey R. Sands, *Saints Across the Reformation*, in preparation.
Chapter Nine

Saints, Guilds, and Seals:
From Exclusivity to Competition

Lars Bisgaard

One of the fascinating aspects of saints in medieval societies is their ability to adapt. Not only did they perform in the liturgical sense, in ecclesiastical space; they also “flowed” to other surroundings. One important context in which saints played a central role was the medieval guild. Merchant guilds, crafts guilds, and religious fraternities all venerated a particular saint or saints as their patron/s. As the guild institution grew in importance during the Middle Ages and more and more brotherhoods were established, either in towns or in the countryside, there was a corresponding rise in the demand for saints not already adopted as patrons of extant guilds.

The church could offer a great variety of saints; some were only known locally or regionally, others were of a universal nature. Seen from a retrospective point of view, local saints seem to have had the greatest appeal during the early Middle Ages, whereas the universal ones became more attractive as the Christian institutions became culturally dominant.¹ The exact time of this shift may vary from region to region in Europe. Interestingly, the old local saints seem to have had a kind of revival at the end of the Middle Ages. One way to explain these fluctuations might be found in the newly competitive environment that most of the guilds found themselves in from at least the end of the fourteenth century onwards. And this was not the only way the internal competition among the guilds made an impact. It is likely that it affected the very way saints were used within the guilds. On the one hand, a great deal of representational material depicting saints is found among the belongings of the guilds in the fifteenth century;² on the other hand, it is also clear that guilds were forced to reconsider how best to use their patrons in their communication with God and society.
This chapter will focus on a particular medium in this process, namely the guild seals. Seals were essential for guilds in so far as a seal expressed that the guild that possessed it was recognized as a legal agent. By sealing a document, guilds sanctioned that they had approved a transaction or had given their consent to a certain action. Or, if the guilds were the initiators, they informed others about decisions taken, property bought or sold, etc. In that sense, the very existence of the guild was expressed by the seal. From this vital function, one might formulate the hypothesis that the writing and the images on the seal were at the core of the identity of the guild.

This study will investigate the guild seals of medieval Denmark. In most European countries, guild seals are well documented and preserved. They have survived in different ways and for different reasons. Firstly, guilds themselves took care of the seals. They invested in boxes to keep the seals safe and thus guarantee the legitimacy of their documents. From time to time seals were changed. This might occur if the old matrix was broken, if its image had gone out of fashion, or simply because the seal had been lost. Former seals still might survive hanging under documents in the archive of the guilds or in the magistrate’s archives. When nineteenth-century historians sought out different archives in search of seals to be published in large editions, they found several among the craft guilds themselves.

Secondly, seals in general were popular objects among the antiquarians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Some antiquarians acquired whole collections of seals, whose seemingly peculiar or exotic qualities, especially if the guild no longer existed, made them particularly attractive. In Denmark, some of the oldest guild seals, from the end of the thirteenth century, have survived due to the effort of antiquarians. A variant of this is drawings of no-longer-extant seals, reproduced by the antiquarians. Unfortunately, it was often only the inscriptions that were copied, while the image was omitted and described in words. A third group comes from modern findings. Archaeological excavations of medieval towns or royal castles have contributed a small but significant group of seals. Frequently, these seal matrices are damaged, but from time to time an intact example emerges. Some seals have also been found by chance. The most remarkable case in the Danish material took place in 1927, when some local fishermen outside the town of Hobro brought up a zinc bucket in their net, and in it found a medieval seal matrix testifying that the town had had a guild of St. Knud, like so many other towns. Fifty-seven
different seals from extinct guilds have survived from Denmark. To this must be added the seals from surviving craft guilds.

This short description of the material makes it clear that the existing seals have been compiled and brought together from all possible sources and situations. The disparate nature they represent makes it difficult even to give a precise dating of the seals. Poul B. Grandjean, the cautious editor of the Danish seals, would likely have avoided any attempt at dating, had he not been under serious pressure. Under these circumstances it would be daring to try to contextualize the individual seals. Instead, the focus here will be on some general characteristics and shifts to be found in the overall development of the seals.

The First Guilds with Saints as Patrons:
St. Knud’s Guilds

Danish historiography on guilds has never questioned the close connection between saints and guilds. In the nineteenth century, the inherent Protestant tradition was so strong that saints were simply viewed as a Catholic fabrication, unworthy of too much attention. Saints were registered as part of the package that came with Christianity, and although some of the surviving guild statutes did go back to the late twelfth century, and cast a rare light on the first Christian period, historians more or less neglected this because they were much more interested in whether the guild material could contain traces of pre-Christian Nordic culture. This approach was complicated by the work of the German scholar, Max Pappenheim. He postulated an institution of sworn brotherhood among the ancient Germanic peoples, and had spotted the early Danish guild statutes as a possible means of proving it. On the other hand, more recent scholarship on guilds has emphasized the nationalistic nature of this older approach, arguing that the patron saint signaled a clearly Christian institution, first seen in the Carolingian burial guilds and later in merchant guilds from Brabant and Flanders.

This approach is quite different from that of political historians, who have written extensively on how the idea of sanctity entered Danish political discourse at an early point. This first occurred around 1100, when the Danish king Knud IV was canonized by the pope less than two decades after he was violently killed in a church in Odense in 1086. Modern literary scholars and theologians have also stressed the ability of local saints to
reconcile and unite different groups. Of particular importance were the translations of the relics of local saints to newly built churches of their own. It has been argued that such occasions functioned as grand rituals entering the collective memory as a point of no return.¹¹

This argument may seem convincing, but it does not explain why only some of the local holy persons had lasting success, nor, indeed, why some of them later saw a revival. According to a recent survey of Scandinavian holy men and women, eight local saints appeared in Denmark before St. Knud did in 1100, and another eight after him.¹² Some of the early ones have indeed long been forgotten. In a recent study on St. Knud it is argued that even though the canonization of Knud was well planned and his vita was given an international touch, it did not prevent his cult from losing much of its attractiveness within a century.¹³ The major reason for this was that the new alliance in power in Denmark under King Valdemar I (r. 1157–1182) clearly distanced itself from the old dynasty and thereby from St. Knud. In fact, Valdemar sought to promote a martyr from his own family line. The choice was obvious, because one of the triggers to the newly ended civil wars (1137–1157) had been the betrayal and murder in 1131 of Valdemar’s own father, Knud Lavard. During his lifetime, Knud Lavard had served as duke of Schleswig and seemingly also become knes [king] of the Abodrites in 1126. His canonization was crowned by success in 1169.

If there ever was a mythopoietic moment¹⁴ in medieval Denmark, it took place in 1170, when the relics of Knud Lavard were translated to the newly erected Church of St. Mary in Ringsted, a few miles from the place where Knud had been murdered twenty-nine years earlier. In the presence of the entire Danish establishment, King Valdemar’s son, who bore his grandfather’s name, was designated heir to the throne, while the liturgy proclaimed the will of God behind the dynasty.¹⁵

For our purposes, it is noteworthy that guilds dedicated to the new saint arose in the sources almost immediately. In a document from ca. 1177, it is stated that Knud Lavard was celebrated by brotherhoods (fri-ternitas/societas) that held the feast for the saint (convivium beati Kanuti celebratur) in all towns of the realm (uniuersis ciuitatibus regni nostri).¹⁶ King Valdemar himself chose to be a member of at least one of these guilds, that of the Gotland traders. All the guilds were at the same time obliged to send yearly offerings to the saint’s shrine in Ringsted (eleemosynae annuales). This implies an early, well-organized guild structure, which is later stressed in a fragment of statutes, dated 1231, that aldermænni de convivio
s. Kanuti had compiled in Ringsted. This could be interpreted to mean that a superstructure existed above the different local guilds. Whether or not this was the case, we are later informed that eighteen aldermen from different guilds of St. Knud met in the commercial town of Skanør in 1256.

The extraordinary arrangement of this religious guild structure, royally protected and promoted, as it were, comes to light if it is compared with other contemporary guilds and their use of patronage of local saints. Except for the later St. Erik guilds whose patron was King Erik Plovpenning (r. 1241–1250), briefly mentioned in the second half of the thirteenth century, none of the local Danish saints ever came to be guild patrons. This was true even of the old King Knud, the first royal saint in Denmark. Although the antiquarians were convinced that the patron for the St. Knud’s guilds must have been the old King Knud, their assumption was refuted by a thorough investigation into the surviving statutes, which demonstrated that the feast days celebrated by the guilds were those of Knud Lavard and not the calendar days of King Knud. However, what really complicated the matter was an apparent shift in mentality as the Middle Ages progressed, because in the fifteenth century the saint venerated by the guilds was without doubt King Knud the martyr. According to Petersen it was easy to mix up these two members of the royal family, both with the same name and both canonized. We will return to other arguments later.

Though the promotion of Knud Lavard might well have been inspired by the success of St. Olav in Norway, none of the devotional and popular elements that were so characteristic of both the early and later Olav cult seem ever to have been achieved by St. Knud. Strikingly few depictions of St. Knud have been found in Danish murals in parish churches. Secondly, the martyrdom of St. Knud is not generally depicted in retables, though that form was highly popular from the end of the fourteenth century and onward. Thirdly, only one of the guild altars described in the sources is specifically said to have been dedicated to Knud Lavard. When Knud Lavard finally appears in one or two murals and retables around 1500, it is probably more correct to describe this as part of a general trend, in which high medieval saints are reintroduced, rather than reflecting a specific interest in the saint.

It is hard to evade the conclusion that the guilds of St. Knud from the beginning were special constructions in which the saint and the guild idea were deliberately matched. Whatever purpose they served—modern
scholars have mostly pointed at mercantile interests, but crusading ideology has also been suggested\textsuperscript{23}—the combination of saint and guild proved to be a success. In fact, St. Knud Lavard outshined all other saints with respect to patronage of guilds in Denmark. In sheer numbers, this local saint even overshadowed the Virgin Mary. A recent study refers to forty-seven guilds in his honor in Denmark and seven in Sweden.\textsuperscript{24} It is a paradox that such a widespread organization had so little impact on devotional life. So far, this question has not been addressed by historians.

The Seals of the Guilds of St. Knud

More seals have survived from the guilds of St. Knud than from any other guilds. In the editions of Grandjean, some thirty seals are registered. To this should be added the seals found in Sweden and Finland, especially the one from the Åland Islands, which has been suggested to originate from Allinge on Bornholm.\textsuperscript{25}

Moreover, these seals are exceptional in several ways: (1) They are without exception large seals, almost comparable to royal seals; (2) The saint is depicted with royal attributes; (3) The seals are quite old and come from a period when other guilds not yet had obtained the right to seal documents.

The size of the surviving seals ranges in diameter from 54 mm to 85 mm. Compared with late medieval seals, this is twice or three times the normal size (see below). The largest seal stems from Malmö, the smallest from the small island of Læsø.\textsuperscript{26} Many of the seals are known from matrices mostly fabricated in bronze, a few in an iron alloy, and a single one is made of brass, another one of lead.\textsuperscript{27} Royal seals from the time before 1340 generally measure between 70 mm and 90 mm.\textsuperscript{28} Royal seals are in other words slightly larger, but it should be remembered that half of the guild seals are actually larger than 70 mm.\textsuperscript{29} The difference is narrowed by the fact that the majority of the surviving royal seals are wax seals, and seal impressions are by nature a few millimeters larger than matrices. All in all, the seals from the St. Knud’s guilds are almost equal in size to the royal ones.

What is even more important is that the composition of royal seals and guild seals devoted to St. Knud is identical. The shape is round and the inscription runs along the rim. The focal point in the middle depicts, in the one case, a ruling king and, in the other, a ruling saint. Their appearance is much the same. They sit on a throne/bench, they wear a royal
crown, and they both have royal insignia such as an orb or a scepter. Recently the similarities between the two kinds of seals have been used to give a more precise dating to some of the guild seals (figures 9.1 and 9.2).\(^{30}\) The striking similarity must have been deliberate. The ecclesiastical seal tradition, which was developed in the same period, often showed representations with a similar combination of inscription and a saintly patron, as seen on the seals from the guilds of St. Knud. But the saint appears differently here. In the seal from Roskilde Chapter, St. Lucius, the patron of the cathedral, is encircled by the very buildings he is expected to protect, and which his spirit should fill and enrich (figure 9.3).\(^{31}\) This represents another understanding of the saint, which could also have been meaningful for the guilds of St. Knud, and which these guilds could have chosen. But they did not. They preferred or were ordered to operate within a strict royal tradition, already established. For later ecclesiastical seals, the main difference from royal seals is found in their shape. Bishops preferred oval seals up to the end of the fourteenth century (figure 9.4).\(^{32}\)

The exclusive character of the guilds of St. Knud is first and foremost shown by their early legal right to seal documents. This right was, for example, not obtained for the English guilds before the end of the fourteenth century.\(^{33}\) So far, this element has hardly played any role in the historiography of the Danish guilds, which is regrettable. Historians have thus missed the importance of contemporary discussions on legal rights for guilds. There seems to have been tension surrounding this matter both in Norway and in Denmark in the second half of the thirteenth century. The issue must have been whether or not to allow citizens the right to organize in guilds. At first, kings and bishops tried to ignore this demand, which was finally granted in the beginning of the fourteenth century. The condition seems to have been that guilds must be registered either with the church or, in towns, with the magistrate.\(^{34}\)

At the same time that the legal basis of guilds in general was being debated, the old guilds of St. Knud flourished as if they belonged to another world. Written statutes exist from the early 1190s in the city of Flensburg, and the seal from the guild in the town in Schleswig is dated to around 1200–1220. In the middle of the century comes the next group of statutes and seals, with eminent examples from Odense on Funen, Store Heddinge on Zealand, and Malmö in Scania. At least eighteen St. Knud's guilds existed in the year 1256, as already mentioned. However, it is from the second half of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth century that the majority of seals stem.
Figure 9.1  The royal seal of King Erik Menved, 1286–1319, wax. *Danske kongelige Sigiller*, Petersen and Thiset, p. 2f. and Plate 19a.

Figure 9.2  The seal of the guild of St. Knud in Aalborg, ca. 1275. *Danske Gilders Segl*, Grandjean, p. 23 and Plate 3a.

Figure 9.3  The seal of the Roskilde Cathedral Chapter cut in walrus tooth, ca. 1100–1150. *Gejstlige Sigiller*, Petersen, p. 18 and Plate XIII, no. 192.

Figure 9.4  The oval seal of Stigotus, bishop of Roskilde, 1277–1280. Inscription: STIGOTUS DEI GRATIA ROSKILDENSIS EPISCOPUS. *Gejstlige Sigiller*, Petersen, p. 15 and Plate X no. 152.
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A Shift of Patron

The dispersal of the seals from the guilds of St. Knud over time is not to be neglected. It raises the important question of which saint we meet at the focal point in the middle of the seal: St. Knud the Duke or St. Knud the King? Grandjean evaded the problem in his magisterial edition of seals by consistently designating the saint “the king.”35 In his introduction he explains that both duke and king are likely candidates; Knud Lavard had acquired a royal title [knes], so it could be he, whereas King Knud IV was a possibility for obvious reasons. Historians have followed Grandjean, or they have accepted the previous reading given by Petersen that the two saints were confused with one another. Only in recent years has the explanation proposed in 1957 by the Swedish historian Salomon Kraft been given due attention.36

Kraft pointed to the new political situation in Denmark in the second half of the thirteenth century. Once again, a Danish king had been murdered, this time Erik Plovpenning (r.1241–1250), and once again his descendants tried to have him canonized. However, the success of the past was not repeated this time, probably because of strained relations between the papacy and Denmark. Erik’s brother, Christoffer I, had usurped power in 1252, and he had Erik’s remains translated to Ringsted in 1258. At the same time, he played down the role of Knud Lavard.37 New guilds dedicated to St. Erik were soon established on Zealand with statutes that we know were copied directly from the guild of St. Knud.38 Whether they replaced the guilds of St. Knud or whether they existed side by side has yet to be answered fully.39 However, the situation in the 1250s was different than it had been in 1170. In the late twelfth century, the idea that the promotion of a saint might occur through a guild dedicated to that saint was quite new.40 Just under a century later, the guilds of St. Knud were well established and enjoyed a life of their own. How did these guilds react to the signals from the king and to the renewed political unrest?

According to Kraft, questions like these were sadly ignored by Weibull and his followers, whom Kraft accuses of a static perception of the Middle Ages. Weibull understood the guilds of St. Knud as state trade organizations and assumed that they had existed unaltered from 1177 on.41 It may be noted concerning Weibull’s state trade point of view that earlier Danish historians often explained the urban development in the high Middle Ages as a result of initiatives taken by kings.42 The era 1157–1241 was characterized by a strong centralized regime that did its best to mod-
ernize the old Nordic kingdom and bring in European standards, for example regarding ecclesiastical affairs. During this period, several new towns were also laid out, some with castles, others centered on a central market place. But the urbanization did not stop in 1241; in fact, there may be reason to believe that it even became stronger up to the arrival of the Black Death in 1350. This possibility was neglected by older historians, simply because the period from 1241 to 1340 was characterized as one of political unrest, which did not fit in with their a priori understanding of growth.

If the towns had been tied to the king during the years of centralization, new possibilities now arose in establishing municipalities with councils (råd) and mayors as front figures, while legal rights could be assured in laws inspired by Lübeck (stadsret). It is in these new circumstances that we have to understand the new context for the guilds of St. Knud. What might have started as royal pressure to replace their patron was in fact the beginning of a lasting transformation of the guilds.

Whether the guilds actually increased in number, as the many new seals may indicate, is difficult to say. The new seals, and thus the guilds that are now mentioned for the first time, may, in fact, arise from the policies of Christoffer I. But if the crown was attempting to promote Erik as the new patron—and it is remarkable that eighteen guilds of St. Erik are mentioned in 1266 as eighteen guilds of St. Knud were in 1256—the regime did not have a lasting success. In the long run St. Knud the King became the new patron.

Returning to the guilds seals themselves, it will now be clear that only the two eldest of the many seals from the guilds of St. Knud depict Knud Lavard, while all the rest show King Knud (figure 9.5 and 9.6). This means that the decisive moment occurred in the 1250s, when the conflict over Knud Lavard was at its height. The importance of this is evident. St. Knud the King can no longer be interpreted as a compromise achieved in the end of the conflict; rather, he had been a possibility from the beginning. It would appear that there was uncertainty concerning royal policy on the old St. Knud’s guilds. The seals from the guilds of St. Erik would support such an interpretation. Two seals have survived. The one represents an original interpretation of Erik’s murder in heraldic form; the other is almost an exact copy of the new type of seals for the guilds of St. Knud (figure 9.7 and 9.8). Only the name differed. In other words, the royal policy was not consistent. In the long run, it helped the guilds to evolve in different directions, depending on the specific situations in the individual towns.
Figure 9.5  The seal of the guild of St. Knud in Schleswig, ca. 1200–1220. Inscription: SIGILLVM CONFRATRUM SANCTI KANVTI DVCIS DE SLESWIC. Danske Gilders Segl, Grandjean, p. 10, Fig. 1.

Figure 9.6  The seal of the guild of St. Knud in Odense, ca. 1245. Inscription: SIGILLUM CONVIVARUM OTHENSIIU SANCTI KANUTI DE RINGSTAD. Danske Gilders Segl, Grandjean, p. 27 and Plate 5d.

Figure 9.7  The seal of the guild of St. Erik in Røddinge, ca. 1275. Inscription: S. CONVIVII BEATI ERICI REGIS DE RØTHINGE. Røddinge is located on the island of Møn, southeast of Zealand. Danske Gilders Segl, Grandjean, p. 20 and Plate 1d.

Figure 9.8  The seal of the guild of St. Erik in Kallehave, ca. 1275. Inscription: S’ CONVIVARUM SANCTI ERICI REGIS IN KALWEHAV. Danske Gilders Segl, Grandjean, p. 20 and Plate 1c.
Guilds of St. Knud and Castles

Another point of departure for evaluating what was at stake is to consider the royal castles. Several new castles were erected during the reigns of Valdemar I, Knud VI, and Valdemar II, from 1157 to 1241. Often the castles seem to have been planned as part of a town. This was the case in Kalundborg, Søborg, Nyborg, and slightly later in Vordingborg. Søborg, however, remained just a castle and no town emerged. Nonetheless, Søborg had a guild of St. Knud like other Danish towns. No statutes have survived from Søborg, only the seal reveals the guild’s existence. A similar situation is found for the locality of Lykkesholm. Where Lykkesholm lay or what exactly it was is not known, but it certainly was not a town with laws of its own. The most likely possibility is that it was a castle. The existence of a seal demonstrates that Lykkesholm also had a guild of St. Knud. This raises the question of why guild and castle appear to be related. An answer might be that the earliest guilds of St. Knud also functioned as a means for the king to retain his rights over towns, exercised through his castles.

If that was the case, it would explain why King Valdemar I could state so openly in his letter from ca. 1177—only a few years after the canonization of his father—that Knud Lavard’s feast was held in all towns of his realm, because the royal castles were indeed directly under his control. The king was also entitled to order that alms and gifts given during the guild drink should be sent to the saint’s shrine in Ringsted, a demand that could otherwise be seen as interfering with the duty to the Church and Christian obligations in general. As for the interpretation of Knud Lavard himself, he might have been what in Byzantium was called a military saint. The concept of the military saint had reached Rus’ in the late eleventh and early twelfth century. This would fit in with the background of Valdemar (the Danish name is derived from the Russian Vladimir), and can likewise explain why so few images of the saint (Knud Lavard) have survived in ordinary churches from the early period: the saint was primarily venerated in the castles.

I am not suggesting that the guilds of St. Knud were mainly castle guilds. That would be a most narrow interpretation. Many hints of trade activity are found in the sources right from the beginning, and it would not serve any purpose to deny it. But what I am suggesting is that in the end of the twelfth century it is difficult to separate religious duties, royal control, town government, and trade considerations from each other. And
very likely the people at that time did not make that intellectual distinction. The elasticity of the guild concept could be of great help in uniting different purposes. The success of the concept relied on its ability to bring people together. Moreover, of course, the goal could differ. The essential point is that the concept of the guild offered a platform through which different groups of people could meet in peace. Based on the statutes that have survived, the guild laws deal mainly with guild gatherings. Important topics include how and when the guild drink should take place, which religious activities were expected to take place, and how members should behave. The right of members to invite their own guests to the guild drink is recorded for the first time in 1256.48 The way it happens indicates that the guest procedure was well known and that there was nothing new about it. Interestingly, the exclusivity of the St. Knud's guilds is stressed at the same time. New stipulations were added in Odense between ca. 1245 and 1300, stating that no baker could hereafter be a member of the guild.49 This may indicate that Odense was on its way to allowing more than one guild.

As the process of urbanization continued, the many different functions of the St. Knud's guild were split up. What began as a royal attempt to change the patron of the guild in the 1250s gave the guilds the opportunity to adapt and modernize. In some of the major towns of the duchy of Schleswig, the St. Knud's guild henceforth appeared as “the highest guild” in town, which probably meant that it had some/all responsibility for governing.50 A similar situation may be seen in Tallinn.51 The only difference here is that the St. Knud's guild happened to be registered among the lower-ranking guilds. In Danish towns outside the duchy of Schleswig, the exclusivity of the guilds of St. Knud was maintained by regulations in the town laws. These stipulated that in legal cases, members of the guild required only half the number of men to swear themselves free that a non-member would have required.52 The transformation was accomplished in the end of the fourteenth century, when new guilds, exclusively for merchants, were established. The guilds of St. Knud had become a relic of times past.

Many historians have suggested that the heyday of the guilds of St. Knud is to be found in one action or period.53 However, this implies that the guilds had only a single function. This approach neglects the guilds’ formidable ability to adapt: in the first period the military saint, Knud Lavard, best represented their function; beginning in 1256, St. Knud the King was chosen, because he better expressed the notion of royalty. The
temporary shift to St. Erik as guild patron probably represented a short
desperate interregnum; but in the long run, as the guilds turned into
social guilds for the upper layers of a town and its hinterland, St. Knud the
King was the obvious choice. Most guilds remained wealthy in the later
Middle Ages, but some reports of impoverishment are also found. The
use of shifting Danish royal saints as guild patrons is indeed exceptional,
and makes the guilds of St. Knud different from all later guilds.

New Urban Guilds

The general urbanization led to the establishment of a variety of new
guilds. When and how the individual guilds entered the civic scene is dif-
ficult to establish precisely, because the sources are scant, but some general
points can be made concerning their development. The arrival of the men-
dicant orders in Denmark in the 1220s and 1230s undoubtedly put a great
deal of pressure on the traditional guilds. The Dominican and Franciscan
brotherhoods placed an emphasis on Christian obligations that expanded
the old guilds’ promise of common burial and yearly commemoration of
deceased members. Such new guilds often take the form of confraternities,
and from the end of the thirteenth century they occur in wills as recipients
of bequests. The confraternities, however, did not reject the institution
of the convivium and, in that respect, they may still be regarded as a branch
of a broad guild concept.

Some of the early seals from around and shortly after 1300 have
adopted the oval form, which indicates an inspiration from the church
authorities. The very word confraternitas is actually found on one of
the seals from the island of Gotland (figure 9.9). Next to Lübeck and
Rostock, Visby was one of the largest cities in northern Europe. Also from
Visby comes an oval seal from a guild of St. Lawrence, dated ca. 1300. St.
Lawrence seldom appears as a guild patron. One of the few such instances
occurs in the will of a canon employed in the Archdiocese of Lund. He left
bequests to two sodalicii in Lund: the one dedicated to the Holy Sepulchre,
the other one to St. Laurentius. The context indicates a religious guild.
The will is not dated, but stems from the years 1361–1375. This supports
the interpretation of the oval seal from the St. Lawrence guild in Visby as
an indication of the devotional nature of that guild (figure 9.10).

Although town authorities, as they developed, had no interest in
granting confraternities the right to use a seal, the church did have such
an interest. Bequests and even civic property could be handed over to
Figure 9.9  The seal of the guild of St. Nicholas, Gotland, ca. 1325. Inscription: 
S‘ CONFRATERNITATIS SANCTI NICHOLAY IN GOTLANDIA.  
Danske Gilders Segl, Grandjean, p. 34 and Plate 9f.

Figure 9.10  The seal belonging to the guild of St. Lawrence in Visby, ca. 1300.  
Inscription: S‘ FRATRUM DE CONVIVIO SANCTI LAURENCII.  
Danske Gilders Segl, Grandjean, p. 31f. and Plate 8c.
the confraternities, especially if their membership included priests who could celebrate masses to benefit the souls of donors. The precise nature of the dispute that took place between the bishop and the guilds in the town of Copenhagen during the 1290s is not known. However, in his attempt to negotiate a compromise, the bishop could have used the conflict as an opportunity to put confraternities on the same footing as traditional guilds. Another opportunity for cooperation between ecclesiastical authorities and the laity arose when members of the clergy gained the right to organize in guilds of their own. Such guilds, known as *calendae*, are registered in the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein in the beginning of the fourteenth century. They were common all over Denmark in the fifteenth century.

An integral part of the urbanization process was the establishment of craft guilds. Crafts are mentioned as parts of households in the eleventh century and in larger numbers during the twelfth century. How and when they formed their own guilds is disputed, but it seems, roughly speaking, to have happened between 1200 and 1400. One of the earliest craft seals comes from the smiths in the town of Horsens in Jutland (figure 9.11). This seal has very likely borrowed its composition from seals belonging to the guilds of St. Knud. The bronze matrix is round, the inscription is set in a broad rim, and the patron of the craft guild, St. Peter, sits on a throne with a tiara on his head. Apart from keys, papal attributes are rarely depicted together with St. Peter, who is generally shown as a standing apostle. This fact suggests that the depiction in this case was a deliberate choice. For reasons unknown, neither Nyrop nor Grandjean attempted to date the seal. There is little documentation of the circumstances under which this matrix was discovered, at the end of the nineteenth century. Thus, archaeological evidence cannot give any support for the dating of the seal. The inscription is written entirely in capital letters, which usually indicates an early dating, as does the similarity to the seals of the guilds of St. Knud. St. Peter’s rich papal garb may also refer to the ongoing strife between kings and church, which took place from 1245 to 1320. Therefore, an early dating, around 1300, is quite possible. If that is the case, the smiths in Horsens formed the oldest known Danish craft guild.

A few other seals stem from the first half of the fourteenth century. We know nothing about the guilds to which they belonged. Among these is the seal of a guild from the village Färlöv in Scania, dedicated to St. Peter. Here, St. Peter is depicted standing, holding a key as identification. This was most probably a parish guild. Three other seals exist from guilds
that had St. Mary as patron. On these seals, Mary is depicted enthroned, with the Christ Child in her arms, in a pose that echoes the composition of the seals of the guilds of St. Knud. However, thrones are not uncommon in Marian iconography, so the connection to the guilds of St. Knud is not necessarily intended. The towns involved are all coastal (Rønneby, Sølvitsborg, and Køge), the latter planned as a market town in 1288. The seals probably stem from craft guilds or merchant guilds.

The scarce material does not allow us to be too specific in drawing conclusions, but some general trends can be pointed out. It is important to note that the connection between saint and guild was not severed when the old guilds of St. Knud split into smaller units, and new religious confraternities reached Denmark at the end of the thirteenth century. However, a major change can be observed in the saints chosen as guild patrons. Beginning in this period, the universal saints of the Latin Church came to be popular patrons for many different kinds of guilds, while Scandinavian saints, except for St. Olav, no longer led in popularity. Local saints appar-
ently signaled the interference of others, infringing on the freedom the new guilds had won. However, the influence from the guilds of St. Knud was also marked in a more positive way. These large and impressive seals seem to have influenced the composition of the seals of the new guilds. Some oval guild seals, however, also suggest the influence of the church.

Seals and Guild Identity

Historians generally agree that guilds flourished in the late medieval period, and no doubt a notable growth in surviving seals from this period can be observed among the Danish guilds. A count of surviving seals has never been attempted. This may, perhaps, be explained by the difficulty of identifying the craft guilds, many of which survived the Reformation of 1536, and many of whose seals are first recorded after the change of confession. Some of these seals show medieval features, while others do not, and no study has so far tried to separate the one group from the other. Indeed, it would be difficult to do so. This problem probably explains why Grandjean did not attempt to date any of the craft seals.

Overall, late medieval guild seals seem to show an increase in ecclesiastical influence. This probably coincides with the increasing freedom of guilds as institutions from 1250 to 1350, and the struggle of these guilds to distance themselves from the dominant guilds of St. Knud. It is notable that the seals of these newer guilds were much smaller than those of the guilds of St. Knud; moreover, even seals belonging to wealthy merchants’ guilds in the late Middle Ages were only half the size that comparable seals had been in the second half of the fifteenth century. The smaller size of the matrices can be explained by the expansion in the circulation of legal documents, to which the guilds were party. In this new environment, the older, larger seals went out of fashion, and no less importantly, they were far too expensive to use in daily business. Wax was a commodity in short supply.

The main motif on the seals continued to be the patron saints. Saints could be depicted as figures, or replaced by a proxy. Saint’s attributes seem to have been so well known that an attribute by itself could represent a patron saint. This is the case for the seals of the shoemakers’ guilds in Odense and Svendborg (figure 9.12). In addition to the depictions of the saints themselves, new motifs were added, which stressed moments in the lives of holy persons, or aspects of Christian dogma. The use of these motifs was not restricted to the confraternities; they were also popular among guilds with worldly power and purposes. For example, the merchants in
Odense depicted the Holy Trinity on their seal, while the merchants in Aalborg had organized themselves under the protection of Corpus Christi (figure 9.13). Nor were the choices of confraternities and guilds limited to the new iconographical motifs when their seals were cut or pressed; images of well-known saints such as the Virgin Mary or St. Nicholas remained available to them.67 This diversity of imagery is a sign of an established Christian culture. In retrospect, it also underscores the exceptional nature of the guilds of St. Knud. For no other guilds is it possibly to pronounce on their functions by examining their choice of saint alone. The independent choice of patron saint was part of the culture of guilds as free associations.68 In this regard, the only other saint similar to St. Knud is St. Gertrud. Her guilds were often related to travel, and provided accommodation to foreigners.69 So far they have not been examined in Scandinavia.

Interestingly, craft guilds showed a tendency to depict their patron saint with attributes of the craft they practiced. This is the case for

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Figure 9.12  The seal of the shoemakers in Svendborg. The pilgrim’s scallop, the attribute of St. James. Camillus Nyrop, “For og imod Odense. En Lavskamp,” Tidsskrift for Industri, 1902, p. 47.

Figure 9.13  The seal of the merchant guild in Odense, dedicated to the Holy Trinity, 1476. Danske Gilders Segl, Grandjean, p. 35 and Plate 10d.

Figure 9.14  The seal of the shoemakers in Visby, dedicated to the Virgin Mary, 1476. Danske Haandwerkerlaus Segl, Grandjean, p. 75 and Plate 31a.
St. Eligius, whom many goldsmiths or smiths of other kinds had as guild patron. On fifteenth-century seals, he is given a hammer and tongs, as if to stress that he could help smiths of all kinds, not only the goldsmiths who shared his craft. But it did not stop there. Even saints with no particular connection to a specific craft were shown on the seals with workmen’s tools. The tailors in Roskilde had St. Paul as a patron, and next to his sword and holy book in their seal is a pair of scissors. Even the Virgin Mary, crowned and holding the Christ Child in her arms, was depicted with the addition of two knives on the seal belonging to the shoemakers’ guild in Visby, on the island of Gotland (figure 9.14).

Although some ordinary smiths appear to have distrusted St. Eligius, the same can hardly be said of the Virgin Mary. She was the most popular of all saints, yet a workman’s tool was nonetheless added to her image. To explain this, we will have to touch upon two different topics: legal interests and guild identity.

In large towns such as Visby, the shoemakers were not the only ones who had chosen the Virgin Mary as their patron. At least one other guild was dedicated to her, though we do not know that guild’s function. A similar situation could be seen in other towns. In Stockholm and Odense, two and three guilds respectively were dedicated to St. Mary, and in Flensburg in the duchy of Schleswig, where we are particularly well informed about the guilds, no fewer than five guilds had Mary as their patron in one way or another. The counting is hampered by the fact that the sources often simply refer to the guilds by their trade, with no information provided about the patron saint of the guild. Thus, coincidences of identical patrons might be even more common than we are able to show.

Seen from a legal point of view, two guilds with the same name had to have different seals. We know nothing about the rules of governing how guilds with identical names avoided identical seals. Generally speaking, town authorities tried to keep administration simple and as each guild had an interest in not being mistaken for another guild, one might guess that the responsibility to avoid confusion was theirs. One way to avoid confusion could be to add some characteristic of the specific guild to the depiction of the patron on the seal. In that respect, depicting workmen’s tools alongside the guild patron was a splendid solution, not least because it would touch upon the guild’s identity.

Like the confraternities, the craft guilds inherited the *convivium* from earlier guilds. On the occasion of the yearly feast (the guild drink),
the patron saint was venerated and deceased members of the guild were commemorated. This function was vital for all the different guilds that merged between 1250 and 1400. One might interpret the continuation of depictions of saints in the center of the seal as a reference to the importance of the *convivium*, the inherited guild identity, one may say. On the other hand, no guild identity can in the long run refer only to the past as its raison d’être. Somehow it has to incorporate daily routines and activities as well.

The depiction of workmen’s tools on seals occurred gradually. They might be compared to what in liturgy is called *adiaphoron* or in the plural *adiaphora*, meaning “indifferent things.” But in fact they were very important as recognizable signs. Heraldry is by nature conservative and sticks to old established forms longer than most media. In that sense, it resembles liturgy. Thus, even small alterations on the seal might signal that something essential was being expressed.

Support for this interpretation might be found in the fact that once the workmen’s tools had found their way into the seals they remained there, and their use expanded. Like children they grew up and replaced their mother and father, and within a few generations saints simply disappeared from the seals. This does not mean that all seals were changed in a steady stream, because in general most guilds retained their old seal if it was not corrupted or broken. But if guilds were caught in a situation where they had to invest in a new seal, they tended to prefer the new heraldry with workmen’s tools to the old one with a patron saint.

The sources do not allow us to follow the process in detail. The seals referred to above, which combined a patron saint with workmen’s tools, belonged to the fifteenth century, probably the second half of it. If we turn to the beginning of the sixteenth century, an interesting diploma from Copenhagen has been preserved. In 1525, several craft guilds in the town authorized the mayors (Copenhagen had four mayors) to sell a plot of land within the town to the king, so the town could be better fortified. Quite a few of the craft guild seals appended to the document have survived, including those of the bakers, the furriers, the harness makers, the shoemakers, the tailors, and the butchers (figures 9.15–9.18). Of these seals, only that of the shoemakers remains loyal to their patron saints, St. Crispinus and St. Crispianus, and depicts them. All of the other guilds had in fact turned their backs on their patrons in favor of the everyday tools of their particular crafts. Is it too daring a statement to say that they finally had freed themselves from the guild patrons and found their own identity?

Figure 9.18  The sealed letter from February 17, 1525. Photo: Courtesy of Københavns Stadsarkiv.
Conclusions

The old Protestant skepticism toward saints has long since been abandoned, but in specialized fields such as the study of guilds, an unspoken heritage seems to have lived on in the assumption that saints were viewed as empty or vestigial symbols. However, the saints’ roles varied from century to century, and it is precisely by focusing on their role as patrons that we can identify some specific features of the guilds of St. Knud in the first century of their existence.

The saints played quite a different role, an equally instructive one, for the many guilds in the competitive environment of late medieval towns. Images of saints were ubiquitous, and as a consequence, seal communication without saints offered an attractive alternative. This raises the interesting question of whether it is possible to detect some skepticism toward saints at the eve of Reformation. But that is quite another matter and demands an investigation of its own.

NOTES

1 André Vauchez, La Sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècles du Moyen Âge (Rome 1988).
4 Camillus Nyrop was the great compiler of Danish craft guild seals, but he published them separately in different journals and magazines. Half a century later, Poul Bredo Grandjean edited two large series, Danske Gilders Segl fra Middelalderen (København, 1948), and Danske Håndwerkerlavs Segl (København, 1950). Nyrop and Grandjean sometimes differ concerning the individual seals.
5 Danish examples include Ole Worm during the seventeenth century, Jakob Langebek in the eighteenth, and Bishop Münter in the nineteenth. There is similar case in Finland, kindly told to me by Tuomas Lehtonen. In the nineteenth century a professor of church history, Wilhelm Lagus, stole a great number of seals from the National Archives of Finland, where they are now designated “the Lagus collection.”
7 Danske Haandwerkerlavs Segl, preface.
8 For a survey, see Bisgaard, De glemte altre, pp. 19–23.

10 The literature is immense. Hans Bekker-Nielsen, Tore Nyberg and Niels Oxenvad, eds., *Knudsbogen: Studier over Knud den Hellige* (Odense, 1986) is a good starting point.


14 Mortensen, *Sanctified Beginnings*.


26 The Malmö seal is represented by a drawing in Grandjean’s *Danske Gilders Segl* (Plate 5a), but he later became aware of an existing one in wax, which he reproduced among the seals from craft guilds in *Danske Haandværkerlavs Segl*, Plate 34g.

27 *Danske Gilders Segl, the town of Hobro* (Plate 3c). The seal of lead is now lost. Ibid., p. 20.

28 *Danske kongelige Sigiller samt sønderjyske Hertugers og andre til Danmark knyttede Fyrsters Sigiller 1085–1559*, Henry Petersen and A. Thiset, eds., (Copenhagen, 1917), Plate 1a–35. The edition reproduces the seals 1:1, but gives no information about measurement, material etc. The measurements are mine.

29 Falsterbo, Kolding, Landskrona, Malmö, Nyborg, Odense no 2, Randers, Ribe, Slagelse, Stege, Tommarp, Vordingborg and two unidentified. *Danske Gilders Segl*, and *Danske Haandværkerlavs Segl*.


32 Ibid., p. VI.


34 Christoph Anz, “Gildernes form og funksjon i middelalderens Skandinavia,” in *Gilder, lav og broderskaber i middelalderens Danmark*, ed. Lars

35 *Danske Gilders Segl*, Fig. 3a–8a.


40 The only modern historian I know of who has argued for guilds dedicated to St. Knud the King in the period 1101–1170 is Erik Wiberg, *Sankt Knuts gille i Ystad* (Ystad, 1937).


43 Hybel and Poulsen, *The Danish Resources*, p. 228, Table 4. Sixty-three out of 114 towns founded between 1000 and 1550 belong to the period 1200–1350.

44 *Danmarks Gilde- og Lavskraaer*, p. 66, § 41. See also the editor’s comments on pp. 57f.

45 In the new heraldry of St. Knud the King, his scepter ends in a lily, almost a fleur-de-lis. This was later attributed to the town of Odense, where King Knud was buried and his shrine worshiped, where the lily was added to the city’s coat of arms. For a different interpretation, see Henry Petersen, “En Altertavle som Mindesmærke om Biskop Jens Andersen Bældenak,” *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed* (1889), p. 91. See also Niels G. Bartholdy, “Sankt Knud Konge og Odense-liljen,” in *Knudsbojen*, ed. Bekker-Nielsen, pp. 93–99.

46 In 1969 a seal from the castle town of Stege was found, see Fritze Lindahl, “To middelalderlige seglstamper fra Stege,” *Nationalmuseets Arbejdsmark*, 1969, 107–19.

47 Monica White, “Byzantine Saints in Rus’ and the Cult of Boris and Gleb,” in *Saints and Their Lives on the Periphery. Veneration of Saints in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe (c.1000–1200)*, ed. Haki Antonsson and Ildar H. Garipzanov (Turnhout, 2010), p. 101 and pp.105ff. Valdemar was married to Sophia of Novgorod. He was named after his mother’s grandfather, grand duke Vladimir.


49 Ibid., 1:86.
Saints, Guilds, and Seals


54 This can be shown for the town of Kalundborg from which a list of guild members has survived. Lars Bisgaard, “Skt. Knuds gildet og andre gilder i Holbæk og Kalundborg,” in Fra Nordvestsjælland 2011, ed. Nils Wickman (Kalundborg, 2012), pp. 85–105.


56 “Convivium caritatis”. Bisgaard, De glemte altre, p. 268.

57 Ibid., pp. 24–29.

58 Danske Gilders Segl, p. 34 and Plate 9f. Inscription: S’ CONFRATERNITAS SANCTI NICHLAY IN GOTLANDIA.


61 Hybel and Poulsen, The Danish ressources, p. 264.

62 Danske Haandwerkerlavs Segl, p. 60 and Plate 22l.

63 Danske Gilders Segl, p. 35 and Plate 10a.

64 The new study by Haugland has considerably augmented the sheer numbers of late medieval guilds in Scandinavia.

65 Two have survived from the merchants in Odense. The diameter is 36mm. Danske Gilders Segl, p. 35 and Plate 10c and d.

666 Danske Haandwerkerlavs Segl, p. 50, 52, Plate 17a and 17n.

67 Danske Gilders Segl, p. 33f. and Plate 9a and 9e.

68 Anz, Gilden im mittelalterlichen Skandinavien very strongly stresses guilds as free associations.

69 Danske Gilders Segl, p. 20f. and Plate 1e and 10e.

70 Danske Haandwerkerlavs Segl, p. 60, 62 and Plate 22o and 23h. That is the goldsmiths in Copenhagen and the smiths in Næstved.

71 Danske Haandwerkerlavs Segl, p. 56 and Plate 20k. Inscription: sigillum convivii sartorum roskildis.

72 Danske Haandwerkerlavs Segl, p. 75 and Plate 31a. This seal and the seal from the Copenhagen shoemakers, dated 1483, are the only craft seals with a year of production inscribed. Ibid., Grandjean, p. 49 and Plate 16a.
Bisgaard, *De glemte are*, Plate 4.

Haugland, *Fellesskap og brorskap*, p. 400.


THE LITURGY OF A particular ecclesiastical province, both in terms of the calendar—the selection of feasts to be celebrated during the course of the liturgical year—and the level of liturgical dignity accorded to each of those feasts, may provide a good deal of insight into the history as well as the ongoing interests and priorities of that province. During the late Middle Ages, the period that in the Nordic region might justifiably be spoken of as the era of the Kalmar Union, it is possible to observe differing trends concerning the veneration and celebration of what might be called the Nordic national saints, saints whose cults originated in any of the various countries of the Nordic region, or were regarded as particularly emblematic of these nations and their churches. These differences can be observed at the level of diocese and archdiocese, but they are particularly evident in a comparison between the Archdioceses of Lund and Uppsala, the medieval centers of the Danish and Swedish churches, respectively. The presence or absence of certain saints in the calendars of the printed late medieval liturgical books of these ecclesiastical centers may profitably be examined in relation to aspects of secular and ecclesiastical politics directly, but not exclusively, connected to the Kalmar Union.

There are obvious reasons why the cult of saints as practiced at the leading cathedrals of any of the three Nordic kingdoms might be viewed as having a political aspect. There is, of course, the often-observed point that the division typically made in the present day between religious and secular spheres of life would have been utterly foreign to people living in the Middle Ages. As chosen intercessors, saints (especially favored patron saints) might be assumed or expected to take an interest in or show support for the causes that engaged their devotees. In some cases, and for
various reasons, certain saints may also have come to be viewed as having a symbolic role in a political context or conflict. To cite two well-known examples, in Norway and Sweden there were strong medieval traditions that regarded all good, old, established, just law as stemming from St. Olav or St. Eric. These saints were regarded or promoted as eternal protectors of their respective kingdoms. Subsequent rulers were often, perhaps especially in Norway, seen as receiving their kingship from these royal saints.\textsuperscript{1} Monarchs during the Kalmar Union period showed strong awareness of the symbolic importance of national, and perhaps especially, royal saints, and both moved to exploit its potential and assumed and sought the intercession of these saints on their own behalf. This may be particularly evident in the naming of two rulers of the Kalmar Union, Olav Håkonsson, the son of Queen Margaret I and heir to Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, and the heir Margaret adopted following Olav’s death, Eric of Pomerania, originally named Bugislav. It seems quite clear that the names of these two heirs to the Union throne were chosen for their saintly resonance, as a means of emphasizing the legitimacy of the young princes’ claims. Indeed, the name chosen for the second of these two princes may have had double resonance, since efforts (including the production of a legend and a collection of miracles) had been made to promote the sanctity of another Eric, the Danish king Eric (Ploughpenny) (d. 1250). Although these efforts did not lead to canonization, a number of Danish guilds were dedicated to this Danish “St. Eric.”\textsuperscript{2} Similar thinking may be evident in the fact that a later Union monarch, Christian I, named his two eldest sons Olav and Canute, and may also have had a son named Eric, who died shortly after birth, in 1478.\textsuperscript{3}

Another contributing factor to the connection between the cult of the saints in the cathedrals and the realm of politics was the role of prominent members of the clergy in the governing councils (Danish *rigsråd*, Swedish *riksråd*) of the various realms. In all three of the Nordic kingdoms, the archbishops tended to be regarded as the leading members of the councils, and other bishops also tended to hold powerful positions and wield political influence.\textsuperscript{4} Thus, there is not necessarily a clear boundary between ecclesiastical and secular political office in the late medieval Nordic region. Likewise, although many archbishops and cathedral chapters championed the freedom of the church, in practice, many rulers (not least Union monarchs) exercised significant influence over the church in a number of different ways, including the selection of archbishops, bishops,
and other prelates, the donation or confiscation of property, and sometimes even physical threats toward or imprisonment of clergy.

Among discussions of the cult of the saints, especially saints of Nordic origin, in the Nordic ecclesiastical provinces, several works stand out. Sven Helander’s *Den medeltida Uppsalaliturgin* discusses the history and development of the liturgical traditions of Uppsala Cathedral from their twelfth-century beginnings to the end of the Middle Ages. In the course of his investigation, he examines a large number of specific cults, including those of the explicitly Swedish saints discussed in this essay. Anna Minara Ciardi has discussed many of these same cults, among others, in her “Saints and Cathedral Culture in Scandinavia,” with a focus mainly on the period before the year 1200. Haki Antonsson has examined the construction and reconstruction of narratives and cults of missionary saints as they arose in various parts of the Nordic region, and noted how trends reflect other aspects of ecclesiastical and political history. Also relevant to the present discussion is Sara E. Ellis Nilsson’s “Holy Validation: Saints and Early Liturgy in Scandinavia,” which argues that, perhaps especially in Sweden, cults of local missionary saints were promoted by clerical elites specifically as a means of legitimizing the particular location of new bishoprics.

The premise of this chapter is that certain trends or tendencies apparent in the relationship between two of the Nordic kingdoms during the period of the Kalmar Union, and even more importantly, the relationship between the Archdiocese of Lund and the Archdiocese of Uppsala, may also be reflected in the selection of saints venerated in each of these church provinces, as represented by their printed liturgical books from the end of the medieval period. Alf Härdelin has cautioned that such liturgical books represent an ideal version of the liturgy that may or may not reflect actual practice at the cathedral itself, let alone in more or less distant parish churches. However, given that the very bodies responsible for the development of the liturgy and the production of the books that document and transmit it include some of the individuals most closely involved in political discussions concerning the Nordic ecclesiastical provinces and kingdoms of the late Middle Ages, the presence or absence of saints associated with each of those kingdoms in the liturgical tradition of the respective provinces seems worthy of investigation.

One important aspect of this discussion is the question of liturgical degree or degree of veneration. This term refers to the extent or scope of the divine office performed on a given feast day. Perhaps the most important
distinction in degree had to do with whether a feast was celebrated with a liturgy of its own (this regardless of whether the feast was celebrated with a proper office or one drawn from the common of saints). Feasts of the lowest liturgical degree, *commemoratio* were typically celebrated in abbreviated form at the end of the various offices for the more important feast of the day. More important feasts celebrated with a complete liturgy of their own would typically be, at least in the Nordic region, celebrated with either three or nine lessons in matins, depending on their rank, and with two vespers. The higher feasts for which the matins included nine readings, typically drawn from the saint’s *vita*, could be further ranked. The lowest of these ranks is *simplex*, followed (with some variation between the Nordic bishoprics) by *semiduplex*, *duplex*, and the highest rank, *totum duplex* (in some areas *solenne*). In the Nordic region in particular, feasts of higher degree were celebrated with additional or more extensive antiphons in relation to feasts of lower degree. In Lund, the dignity of a particular feast could be further specified in the breviary by a notation of who was to celebrate it.

If we examine the cult of the Nordic saints in later medieval Denmark, especially in Lund, as exemplified by the printed liturgical books from the end of the period, a number of interesting trends can be observed. For example, although King Canute IV (ca. 1080–1086), who would later be venerated as the martyr, St. Canute the King (*Canutus rex*), is associated with Lund Cathedral from its very beginnings, he is mentioned in early sources from Lund to a greater extent as an honored donor and founder of the cathedral than a venerated saint. According to Curt Wallin, much of the medieval cult of St. Canute was centered on the guilds dedicated to him, and the earliest evidence of a guild of St. Canute in Lund dates from about 1250. The earliest documented altar dedicated to the saint (together with the Virgin Mary) dates from 1368, and it was founded through the testament of a member of the guild of St. Canute in Lund. From the beginning of the fifteenth century, however, the cult seems to gain a different status at the cathedral. In 1405, the archbishop, Jacob Gertsen Ulfstand, made a donation to an additional altar, which he had founded in honor of the Virgin Mary, St. Laurence, and St. Canute the King. This may be the earliest intimation that St. Canute has come to be regarded as a co-patron of the cathedral, together with the Virgin and St. Laurence, to whom the high altar was dedicated in 1145. Moreover, an increasing emphasis on the feast of St. Canute in indulgences can also be seen, beginning in about 1400 and continuing throughout the century. Other
indications of the increasing veneration of St. Canute at Lund Cathedral included new reliquaries, such as an arm reliquary containing an arm bone of the saint as well as his inclusion in visual depictions. One such depiction, described by C. G. Bruinus, was on a processional banner, while another is the sandstone relief carved by stone master Adam van Düren in the early sixteenth century. In this stone carving, which was originally placed on an exterior wall of the cathedral, St. Canute is depicted in the company of St. Laurence and the Virgin Mary, the two original patrons of Lund. Alongside each of the figures is a coat of arms, the one beside St. Laurence representing the king, beside the Virgin Mary the arms of the queen, and beside St. Canute, those of the archbishop. Like a processional banner, this relief would have been easily viewed by the general populace of the town. Perhaps most important of all were the expanded offices for St. Canute in the late medieval liturgy, which underline his importance in the cathedral cult. In the late medieval breviary, the feast of St. Canute, July 10, is celebrated with the highest degree, and with an octave. Further, the feast of the relics is celebrated on the day following St. Canute’s, and it includes a special antiphon. It is interesting to speculate about the reasons for the increasing emphasis on the cult of this particular saint in Lund during this period. It seems likely that it is a response to the widespread popularity and powerful symbolic importance of St. Eric in Uppsala (and the whole of Sweden), and perhaps to an even greater degree, of St. Olav in Nidaros and the whole of Norway. Particularly when Denmark has entered into a union with these other two kingdoms, balance, if nothing else, would seem to require a royal patron saint for the Danish kingdom and the Danish archdiocese. As Ellen Jørgensen has remarked,

ogsaa i Helgenhistorien bliver den nationale Udvikling aabenbar. Den provinsielle Afgrænsning synes i nogen Maade at falde bort, Knud Konge og Knud Hertug kaeres til Danmarks Patroner, ja, den førstnævnte faar en ny Ære som Rigshelgen, en ære han ikke udelukkende skylder sine kongelige Brødre St. Olaf og St. Erik—Union—Symmetrien—men den vakte Nationale bevidsthed. [The national development also becomes clear in the history of the saints. The provincial divisions seem in some way to disappear, Canute the king and Canute the duke are chosen as patrons of Denmark, indeed, the first receives a new honour as the national saint, an honour he does not owe exclusively to his kingly brothers St. Olaf and St. Eric—Union—Symmetry—but also to the awakened national consciousness.]
St. Canute the King is by no means the only Danish saint to appear in the liturgical calendar of the Lund Breviary of 1517. This calendar includes all of the Danish saints who occur in the late medieval calendars of the other Danish bishoprics, but by no means all of the cults that were promoted during the Danish Middle Ages. Among the Danish saints who do not appear in the late medieval Lund calendar, nor in any of the other published calendar of late medieval Denmark are St. Margareta of Roskilde, St. Nicholas of Århus, and St. Andreas of Slagelse. Local and regional veneration has been documented for these saints, especially for the first two, on whose behalf papal canonization processes were initiated, though these were ultimately unsuccessful. This point highlights one of the most notable distinctions between Lund and Uppsala. In the late medieval liturgy from Uppsala, each Swedish diocese contributes at least one saint of its own. In contrast to many of the Danish saints, it is not clear that papal canonization was ever sought, let alone conferred, for Swedish saints before St. Bridget. This notwithstanding, by the late Middle Ages, every Swedish diocese promoted the cult of at least one saint of local origin, whether that saint was a missionary bishop or abbot, a pious laywoman or layman, or a renowned mystic, such as Linköping’s St. Bridget. Haki Antonsson has noted that while the Danish Church certainly promoted (or attempted to promote) the cults of a number of local saints (as well as a number of dynastic ones), “it was only in Sweden that cults of missionary saints became a notable feature of the medieval religious landscape, especially as patron saints of the Swedish bishoprics.”

The Danish saints receiving the highest degree of veneration in the Lund calendar are the two royal saints, St. Canute the King and St. Canute the Duke (Canutus dux, or Canute Lavard). The feast of St. Canute Lavard on January 7 is celebrated with the degree of festum vicariorum, while the feast of St. Canute the King on July 10 is celebrated with the very highest degree, festum prelatorum. A third saint who was well known during his lifetime, not only in Denmark but more widely, was Abbot William. His feast was celebrated on June 16 with the degree of nine lessons. St. William was a confessor, not a martyr, and was a well-known participant in the international ecclesiastical politics and intellectual discussion during his lifetime. He was particularly known and admired for his preserved collection of letters, the Epistolae abbatis Wilhelmi de Paraclito. Although originally from Paris, William was called to Denmark in 1165 to take over the Augustinian community of Eskilsø. Following his death in 1202, he was canonized by Pope Honorius III in 1224.
Like St. Canute the King and St. Canute Lavard, as well as St. William, St. Ketill appears to have been a known, historical person. He is said to have been dean of the chapter of Augustinian canons at Viborg, and to have died in 1150. His feast was celebrated in Lund on July 12, directly following the feast of St. Canute and the feast of the relics. Finally, St. Theodgar (Thøger), a missionary saint and church-builder said to have been part of the entourage of St. Olav before arriving in Vestervig, was celebrated in Lund on October 30 with the degree of nine lessons. It is interesting to note that he is the only one of the officially recognized national saints of Denmark who is explicitly described as a missionary. It is also interesting to note that the Archdiocese of Lund does not seem to have sought to promote the cult of a local martyr (or other saint) of its own in the way that, for example, the cults of St. Olav and St. Eric were promoted in Nidaros and Uppsala. For each of these, the archdiocese is the absolute center of the cult of the royal martyr. This is not necessarily because of lack of opportunity. In 1383, the archbishop of Lund instructed a group of prelates and canons to bring the remains of a local woman, Magnhild of Fulltofta, a murder victim reputed to have performed miracles after her death, to the cathedral. In spite of this translation, no further attempt to promote a cult of Magnhild seems to have been made. It might indeed be argued that an ordinary laywoman would make a poor patron for the center of the Danish Church, even if the Swedish diocese of Skara counted just such a woman as its particular patron saint. Instead, however, the cathedral placed increasing emphasis on the cult of St. Canute the King. In this case, it would appear that the status of St. Canute as a royal martyr, and increasingly, as a symbol and intercessor for the kingdom of Denmark, were of greater importance for the promotion of his cult in Lund than the fact that the saint’s cult was actually centered in the diocese of Odense.

Interestingly, nearly as many Swedish saints were venerated in late medieval Lund as Danish ones, and in some cases their feasts were celebrated with relatively high degree. In fact, three of the four Swedish saints in the calendar were celebrated with the degree of duplex. The first of these is St. Henry, whose feast was celebrated in Lund on January 19. St. Henry was the particular patron saint for the diocese of Åbo, which encompassed much of present-day Finland. Together with Sweden’s royal martyr, St. Eric, the saintly bishop is said to have undertaken a mission to convert the Finns during the later twelfth century, and he is said to have died a martyr’s death there. As Tuomas Heikkilä notes, the liturgy of St. Henry in the Lund breviary of 1517 contains significant
portions of his legend, in a form that shows strong similarity to that from Linköping. Not surprisingly, given his close association with St. Eric, St. Henry was a saint of particular importance for Uppsala Cathedral, where, according to Sven Helander, he came to be venerated as a third patron saint alongside St. Laurence and St. Eric. It is interesting to speculate whether this association, as much as the specific connection to the diocese of Åbo, gives St. Henry his status in Lund. The Swedish saints in the Lund breviary are those who might be considered to have the best claim of being national rather than just regional or provincial saints. A second of Sweden's many missionary and bishop saints was venerated in Lund on February 15, with the degree of nine lessons. This was St. Sigfrid, who has been associated with a bishop by that name who, according to Adam of Bremen, came from England to undertake missionary work in Norway and Sweden. According to the list of kings appended to the Older Law of Västergötland, Sigfrid baptized Olof Skötkonung, the first Christian king of Sweden in the early eleventh century, before continuing his career as the first bishop of Växjö. The earliest legend of St. Sigfrid presents him as the archbishop of York, who leaves his post to travel to Sweden via Denmark. This association certainly played a role in Lund Cathedral's acquisition of a reliquary that came to be regarded as one of its particular treasures. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, Peder Lykke, a canon from Lund (later to become archbishop) was sent to England to begin negotiations concerning the marriage of Philippa, daughter of King Henry IV, and Eric of Pomerania, the heir to the Kalmar Union. When he returned to Lund, Peder Lykke brought with him a gift from the English king, a reliquary of gilt silver, containing the relics of the “English missionary St. Sigfrid.” It seems clear that King Henry's gift must have been intended to underscore the connections between the kingdoms, which would be brought closer through the marriage, and it undoubtedly had the effect of raising St. Sigfrid's profile at Lund. By the later Middle Ages, too, Sigfrid had come to be regarded as a patron saint and “apostle” not only of the diocese of Växjö, which claimed him as its founder, but of Sweden in general, and his feast was celebrated with high degree in all of the Swedish bishoprics. According to Toni Schmid, the cult of St. Sigfrid had been introduced to Denmark by Peder Jensen Lodehat, who served as bishop of Växjö from 1382 to 1386, and would later become bishop of the Danish sees of Århus and Roskilde. 

The third Swedish saint venerated in Lund, according to the late medieval breviary, is St. Eric, Sweden's royal martyr, whose feast day of
May 18 is celebrated with the degree of duplex. St. Eric is said in his late thirteenth-century legend to have fallen in an uneven battle against invading troops led by a Danish usurper, Prince Magnus. The legend of St. Eric establishes him as a builder of churches, a lawgiver, and the epitome of a just monarch. By the early fifteenth century, Eric had come to be considered the patron saint of the Swedish realm, and a powerful symbol for those who laid claim to it. The term “St. Eric’s Law” had come to be used for good, old, established Swedish legal tradition, and claimants to the Swedish throne often portrayed themselves as heirs of St. Eric. In the case of St. Eric, it appears that the invocation of the saint to support a claim to the Swedish throne may rely on a claim of genealogical descent to a greater degree than for St. Olav in Norway. For example, Carl M. Kjellberg has argued that rhymed chronicles composed during the reign of King Karl Knutsson (1448–1457, 1464–1465, 1467–1470) actually made the false claim that Karl was descended from the saint. Together with the other Nordic royal saints, Canute of Denmark and Olav of Norway, St. Eric could be and was portrayed as a symbol of the Kalmar Union, and called upon as an intercessor on its behalf, and thus it is no surprise that according to a late sixteenth-century source, there was an altar in Lund Cathedral dedicated to the three Nordic holy kings, in addition to an altar dedicated solely to St. Eric. In other contexts, St. Eric was also a potent symbol and intercessor invoked by factions which sought to separate Sweden from the Kalmar Union, and those who sought to assert its status as a separate kingdom, governed by its own laws, within the Union.

Like St. Eric, St. Bridget, the last of the Swedish saints found in the Lund breviary, came to be a powerful and multivalent figure in late medieval Sweden and beyond. Her feast was celebrated in Lund on October 7, with the degree of duplex. Unlike many other Nordic saints, Birgitta Birgersdotter (1303–1373) was not a member of a royal dynasty nor associated with the early Christian mission. Instead, she belonged, by birth or marriage, to several of the leading families of fourteenth-century Sweden, and interacted (at various times) both in person and through her prophecies with members of the royal family and other leading political actors. It would appear likely that the support and favor that Bridget herself, and the religious order she founded, received from the royal dynasty of Sweden and from Queen Margaret and her heirs, arose both from personal ties and from theological motivations. It is well known that the young Queen Margaret, after her marriage to Håkon Magnusson, was brought up by Märta Ulfsdotter, the eldest daughter of Bridget. Margaret
would later distinguish herself as an active supporter of Vadstena Abbey and of the cult of its founder. In 1389, Margaret was among those who petitioned Pope Urban VI in support of the canonization of Bridget, who had died in 1373. The monarchs who would succeed Margaret as rulers of the Kalmar Union also shared her interest in and support for Bridget’s _Ordo Sanctissimi Salvatoris_. Jens E. Olesen has argued that the Birgittine order, and especially Vadstena, its first and most important house, played a central and unifying role in creating and maintaining a culture of the Kalmar Union, at least at the highest levels of society. He further suggests that the depictions of the three Nordic royal saints that became popular (at least in Skåne) during the period from around 1450 to 1520 arose from a Birgittine idea, in which the kings might be understood as “personifying symbols of the three Nordic kingdoms’ legal systems and written laws, each one distinct, but all anchored in God’s eternal law.” Like her order, St. Bridget herself may have been viewed as both a unifying symbol for the three kingdoms, and an intercessor for Union monarchs and for the Union itself. Olesen has noted, for example, that the enthusiasm Christian I had often expressed for Bridget as a patron of Sweden, her order, and her Revelations seemed to cool after his defeat at the hands of Swedish troops led by Sten Sture (the Elder) at the battle of Brunkeberg in October 1471. There are indications that the veneration of St. Bridget at Lund Cathedral may date from the earliest period of her cult. According to its oldest preserved statutes, dating from 1505, the greater clerical guild of Lund, the “sodalitium majus Lundense,” was dedicated to the cathedral’s two patrons, the Virgin Mary and St. Laurence, as well as to St. Bridget. The guild, which had its own altar in the cathedral, was founded by Archbishop Niels Jensen, who died in 1379, only a few years after Bridget herself. Gottfrid Carlsson considers it possible, though far from certain, that Bridget’s status as guild patron dates from the guild’s initial foundation. He notes that her veneration was the most characteristic aspect of the guild’s ceremonial, and also that another clerical guild in Lund, this one connected to the parish church of St. Nicholas, was also dedicated to St. Bridget. Archbishop Niels himself had a role in the promotion/recognition of Bridget’s cult, since in 1375 it had fallen to him, together with the bishop of Odense, to investigate the saint’s life and miracles as part of her canonization proceedings. By the end of the medieval period, at least two further altars were dedicated to Bridget, either in the company of other saints (Dean Folkvin’s altar from 1412) or alone (Barbara Thorkildsdatter Brahe’s altar from 1475). In addition, the cathedral had
an arm reliquary that depicted a hand holding a pen in its fingers, a clear reference to Bridget. This contained “a portion of Bridget’s fingers and a relic of Mary Magdalene.” 51 St. Bridget’s feast day is also included in a long list of days on which visitors and contributors to Lund Cathedral might receive an indulgence of 200 days, in an undated letter of indulgence from Pope Eugenius IV (1431–1447). 52 The Revelations of St. Bridget were widely read and disseminated in the late medieval world, and there is ample evidence that they were read and appreciated, by clergy and laity alike, in the Nordic countries. 53 Thus it is by no means likely that specifically political issues are the sole motivation for the inclusion of the feast of St. Bridget, and the relatively high degree of motivation accorded it, in the Lund breviary. On the other hand, the combined effects of Bridget’s regional and international prestige, the generally close relationship between her order and leading proponents of the Kalmar Union, and perhaps even the fact that she was first new saint from the Nordic region to be canonized since the 1220s, make her relatively prominent place in late medieval Lund quite understandable.

In addition to the Danish and Swedish saints already discussed, the Lund breviary included just one Norwegian saint, St. Olav. It is no exaggeration to say that Olav, throughout and beyond the Nordic region, was the most widely and fervently venerated of all the Nordic saints. Like his Swedish counterpart, Norway’s royal martyr is celebrated in Lund with the degree of duplex, on his usual feast day, July 29. 54

Looking at the representation of Nordic saints in the cathedral cult in late medieval Lund, some interesting trends can be discerned. Although all of the more established Danish cults are represented in the calendar, only the two royal saints, Canute the King and Canute Lavard, are celebrated with especially high degree, and of these two, the cult of Canute the King is by far the more prominent. The only Norwegian saint represented is St. Olav, who is in some contexts the most powerful symbol of and intercessor for the kingdom of Norway, though in other contexts throughout the Nordic region he is an equally beloved intercessor without necessarily signaling a particular connection to Norway.

It is particularly interesting to note that the Lund calendar includes four Swedish saints, and that three of these are celebrated with higher degree (duplex) than any of the nonroyal Danish saints. How should this be understood? As noted above, all of the Swedish saints included have some claim to a national and not just regional importance in a Swedish context. St. Sigfrid is said to have baptized the first Christian king of
Sweden, and is thus a missionary for the entire kingdom and not only for the tiny diocese of Växjö which claimed him as its particular patron. By the fifteenth century, St. Eric had been promoted as the patron saint of the entire kingdom. He was also the second patron saint of the Archdiocese of Uppsala, a point of which we should not lose sight. St. Henry, whose legend portrays him as the bishop of Uppsala during the reign of St. Eric Jedvardsson, is both the patron saint of the important eastern Swedish diocese of Åbo and province of Finland, and a saint of importance in Uppsala. Finally, St. Bridget was a figure of undeniable prestige and importance in late medieval Christendom, and the founder of an order whose activities were often seen as promoting the interests of Kalmar Union leaders. Why do we see a relative emphasis on Swedish saints in this calendar, when only one Norwegian saint, albeit an important one, appears? Here, it is worth remembering a crucial point in Nordic ecclesiastical politics.

When the Archdiocese of Lund was established in about 1104, it encompassed the whole of the Nordic region. The Archdiocese of Nidaros, established in about 1153, made Norway, Iceland, Greenland, and the Western Isles independent of Lund. However, just over a decade later, when the Archdiocese of Uppsala was established, circumstances were rather different. The archbishop of Lund had been made papal legate on behalf of Sweden, and had been entrusted with the pallium intended for the Swedish archbishop, at the time of the creation of the Archdiocese of Nidaros. In 1164, when the Archdiocese of Uppsala was separated from Lund, the archbishop of Lund retained these privileges, and was made primate \textit{(primas)} over Sweden. Lauritz Weibull has remarked that this relationship was a kind of middle position between the papacy and the Archdiocese of Uppsala, and that it involved both matters of constitution and of administration. As important as this status as primas undoubtedly was to Archbishop Eskil and the archbishops of Lund who followed him most directly, it seems to have played little role for most of the fourteenth century. However, late in that century, archbishops of Lund once again begin to title themselves “Primate of Sweden.” Magnus Nielsen, who became archbishop in 1379, was consistent in his use of the title, as were the archbishops who succeeded him. This particular relationship between the Danish and Swedish archbishoprics, quite different from the one between Lund and Nidaros, may well explain why Swedish saints are integrated into the cathedral cult at Lund to a greater extent than Norwegian ones, and also why they are celebrated with relatively high degree. From the point of view of the cathedral chapter at Lund, these
saints may have belonged to them as much as they did to Uppsala. As an examination of the late medieval calendar of Uppsala will show, this concept of an inclusive greater Lund was not necessarily recognized by the Swedes.

The cult of the Nordic saints in late medieval Uppsala diverges in interesting ways from that of Lund. In the calendar of the Uppsala Breviary, from 1496, no Danish saints are represented at all. Indeed, it appears that the earlier cult of St. Canute the King (and perhaps St. Canute Lavard) had largely waned by the fourteenth century, a trend that also occurred in several other Swedish sees, including Skara. Since the fading of this cult in Uppsala would seem to predate the veneration of St. Canute the King as a Danish national patron, and also, apparently, his inclusion among the patron saints of Lund Cathedral, it is reasonable to conclude that factors other than national feeling account for the omission. However, by the time of the late medieval Uppsala breviary, relations between the Nordic kingdoms and their churches had changed, and this may be reflected in the selection of saints celebrated at the cathedral.

Following calendar order, the first of the Nordic saints venerated in Uppsala was St. Henry the bishop, patron saint of the important eastern Swedish province of Finland and the diocese of Åbo. His feast was celebrated in Uppsala on January 19, with the degree of duplex and nine lessons. St. Sigfrid, reputed to have founded the southern Swedish diocese of Växjö, was celebrated in Uppsala on February 15 with the degree of semi-duplex and nine lessons. The royal martyr St. Eric, second patron saint of Uppsala Cathedral, was celebrated on May 18 with the degree of totum duplex. In addition, his translation was celebrated on January 24 with the degree of duplex and nine lessons.

St. Eskil was one of the two patron saints of the diocese of Strängnäs and the province of Södermanland. According to Ælnoth, the author of the early twelfth-century life of St. Canute the King, Eskil was a bishop who came from England to preach the Christian faith for the pagans in Sweden and was killed by them. The somewhat later legend associated with the offices of St. Eskil tells a similar story in greater detail. In this version, the English bishop Eskil came to preach in central Sweden during the reign of King Inge the elder (late eleventh century). As other sources also relate, the Christian Inge was for a time deposed by a pagan rival, Sven. According to his legend, Eskil was stoned to death in Strängnäs, near the site on which the cathedral would later be built, and buried in Tuna, which was some thirty kilometers away. St. Eskil’s feast was celebrated in Uppsala
on June 12 with the degree of semiduplex and nine lessons. Interestingly, although Eskil’s feast was not celebrated in Lund, the feast of his translation, October 6, was commemorated in Odense, the center of the cult of St. Canute the King.\textsuperscript{59}

St. David the abbot is said to have been another missionary saint of English origin, who came to preach the Christian faith to the pagans of the region of Västmanland at the behest of St. Sigfrid. He was the (second) patron saint of the diocese of Västerås. His feast was observed in Uppsala on July 5, with the degree of three lessons.\textsuperscript{60} The martyr St. Botvid is the second of the patron saints of the diocese of Strängnäs, alongside St. Eskil. He is said to have been a layman from Södermanland who was baptized in England and murdered by his slave in the early twelfth century, and his cult is well attested from that century. His feast day was celebrated in Uppsala on July 28 with nine lessons.\textsuperscript{61} St. Olav, the martyred king of Norway, was an important saint in Uppsala, as he was in many other parts of the Nordic region. His feast was celebrated in Uppsala on July 29, with the degree of semiduplex and nine lessons.

St. Helena, or Elin, the martyred widow from Skövde in the province of Västergötland, was venerated as the patron saint of the diocese of Skara as early as the twelfth century. She is said to have been a pious Christian who undertook a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, only to be murdered while she was on her way to attend the consecration of the church in Götene, near her own home. Her feast day was observed in Uppsala on July 31, with nine lessons.\textsuperscript{62}

St. Katherine of Vadstena was the daughter and companion of St. Bridget, and implemented many of St. Bridget’s plans for her new monastic order and for Vadstena Abbey. Like Bridget herself, St. Katherine was associated with the diocese of Linköping. Miracles were attributed to Katherine after her death in 1381, and a canonization process was initiated during the 1470s. Her cult was authorized for the Nordic countries and the Birgittine Order, and her relics were enshrined in 1489. Her feast was commemorated in Uppsala on August 2, and was the second feast listed for that date. St. Bridget herself was celebrated in Uppsala on her customary feast day of October 7, with nine lessons.\textsuperscript{63}

Each diocese of the Swedish Church is represented by at least one saint in the Uppsala breviary. In addition to these feasts of individual saints, the Uppsala calendar includes the (as Helander puts it) “grandiose” \textit{Festum patronorum regni Suecie}, celebrated on a Sunday between July 10 and 16. This group of national patron saints included all of the
“Swedish” saints featured individually in the calendar, as well as the Virgin Mary, John the Baptist, St. Laurence (the original patron saint of Uppsala Cathedral) and St. Ansgar. Moreover, Helander makes a direct connection between the introduction of this new feast day at the Arboga Council of 1474, and a growing sense of Swedish nationalism following the battle of Brunkeberg in 1471, in which the Danish troops of King Christian I were defeated by Swedish troops led by Sten Sture. It is certainly worth noting that the timing of this new feast day corresponds exactly with the celebration of the feast of St. Canute the King in Lund. With regard to the degree of veneration accorded the Nordic saints in Uppsala, Helander has made the important point that the Uppsala church was extremely restrained in degree of veneration for all feast days. While these saints were typically celebrated with higher degree in other Swedish sees, it should be remembered that the degree of duplex, accorded St. Henry, is actually very high by Uppsala’s standards.

In contrast to the late medieval calendar in Lund, then, the Uppsala calendar shows some interesting traits. While the Lund calendar includes a goodly number of Swedish saints alongside its Danish ones, with St. Olav as the sole Norwegian saint; Olav is the only one of the Nordic saints in the Uppsala calendar whose cult is not of Swedish origin. Moreover, while there are certainly circumstances in which St. Olav could be and was understood as a specifically Norwegian intercessor and symbol, even in an explicitly Swedish context, his prominence in Uppsala does not appear to be such a case. Devotion to this saint in Sweden, and in Uppsala itself, was extremely well established from an early point. Olav’s inclusion in the Uppsala breviary is largely a recognition of his general importance and popularity in Swedish religious life. Moreover, as Ingrid Lundegårdh has argued, the prominence of St. Olav in the cathedral cult of Uppsala also has to do with that important saint’s great popularity in the northernmost areas of the Swedish archdiocese. In an attempt to divert pilgrimage, and even tax payments, that had previously gone to the Norwegian Archdiocese of Nidaros, the Uppsala church founded an altar dedicated to St. Olav in the early fourteenth century and strengthened his cult.

The relative inclusiveness of Swedish saints in the Lund calendar seems directly related to the claim of primacy that the archbishops of Lund, especially from the late fourteenth century onward, made over the archbishops of Uppsala. Likewise, it seems likely that the Uppsala breviary’s inclusion of saints from each of the Swedish ecclesiastical provinces, its exclusion of any Danish saints, and even the celebration of the feast of
the patron saints of Sweden during the precise week that Lund celebrated the feast of St. Canute the King, may have politically-tinged motivations. It is fair to say that while the political concerns of religious leaders in the late medieval Nordic kingdoms were closely related to, and perhaps inextricable from secular politics, they were not necessarily identical with them. As leading members of the councils of the realms (riksråd), bishops, like lay members of the aristocracy, were concerned with constitutional issues in relation to the Kalmar Union. At least as far back as the reign of Eric of Pomerania (ca. 1412–1439), the councils of the various realms attempted to assert the obligation of Union monarchs to obey and subject themselves to the established laws of the kingdoms they governed, while in many cases, Union monarchs considered that their kingship placed them above all national laws. To some extent this is also true of the fifteenth-century Swedish king, Karl Knutsson, and uncrowned regents of Sweden such as Sten Sture. In some cases, the particular points of conflict between monarch and council related to matters of the freedom of the church, as when Eric of Pomerania attempted to force the cathedral chapter of Uppsala to accept his candidate(s) for the office of archbishop over their own in the early 1430s.68

Interestingly, however, even in periods when relations between the councils of the realm and the Union monarchs were relatively calm, conflicts could erupt in the more strictly ecclesiastical realm. By and large, the reign of Christopher of Bavaria (1440–48) could be regarded as a relatively calm period in the history of the Kalmar Union. As Herman Schück notes,

The constitutional idea of a personal union of kingdoms governed independently by councils became more of a reality than in any other period. In Christopher’s reign, which corresponded with the council of Basel, the Nordic churches gained their greatest degree of independence. The archbishops Hans Laxmand in Lund, Aslak Bolt in Trondheim, and Nicolaus Ragvaldi in Uppsala appeared as the leading men of their kingdoms and were able to improve the position of their various churches.69

However, this relative calm on the secular front, and even in relations between monarch and church, did not prevent conflicts from erupting on the level of specifically ecclesiastical relations. In 1444, on his way to the Kalmar meeting of the Nordic council, the newly installed archbishop of Lund, Tue Nielsen, chose to have a processional cross carried before
him as he made his way through Sweden. The Swedish bishops interpreted this act as an assertion of the authority of Lund over Uppsala, implying that Sweden belonged to the Danish ecclesiastical province, and as a reassertion of the matter of primacy maintained by the Danes and denied by the Swedes. It was vigorously protested, first by the bishops of Linköping, Strängnäs, and Växjö, who were present at the meeting, and later by the archbishop of Uppsala, who was not.70

The question of whether the archbishops of Lund could claim primacy over those of Uppsala arose again in the same way, decades later, at the Kalmar meeting of 1482, where the issue of the succession of King Hans to the Union throne after the death of Christian I was to be discussed. This meeting was attended by the archbishop of Uppsala and the bishops of Linköping, Skara, Strängnäs, and Växjö, as well as twenty-one Swedish magnates. Once he had arrived in Kalmar, the archbishop of Lund, Jens Brostorp (whose first Union meeting this was), made a point of having his processional cross carried before him. According to Gösta Kellerman, this must be interpreted as a renewed claim of primacy over the Swedish ecclesiastical province. In spite of Danish archbishops’ use of the title primas, the archbishops of Uppsala had for some time turned directly to Rome for their consecration and to receive the pallium, so that the claim of primacy was more formal than pragmatic. This action on the part of Archbishop Jens elicited a strong protest from the Swedish archbishop, Jakob Ulvsson, who both insisted that the two provinces must remain separate has they had (he claimed) previously been, and accused his Danish counterpart of putting the Kalmar Union at risk.71

It has been asserted that the Kalmar Union brought about a great change in the church of Lund, so that the latter’s main political objective from the end of the fourteenth century until the reign of Christian II was the preservation of the Nordic community, and its reunification during the periods in which it fell apart.72 In this sense, the interests of the church and those of the rulers of Denmark were more or less compatible. If the primacy of Lund over Uppsala could be upheld, it could only serve the interests of a union ruled over by monarchs based mainly in Denmark. In Sweden, circumstances were often more complicated.

From the point of view of many Swedish prelates, the independence of the Archdiocese of Uppsala from the Archdiocese of Lund did not necessarily require that the kingdom of Sweden must be ruled by an exclusively Swedish king, rather than a Union monarch (though that was certainly one possible solution). Just as possible, and indeed, something
the prelates oft en supported, was the idea of a distinct Swedish kingdom, with its own separate and distinct legal code, ruled over by a monarch of the Kalmar Union who agreed to be bound by those laws, much as during the reign of Christopher of Bavaria. In many cases, the bishops and archbishops of Sweden, much like the noblemen who were their colleagues in the council of the realm, found that the independence of the church was threatened just as much by the actions of “Swedish” rulers such as Karl Knutsson or Sten Sture as by Union monarchs.

In this context, it is worth considering how we should understand the term “national saint.” An answer might be that national saints in a narrow sense arise to a great extent when there is conflict between the kingdoms. The cults of St. Canute the King and St. Canute Lavard were originally promoted for specifically dynastic purposes. Neither at that point, nor when these saints were widely promoted as guild patrons, is there reason for them to be regarded as especially “national” in character, especially in terms of their reception. The feast of St. Canute the King (and in Västerås also Canute Lavard) continued to be celebrated in the Swedish bishoprics of Linköping and Västerås until the end of the medieval period. This is probably not an expression of a political position with respect to the Kalmar Union, but rather a continuation of an old tradition in areas where the guilds of St. Canute remained important. In this context, the veneration of St. Canute would resemble that of St. Olav in many parts of medieval Sweden and Denmark, where that saint is regarded as a powerful intercessor for reasons that may have nothing to do with Norway. However, the cult of the patrons of Sweden was heavily promoted in a period when the Swedish kingdom’s status within the Kalmar Union was uncertain, and when, at the same time, the independence of the Swedish church, both from the temporal rulers and from the church of Denmark, was also in question. Thus, the cult of the saints in late-medieval Lund and Uppsala, as represented mainly by their late-medieval calendars, reflects a tendency toward inclusion and integration of Swedish saints in Lund, and a tendency to reject everything Danish while promoting the cults of “native” Swedish saints in Uppsala.
NOTES


18 Ibid., p. 84.
19 Jørgensen, Helgendyrkelse, p. 44.
26 Gad, Legenden, pp. 170–72;
29 See Tuomas Heikkilä, Sankt Henrikslegenden (Helsinki, 2009).
30 Heikkilä, Sankt Henrikslegenden, p. 86.


46 Ibid., p. 207.


51 Ibid., p. 94.

52 Ibid., p. 119.


63 For all feast days above, see Grotefend, *Zeitrechnung*, 2:243–46.
65 Ibid., p. 205.
66 Ibid., p. 253.
70 The protest of the bishops, dated Kalmar, June 11, 1444, is published in *Diplomatarium dioecesis Lundensis*, vol. 3, no. 258, pp. 274–78, while the archbishop’s protest, dated Arnö, July 20, 1444, is printed as no. 259, pp. 280–84; see also Carlsson, “Lunds ärkesäte,” pp. 515–56.
SCANDINAVIAN HISTORIANS IN MODERN times have often tacitly assumed that saints in the Middle Ages were peaceful. Saints’ lives, miracle collections, and pictures and figures of saints have been studied to sift out information about daily life, habits, utensils, attitudes toward health, and the like, or saints have been considered political creatures invented or exploited by rulers to enhance their own prestige and strengthen their dynastic line against other members of the family. The topic of saints and warfare, however, has been almost totally neglected. Such a connection has fallen outside the dominant socioeconomic historiographical tradition in Scandinavia during the entire twentieth century, and it has somehow affronted or at least been disturbing for the strong Lutheran and pietistic tradition in Scandinavia, according to which a good Christian would also do good, pious, and peaceful deeds. Modern historians have sometimes directly blamed medieval saints for not having lived a truly saintly life, and for having come to be venerated as saints in spite of their engagement in wars, the brutality they showed toward the people, or some other indecent behavior.¹

Such an approach misses an important aspect of the medieval Christian understanding of saints, namely that it could be necessary, and therefore a good deed, to be a warrior. Ever since the earliest church, Christian theologians agreed that it was unrealistic to imagine societies without war, because societies here on earth can never be without evil, and it is therefore necessary to fight against evil, both spiritually and physically.²

Warfare was endemic to medieval societies, also in Scandinavia, and not least in the Baltic where fighting for trade and economy and fighting for mission went hand in hand throughout the Middle Ages.
Saints have participated in warfare as intercessors and symbols, and as such they have been closely integrated in preparations for warfare and during actual battles, but we still know too little about how they worked in practice in the North, and about how we should actually define a warrior saint.

Saintly Warriors, Some Models

With St. Paul, military concepts and metaphors of warfare became fundamentally embedded in Christian language and worldview. The struggle against evil is continuous and a basic condition for each and every Christian throughout life, but most of this struggle is spiritual. The problem for modern historians is that it can be very difficult to distinguish between spiritual and physical warfare in the medieval sources concerning saints, or to estimate the importance of the one for the other. Saints fought and killed and died, spiritually, but to which extent did this inspire other Christians to do the same physically?

The main focus here will be on saints who somehow contributed to direct physical warfare, which certainly does not exclude their having, at the same time, a number of other functions. They were addressed in prayers and asked to intervene, sometimes in very small and mundane matters, sometimes in political affairs with far-reaching consequences, sometimes to help in actual warfare. It is difficult to single out one primary or main function of any saint, and even the mightiest and most belligerent ones could also be invoked against minor inconveniences.

Saints could be invoked by a single individual in personal matters, but also by a community or any kind of group in matters that involved larger areas of society. Many studies in hagiography have concentrated upon single individuals’ understanding of saints and on individual prayers or the miracles that individual persons experienced. This reflects a bias in the source material, with its meticulous enumeration of individuals helped by miracles, but it may have reinforced the modern impression that saints spent most of their time solving problems of daily life and had little interest in more far-reaching matters that had implications for many, such as warfare. However, in spite of these complications, we can point to some characteristics for warrior saints, on a different level of abstraction:
1. Some saints actually took part in warfare personally, whether or not they had done so while alive; they appeared during battle fighting together with the living soldiers, or they appeared to the war leader in visions before the fighting began; or they were invoked in prayers during battle.3

2. Another characteristic—common to many saints in religious border areas throughout Europe, though not exclusive to these saints—was that they liberated prisoners of war or that they saved peaceful travelers from the attack of pagan enemies.4 It was an achievement repeated by numerous different saints from Canute Lavard in Denmark to Santiago in Spain.5 Ultimately, they were inspired by the miracle that Peter witnessed when he was liberated from prison in Jerusalem by an angel of God, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles (chapter 12).

3. A third characteristic, which may be classified as belonging to warrior saints, was the example of saints being martyred by infidels during battle or during violent persecutions and torture. This was a common fate for many saints from the Roman persecution of the earliest church, and the recounting of these stories would have had a morally edifying function in all layers of medieval societies. But when they were told in border societies or to soldiers on their way to fight against infidels, these narratives could easily be interpreted as examples to be imitated in actual warfare.

4. A fourth characteristic is closely linked to the medieval mental tendency also to understand holiness in physical terms. The power of the saint could be an abstract idea floating around and somehow emanating from heaven, but it could also be located very concretely in physical objects, such as the relics of saints, which, when distributed in border areas, could be understood as actively protecting their devotees and participating in the fight against evil.6 Consequently, newly conquered areas could somehow belong to the saint, who would not only be the patron of the area, but, in the medieval understanding, actually the owner of the land. If, for example, we can detect a pattern in the dedication of churches in missionary areas to certain, specific saints, we may perhaps assume that these saints had participated in the conquest and conversion and in some sense functioned as warrior saints.
Royal Saints and Warfare

Many members of the royal families in Scandinavia were venerated as saints, with or without officially being canonized. They had different functions, as can be seen from the miracles they performed, but they were also closely connected to warfare.7

One such example is the Danish duke Canute Lavard, who was killed in 1131. Soon after his murder, a cult began to develop around his grave in Ringsted. In 1146, Canute’s son and his nephew attempted to have him canonized, immediately before they—or at least the nephew—went on a crusade against the pagan Wends. They probably believed that Canute somehow could help them during their war. The canonization was prevented at this time by the archbishop, because it had no papal approval, but, twenty-five years later, Canute Lavard was canonized by papal authorization and solemnly translated in the magnificent church of Ringsted, in June 1170.

Canute Lavard’s connection to warfare is evident from two sources. The first is the official liturgy used during the translation, which opens with this characterization of Canute: “Blessed the man whose head the Lord has crowned with the crown of martyrdom and protected by the wall of faith, whom the Lord has armed with the shield of faith and the sword to exterminate the heathens and all the Lord’s enemies” (Beatus vir cuius capiti dominus coronam imposuit muro salutis circumdedit. scuto fi dei et gladio muniuit ad expugnandas gentes et omnes inimicos).8 Later in this liturgy, Canute is presented as having been an ardent warrior in the pagan areas in northern Germany, where he expanded Christian territory; as having founded churches; and as having brought peace to Christians and pagans alike. He compelled the pagans to abandon their empty and profane rites and to believe in Christ, and he is called an athleta Christi, a warrior or a champion of Christ (Pacem Danis et paganis fidem sanctus contulit/ quos a vanis et prophanis ritibus recedere/ et in Christum credere compulsit sub pacis federe./ Duci Danorum sub iure regio honorem exhibit Sclavorum legio).9 Canute is presented as a warrior who while alive fought to defend and expand Christianity, and who therefore became a martyr and died for the faith. He thus fits in with a number of kings who were canonized during the twelfth century and turned into crusaders or protocrusaders.10

Even after his death, Canute continued to work on behalf of the crusades. In November 1169, Pope Alexander III issued a bull to Bishop
Absalon of Roskilde because of the conquest of the pagan fortress and temple of Arkona on the island of Rügen, which had finally been accomplished the preceding year by Canute Lavard's son, King Valdemar I the Great. In this bull, the king is described as inspired by heavenly zeal, armed with the weapons of Christ, and protected by the shield of faith, etc., when he with his strong arm fought against the pagans and called them back to the faith and the law of Christ. Pope Alexander gives here a short and concise description of mission by sword, of which he obviously approved. And four days later, the pope issued the bull that canonized Canute Lavard. The connection seems obvious. Canute must somehow have assisted the living soldiers during the siege of Arkona; he had now become recognized as a warrior saint.

This corresponds well with some of Canute's miracles. He liberated a Swede who had been taken captive by the pagans and held in chains. He also saved a group of poor and unarmed Christians who were attacked by numerous pagans, whom the Christians succeeded in repelling by praying to Canute. As a sign of gratitude, they donated a pagan lance from the battle to be displayed at Canute's tomb. This miracle elegantly evokes the memory of the siege of Antioch during the First Crusade, when the holy lance was discovered and allegedly saved the Christians from a numerous Muslim enemy.

Canute Lavard began his career as a warrior saint, and he very soon became the patron saint of the guilds of St. Canute, which spread and acquired houses throughout the Baltic area. Whether these guilds were involved directly in warfare or not is a complicated matter. The members of these guilds, however, came from the highest rung of society in their various cities, and also included individuals from the royal family. These persons were inevitably consulted in any preparations for war and actual warfare, and it is unlikely that they should not have prayed to Canute on these occasions.

Canute Lavard had a few Danish predecessors. His uncle, King Canute, had been killed in 1086 in Odense by rebels. He was canonized in 1099/1100 and became the first royal martyr with papal approval. According to the narrative of his life and death, composed for the translation of his relics, he was also an *athleta Christi*. His passion was a detailed imitation of the Passion of Christ, but it also closely resembled the lives and legends of earlier English and international saints who had fought and died for the faith. Canute the King was “the first martyr of his people, the ideal Christian soldier.”
Even earlier, Danish kings had fought for the faith and had been considered important spiritual warriors as well as military ones. King Harald Bluetooth had converted to Christianity in around 965, and boasted twenty years later on an immense runestone that he had “conquered all Denmark and made the Danes Christians.” A hundred years later, in the 1070s, Adam of Bremen wrote, that

This Harald who as the first compelled the Danes to accept Christianity, and who filled the whole Northern World with churches and preachers, this Harald was innocent but wounded and despised for Christ’s sake, and he shall not, I believe, be in want of the palm leaves of martyrdom.”

Adam stated that miracles and healings took place at Harald’s grave. Apparently, a cult for Harald had begun, precisely because he had introduced Christianity through war, but we have only few traces of it from the twelfth century, and it seems to have disappeared totally.

In Norway, King Olav fell at the Battle of Stiklestad in 1030, during his brutal campaign to convert the country to Christianity, and miracles were soon recorded from around his grave in Trondheim. After his death, he continued actively to take part in wars against infidels. In 1043, he appeared in a vision to his son Magnus, the evening before the great battle at Lyrskov Heath in southern Denmark against the pagan Wends. When fighting began the next day, the air was filled with the sound of the great church bell in far-away Trondheim, and Magnus swung his father’s big battle-ax, named Hel, and killed Wends in great numbers. Olav apparently became a very important saint in the early mission in the Baltic, to judge from the great number of churches dedicated to him, many of which date back to the conversion period of the different areas. But his influence extended even further. In the twelfth century, the story spread that Olav had not died, but had moved to Syria and was now riding his horse and leading the Christian troops against Muslims. No later than the early twelfth century, the Nordic Varangian guard had their own church in Constantinople dedicated to Olav, in which they kept his sword, while his helmet was in Antioch, and his personal armor in Jerusalem. All these items were an inspiration for the Scandinavians in imperial Byzantine wars against infidels, and in the crusades to the Middle East. When the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem was renovated, probably in the 1120s, two columns near the entrance were decorated with frescos in Byzantine style depicting St. Olav of Norway and St. Canute the King of Denmark.
Scandinavians on crusade venerated these two saints, and must have got the very natural idea of transplanting the holy war and its warrior saints from the Mediterranean to the Baltic.

The Swedish King Eric, killed in 1160, is a more obscure figure in his early career as a saint. He may or may not be the one Pope Alexander III hinted at in 1171 or 1172 when he forbade the Swedes to venerate a saint who had died in excessive drunkenness. Just like King Canute and King Olav, King Eric became the Swedish national warrior saint—against other Scandinavians—during the high and late Middle Ages. Each of these cults received royal and aristocratic support. Soldiers’ prayers were directed to the royal saints, and their names even became battle cries in war. After the creation of the Kalmar Union in 1397, Canute, Olav, and Eric were represented together and functioned as a trinity of saints to protect the Union, and they became the patrons of a new military order for the very highest nobility of the three countries, the Order of the Elephant, which was established in the 1460s. At the same time, St. Eric could also be referred to as helper and protector by Swedish rebels who fought against the king of the Kalmar Union, as the archbishop of Uppsala did in 1471.

It is of great interest in a Baltic context that King Eric was said to have led a crusade to Finland, probably in the 1150s, together with Bishop Henry of Uppsala, who had originally come from England. This episode is an important element in the short version of Eric’s legend, which in the form we know it now must have been composed around 1270. Eric was moved by piety and Christian zeal to fight against the enemies of the faith. He proposed to the pagan Finns that they be baptized and cease their attack upon Christians and upon Sweden. The response was war, and Eric and his soldiers killed a great number of Finns in defense of Christianity and in revenge for their having earlier spilled Christian blood (in ulcionem sanguinis Christiani). Although the war is characterized as just and necessary, Eric afterwards lamented and wept because so many unbaptized pagan souls had gone to hell instead of being saved. After the initial conquest, Eric organized the new church structure and provided the new Christian land with preachers and churches before he returned to Sweden. Bishop Henry established an episcopal see and began the missionary work, but was soon martyred on one of the frozen lakes at the hand of a local Finn called Lalli. The sources are late, and all of the details in this chain of events have been much debated among scholars, including the question of whether this first crusade to Finland ever took place at all. In any case, around 1300, at the latest, a hagiographic tradition was
established to explain that Finland had been converted violently through a crusade led by two saints, a king, and a bishop.  

International Saints and Nordic Warfare

A different group of warrior saints were imported from outside Scandinavia. Often, we know very little about how they were venerated in Scandinavia in the early medieval period, but we can, nevertheless, draw on a number of sources to suggest that they played an active role in warfare. There were many to choose from.

One of the earliest must have been the Archangel St. Michael, who in modern Scandinavian scholarly literature is almost always depicted with the scale with which he weighs the souls of the deceased and helps them into heaven. In the Middle Ages, he became known to everyone from the requiem mass, in which he is depicted saving the souls of all the faithful from the lion, from hell, and from disappearing into obscurity, before finally leading them into the holy light which the Lord has promised to Abraham and his seed.

*Domine, Jesu Christe, Rex gloriae, libera animas omnium fidelium defunctorum de poenis inferni et de profundo lacu. Libera eas de ore leonis, ne absorbent eas tartarus, ne cadant in obscurum; sed signifer sanctus Michael repaesentet eas in lucem sanctam, quam olim Abrahae promisisti et semini ejus (Offertorium of the Requiem mass)*

(Lord Jesus Christ, King of glory, liberate the souls of the faithful, departed from the pains of hell and from the bottomless pit. Deliver them from the lion’s mouth, lest hell swallow them up, lest they fall into darkness. Let the standard-bearer, holy Michael, bring them into holy light. Which was promised to Abraham and his descendants.)

St. Michael is designated as *signifer*, the carrier of the banner, which unambiguously designates him as the leader in battle. By the eleventh century, and especially after the conquest of Jerusalem in 1099, most Christians would understand this banner to be *vexillum crucis*, the banner of the holy cross that the crusaders raised before battle. In this period, the *lux sancta* to which Michael is leading the faithful may even have been associated with the *terra sancta*, the Holy Land, the land which the Lord had promised to Abraham, and which the true children of Abraham, as the crusaders were viewed to be, now claimed back with sword in hand.
St. Michael seems to have been very actively venerated in the early conversion period. He is mentioned on runestones from the eleventh century, side by side with the Holy Virgin Mary, and some of the earliest churches in Scandinavia were dedicated to him. In the Norwegian *Draumkvæde*, which is probably medieval in origin, he is called Michael of the Souls and described as coming from the South on his white horse and riding against the devil, blowing the trumpet of Doomsday.

The kind and benevolent archangel with the scale was certainly not the only possible way of understanding St. Michael in the Baltic area. Throughout the Middle Ages, he was also depicted as the dragon slayer. Sometimes he was in angelic garb, as on the twelfth-century granite relief from the church of Øster Starup in Denmark. Sometimes the archangel was in full international contemporary battle armor, as for example on a statue from the early sixteenth century in the church of Pernaja in Finland. This is a close parallel to a statue of St. Olav from very much the same period and area, from the church of Janakkala, also in Finland, but it represents a very common and widespread type. Occasionally, Michael was equipped with specifically Nordic weapons, as he was as a small figure on the outer wall of Hörne church on Gotland from around 1300. He holds a circular shield with his left hand and in his right has a battle mace, the *stridshammer*, “which is very common in the Nordic countries,” as noted in papal documents from the later Middle Ages.

Overall, the depictions of St. Michael in Scandinavian medieval churches suggest that he was more often portrayed as a dragon slayer in the late Middle Ages than as a weigher of souls.

Another saint whose cult arrived in the Baltic region during the conversion period was the Spanish St. Vincent of Zaragoza, one of the martyrs of the early church. He had been grilled over fire, among other torments, and killed, in 304. His corpse was thrown out into the fields to be devoured by wild animals, but was protected by ravens, even though these birds normally feed on dead bodies. The cult of St. Vincent seems to have been relatively widespread in Scandinavia; one of the larger altars in the cathedral of Lund was consecrated to him in 1145, with the solemn deposition of relics of his. Vincent was venerated in the mid-eleventh century by the Danish king, Sven Estridsen, who took the saint’s relics with him on his war ship to ensure luck in battle against the Norwegian King Harald Hardrade. King Sven actually lost both the battle and the relic, so Vincent was not as effective as hoped for on this occasion.
did play an important role, however, in spreading Christianity in eastern Europe and in the countries along the Baltic shores.

Around 1170, Vincent joined the crusades on the Iberian Peninsula; his body sailed into the harbor of Lisbon, with no living person on board and guided only by a pair of ravens. He became probably the most popular of the Portuguese warrior saints, equaling even Santiago the Moorkiller from Compostela; moreover, “Vincent, Vincent” became the battle cry of the Portuguese crusaders. It is interesting to speculate whether a saint accompanied by ravens might have had a particular appeal for the Nordic warriors whose euphemism for “killing in battle” was “to feed the ravens.” In any case, the stories about Vincent and his support for religious wars in the South will certainly have been well known in the Baltic area throughout the Middle Ages. Vincent was mentioned in connection to the cathedral of Lund in the early twelfth century, and in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, Vincent was depicted on the column next to St. Olav and St. Canute.

It may also have added to Vincent’s popularity in Scandinavia that, according to his legend, he was born in the Spanish town of Huesca just like St. Lawrence, who was the patron saint of the Ottonian religious expansion eastwards in the tenth century, and the patron saint of the missionary episcopal see of Lund. Just like Lawrence, Vincent had been tortured over burning coal. Both were frequently depicted with the grill in their hand, and both became connected to mission and warfare. They were sometimes depicted together, and churches were sometimes dedicated to them in common.33

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With the crusades to Jerusalem, new saints came to the Baltic area. Everywhere in western Europe, warriors heard the stories about how the first crusaders were attacked by Muslims while marching through Syria toward the Holy City, but suddenly got reinforcement from an army of dead crusaders riding out of heaven, led by St. George and St. Demetrios. These two saints had both been soldiers in the Roman army and had converted to Christianity, and for this they were both cruelly martyred in the very early fourth century. In the beginning, they were probably venerated for their witness and their suffering, but from the ninth century onwards, Byzantine emperors actively promoted the cult of St. George and St. Demetrios as warriors who fought actively together with the imperial armies to protect the emperor.34 There may actually well have been a
cult or at least a developed knowledge of the two saints around the Baltic shortly after this period, because of the region’s close connections to Kiev, where George and Demetrios were also venerated as warrior saints long before the crusades. It is difficult to tell because of lack of sources from Scandinavia, but, in any case, it seems certain that the cult of St. George there grew markedly after 1100. He became popular everywhere in western Europe, including Scandinavia. In the high and later Middle Ages, St. George became one of the most popular and common saints in mural paintings in Scandinavia, which is often explained by noting that he was the protector of the weak and of leprosy hospitals. He is, however, almost always depicted as a mighty warrior and a dragon slayer, as he was on a fresco from 1496 in Bellinge church near Odense in Denmark. St. George could be used directly in war propaganda, as he was in a monumental wooden tableau from Storkyrkan in Stockholm from 1489, often attributed to Bernt Notke. Here St. George symbolized the brave Swedes or probably Sten Sture himself, clad in shining gold on his dapple gray horse, protecting the maiden Sweden against being devoured by the Kalmar Union led by the Danes, represented by the horrible and defeated dragon under the hoofs of the horse. The figure was erected to commemorate the Swedish rebels’ victory in 1471 at Brunkeberg over the Danish King Christian I, who had attempted to conquer Stockholm. St. George was chosen for this monument instead of St. Eric to illustrate the divine favor toward the Swedish case, because St. George was the personal patron saint of the rebel leader, Sten Sture.

Another saint connected to crusades was actually the fourth-century St. Nicholas, who is often presented only as a peaceful healer and a helper of sailors. His cult came to western Europe following the turmoil in Byzantium shortly before the First Crusade, when his relics were moved from Myra in Asia Minor to Bari in Italy by industrious and belligerent Normans, which probably occurred in 1087. In Bari, Nicholas became the protector of crusaders on their way from southern Italy to the Holy Land, and since the twelfth or thirteenth century, he was well known for liberating Christians from Muslim prisons. He must also have been considered important for Scandinavian warriors and rulers. When the Danish king Eric went on a crusade to Jerusalem in 1103, he acquired important relics of Nicholas and sent these home to initiate a cult for the saint in Slangerup, the king’s own birthplace. Similar royally supported cults for St. Nicholas were established in Oslo and in Trondheim in Norway, probably associated with relics of the saint, brought from Byzantium by
the crusader King Sigurd Jorsalfar.\textsuperscript{40} During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the cult of St. Nicholas spread along the Baltic coast, following step by step the armed mission through Pomerania and further eastwards, where a number of new churches in the missionary areas were dedicated to St. Nicholas. Just as was the case with St. George, St. Nicholas was a popular saint with the Teutonic Order, and the two followed the knights on their continuous crusades. In Tallinn in Estonia, a fine altarpiece from around 1480 shows St. Nicholas waiting for a ship. It is not solely a merchant ship because it is decorated with banners showing the black head of St. Mauritius and the altar was donated by the brotherhood of the Black Heads in Tallinn. They had as their patron saint Mauritius, another of the warrior saints of antiquity who became especially popular in the Baltic and whose veneration was connected to crusading.\textsuperscript{41}

Mauritius had been the black commander in the Roman imperial army of a legion of Christian soldiers from Egypt. When he refused to decimate the legion, he was executed in the late third century. Like St. Lawrence, St. Mauritius came to be connected with the tenth-century eastward expansion of the Ottonians, and he became the patron saint of the important missionary see of Magdeburg. In the eleventh century, it was believed in northern Europe that he had carried with him the holy lance that had been used to pierce the side of Christ.\textsuperscript{42} Mauritius was included early in the liturgy at the cathedral of Lund, and in the late twelfth century, the crusader king, Valdemar the Great of Denmark, issued coins showing the picture of Mauritius, imitating coinage from Magdeburg.\textsuperscript{43} In Livonia, Mauritius became the patron of the Black Heads, a guild of bachelors who traded, but also served as military contingents. The different merchants’ guilds in Livonia had diverse saints as patrons, but “the ‘military’ ones had a very prominent position.”\textsuperscript{44} In the mid-fifteenth century, Mauritius’ picture was painted in the chapel of the Three Magi in Roskilde cathedral, which was the chapel of the most prominent knightly order in Scandinavia at the time, the Order of the Elephant.\textsuperscript{45}

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The list of warrior saints could certainly be extended, for example by looking more closely at the spread of the cult of St. James in the Baltic during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Instead, it is interesting to speculate about how much was actually needed to make a saint into a religious warrior. An example would be the extremely popular fourth-century St. Martin of Tours. He was very well known in the north, and in
modern historical studies his life as a peaceful bishop has been much more emphasized than his career as soldier. However, he is normally depicted in the Middle Ages as a warrior on a big battle horse or as a nobleman with fine hat, a tendency that can also be seen in the widespread images of the saint from Scandinavian churches. During the Middle Ages, St. Martin’s home monastery became increasingly identified with the crusades. Marmoutier Abbey near Tours was founded by Martin after 371. In 732, Muslims had decided to raid and destroy the monastery, according to the French chronicles of St. Denis, but they were stopped by Charles Martel. This is what we know today as the decisive battle at Poitiers, but it was commonly believed in the Middle Ages to have taken place at Tours, which therefore became a place of particular symbolic importance for the preaching of the crusades. Pope Urban II continued to Tours after his sermon in Clermont and preached the First Crusade here in 1096, and Pope Calixtus II continued the tradition by preaching another crusade here in 1119. On a common European scale, Martin of Tours became very closely connected to the crusades in the twelfth century, and this must also have been known in the Baltic area.

The Angry Mother—Mary at War

Let us proceed to something much less speculative and for which we actually do have some evidence in medieval sources; that is for the Holy Virgin Mary as a kind of goddess of war. Not only did the veneration of the Virgin become even more widespread during the twelfth century than earlier, it also became deeper and more emotional. The figure of Mary as the caring mother became elaborated with very direct, concrete imagery. Commentaries to the Song of Songs described Mary’s breasts and the milk springing from them—the well of grace, Richard of St. Victor called them. In one miracle narrative, a crusade preacher ran out of inspiration—it could happen in the Middle Ages—but after having sucked the milk from the breast of Mary, he grew strong enough to resume the preaching against Muslims, and with much greater success than earlier. He became cardinal in Rome because of his eloquence.

Because of her all-absorbing maternal love, Mary could also be all-absorbing in her wrath and anger against those who fought against her Son. This may explain why during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, she also became perhaps the most popular saint for warriors fighting against infidels.
Mary was used as a unifying symbol during battle, depicted on icons carried in front of the troops, or more often on banners. This may be seen clearly in a number of manuscript illustrations from Spain, for example of the Cantigas de Santa Maria, but it was also a common way of using Mary around the Baltic both among common crusaders and among the Teutonic Knights whose order was dedicated to the Holy Virgin. Henry of Livonia relates how a siege of a pagan fortress ended: “The crusaders received hostages, entered the fortress, invited the pagans to accept baptism, sprinkled the whole fortress with consecrated water, and raised the banner of Mary on the top of it.”

The crusades occurred in a space that had the special attention of St. Mary. When Pope Innocent III as part of the preparations for the Fifth Crusade called back all indulgence except to the Holy Land, Bishop Albert of Riga in 1215 explained that Riga and Livonia were the land of Mary, the land of the Mother and therefore of no less importance than Palestine, the land of the Son. How he actually succeeded in persuading the pope and the cardinals that this frozen land on the Baltic shore had a special position in the eyes of St. Mary is hard to imagine, but it worked. Warriors could again go on crusade to Livonia and earn indulgence. This parallels what happened in other religious border areas—and had actually also happened before the First Crusade—namely that lands newly conquered from infidels were donated to St. Mary.

The queen of heaven from the Apocalypse is clad in the sun, with the moon under her feet, and with a crown of twelve stars. While the old dragon wipes a third of all the stars away with its tail, the queen gives birth to her son, who will govern all peoples with an iron scepter. The biblical images of Mary as the center of a cosmic war are strong and often illustrated in paintings, altarpieces, etc. The sun became the symbol of Mary, the “sun of justice,” as she was called in the liturgy used in Riga. The star became another of the common Mary-symbols and gave her, in the North, a singular relationship to the sea. Stella Marie so easily became Stella maris, the star of the sea, and this double expression was used in a number of songs in honor of the Virgin. Mary became the protector of the sea, which crusaders would cross to fight in the land of Mary, and Livonia could be called “The land on the other side of the sea,” the Outremer of the North, as Palestine was the Outremer of the Mediterranean.

St. Mary could be quite effective when necessary. Henry of Livonia relates how the Danish king in 1221 had demanded Riga’s capitulation, but his governor had to leave the city without any result, and
he left for the open sea, but without any steersman he was cast hither and thither. Because he came to Livonia against the will of God, the winds rose against him, for good reasons, and the sun of justice did not shine over him. He failed to respect Mary who is called the star of the sea, and therefore she did not show him a safe route for his journey. So, the queen of the world and the empress of all lands will always protect her own land. Was she not in command, when many kings attacked Livonia? Did she not let King Vladimir of Polotsk die a sudden death? Did she not deprive the great king of Novgorod of his kingdom, when he attacked Livonia, so his own people rebelled against him? And the other king of Novgorod, she killed by help of the Mongols.55

Henry continues at length, and concludes:

see, how sweet the mother of God is towards her own and how she always defends her own against enemies, and see how cruel she is against those who invade her land, or those who strive to hinder the belief and the cult for her Son. See how many kings she has haunted. See, how many heretic and pagan princes she has exterminated from earth.

This double aspect of Mary is actually neatly summarized already in the Song of Songs where it is said:

Thou art beautiful, O my love, 
comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners, 
Turn thine eyes from me, 
for they have overcome me.

These verses were used in the liturgy for the feast of the Assumption of St. Mary, on August 15, which became a popular day for crowning young kings before they went on crusade. On that day, the crusaders had conquered Fellinn in Estonia in 1223, and therefore they chose the next year to attack Tartu on exactly the same day.56

St. Mary was a double-faced figure, at least seen from a modern perspective. She is loving and caring, and she is also the violent woman who destroys the enemies of Christ without any mercy. The latter aspect of her functioning in the Middle Ages is very seldom included in the modern Scandinavian descriptions of her.

Saints in the Middle Ages combined tenderness and caring with military brutality. This is an old phenomenon, but it became more pronounced with the crusading period from ca. 1100 onwards. Saints’ lives
were rewritten in order to turn the saints into crusaders, new royal saints were canonized precisely because of their engagement in crusading, and some of the saints became patrons of the new knightly orders, which were in themselves a novelty in Western Christianity. The combination of living a monastic life and systematic killing is another example of the spiritualization of warfare characteristic of the crusades and of the warrior saints.

Both from iconography and from written sources, it is clear that saints were depicted as warriors, and that they were involved in actual warfare in the countries around the Baltic. Much, however, is still unclear and conjectural when it concerns saints and warfare, especially in the North, because of the paucity of sources. We still have too little knowledge about how saints were used on the battlefield. Were their names used as battle cry in the North as they were in southern Europe? Were they depicted on standards and flags and carried in front of the army in the North as they were in the South? We know from a few sources that their relics could be carried with the army, as King Sven Estridsen did with St. Vincent, but we do not know how they were actually used. Were they carried in procession before the battle began, were they strategically placed to protect the main contingent of soldiers, the main ship, the main siege tower? And what happened after victory? How common was it to dedicate the new churches in missionary areas to a saint who had helped in conquering the land?

A main problem of interpretation is the ambiguity of medieval religious expressions—should a fight be fought physically or spiritually, or both? The answer is that it depended upon the listener, and differed from person to person and from time to time. It is well attested that, for example, during the eleventh century, the spiritual understanding of the military language of the Bible and church fathers was supplemented by an interpretation that allowed direct use of physical force, and even praised it if it was in the service of the church. We must assume then, that military expressions in, for example, Scandinavian saints’ lives could be understood, by some of the listeners, as a license to war, and as a promise that the saint would participate and help.
NOTES

Research for this chapter was done under the project number 4EUROC/24.08.2010 within the European Science Foundation programme EUROCORE-CODE entitled Cuius Regio.

1 This is the tone in a great number of general histories of Scandinavian countries from the twelfth century. This attitude is much less pronounced in some recent publications on saints, e.g., Anu Mänd, “Saints’ Cults in Medieval Livonia,” in The Clash of Cultures on the Medieval Baltic Frontier, ed. Alan V. Murray (Farnham, 2009), pp. 191–223; and Haki Antonsson and Ildar H. Garipzanov, eds., Saints and their Lives on the Periphery. Veneration of Saints in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe (c. 1000–1200) (Turnhout, 2010).

2 The classical study is still F. H. Russell, The Just War in the Middle Ages (Cambridge 1975).


5 For Canute Lavard, see Vitae sanctorum danorum, ed. M. C. Gertz (Copenhagen, 1908–1912), p. 242–45; Santiago Liber Sancti Jacobi, Codex Calixtinus, ed. Walter Muir Whitehill (2 vols., Santiago de Compostela, 1944), 1:261, 273, 275. See Anthony Lappin, The Medieval Cult of Saint Dominic of Silos (London, 2002), pp. 171–95 for how Dominic was initially invoked for the release of prisoners; however, that aspect of the saint ceased to be of interest after the religious boundary between the Christian and Muslim kingdoms moved far south of Silos.

6 The Cistercian monastery of Dargun in the crusading area of Mecklenburg was founded in 1172 on the day of translation of St. Canute Lavard, and must have had some of his relics; Danmarks middelalderlige annaler, ed. Erik Kroman (Copenhagen, 1980), p. 128. Another example is the many relics of the Holy Cross that were brought from the Holy Land to religious border areas in western Europe. See Nikolas Jaspert, “Vergegenwärtigungen Jerusalems in Architektur und Reliquienkult,” in Jerusalem im Hoch- und Spätmittelalter. Konflikte und Konfliktbewältigung—Verstellungen und Vergegenwärtigungen, ed. Dieter Bauer, Klaus Herbers, Nikolas Jaspert (Frankfurt, 2001), pp. 219–70.

7 On royal saints in general, see Erich Hoffmann, Die heiligen Könige bei den Angelsachsen und den skandinavischen Völkern (Neumünster, 1975); Gabor Klaniczay, Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses. Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe (Cambridge, 2002).

8 John Bergsagel, ed., The Offices and Masses of St. Knud Lavard (+ 1131), (Kiel, Univ. Lib. MS S.H: 8 A. 8*) (Copenhagen, 2010), 2, p. 2.

9 Bergsagel, The Offices and Masses, p. 16.

11 Diplomatarium Danicum, ed. Det Danske Sprog- og Litteratselskab (Copenhagen, 1938–) (Henceforth DD), I:2 no. 189: “rex, celesti flame inspí- ratus et armis Christi munitus, scuto fidei armatus considerans, diuinó munere protectus, cum brachio forti et extento ... ad fidem et legem Christi tam potente rac valide magnanimitére reuocauit ...”

12 DD I:2 no. 190.


17 Adam of Bremen, Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum, ed. J. M. Lappenberg, Hannover 1876: 2.26: “At ille noster Haroldus, qui populo Danoru christianitatem primus indixit, qui totum septentrionem ecclesiis et praedí- catoribus replevit, ille, inquam, innocens vulneratus et pro Christo expulsus, martyrii palma, ut spero, non carebit.”


29 Knut Liestøl, Draumkvæde. A Norwegian visionary Poem from the Middle Ages (Oslo, 1946).


35 In general, see Jan Svanberg, *Saint George of Sweden and Finland* (Stockholm, 1998).

36 Following the interpretation of Jan Svanberg and A. Qwarnström, *Sankt Göran och draken* (Stockholm, 1993), pp. 58–63, and Jan Svanberg, *S:t Göransgruppen i Konsten* (Stockholm, 1996), pp. 27–30. In an interesting article, Jan von Bonsdorff has argued that the interpretation of the monument as symbolising the wars between Danes and Swedes is a late, nationalistic projection; in Jan von Bonsdorff, “The Inertia of the Canon: Nationalist Projections onto the Works of Hans Grüggemann and Bernt Notke,” in *Renaissance Theory*, ed. James Elkins and Robert Williams (London, 2008), pp. 278–86 and pp. 455–56. If we accept this interpretation, the monument is not a direct means of political propaganda, but it still illustrates how important saints were in warfare.


38 Ildar H. Garipzanov, “Novgorod and the Veneration of Saints in Eleventh-Century Rus’: A Comparative View,” in *Saints and Their Lives on the Periphery*, pp. 115–45, on Nicholas see pp. 136–42.


44 Mänd, “Saints’ Cults,” pp. 204–5. The patron saint of Reval/Tallinn was St. Victor, another warrior saint who was very popular also with the different guilds in Estonia; ibid. pp. 203–4.


50 For Virgin Mary as supporter in battles in the Baltic area, see also Mänd, “Saints’ Cults,” pp. 194–99.

51 Henrici Chronicon Livoniae, ed. Leonid Arbusow et Albertus Bauer, (Hannover, 1955), (hereafter HCL), XI, 6; XII, 3; XVI, 4.

52 HCL XIX, 7.

53 HCL XXV, 2.

54 Terra transmarina, HCL XV, 4.

55 HCL XXV, 2.

56 HCL XXVIII, 4.

SAINTS WERE, FOR MEDIEVAL Christians, the tangible element in a religion mostly defined by abstract theological ideas. They were men and women who had been excellent in their lives or through their deaths and who, at the moment of death, went immediately to live with God (a reward normal humans could reach, at best, at the Last Judgment). Saints were still present in their bodies on earth and could, due to their double character as “living dead,” act as intermediaries between humans and God. Due to the holy power, *virtus*, given to them by God, they were believed to be able to interfere in human lives by punishing or rewarding, causing or circumventing damage, helping or hindering in battle, and so on. Saints had their places in the mass and in specific liturgies; they were carried out of the church into the streets of towns in processions, were represented in plays, and also appeared outside of the sacred space in images on all sorts of media. We (modern Europeans) may today still celebrate the feast of St. Martin or St. Nicholas and know something of the background of the night of St. Walburga or the fire of St. John, but mostly as rituals and legends out of context and separate from our secular lives. For medieval people, the saints’ calendar determined the whole year; the legends of saints were part of the oral tradition that was passed on from generation to generation, and celebrating their ceremonies was a crucial part of personal, social, and political life.

While modern Europeans usually do not care much, among European medievalists scholarly interest in saints and sanctity increased considerably at the beginning of the twenty-first century, probably not least because we have come to be interested again in entanglements of the secular and sacred arising in our societies from phenomena such as global migration. Although we always knew that religion was an inseparable
part of human life in the Middle Ages, we have rarely considered religious factors—saints and sanctity, visions and prophecy, rules and directions drawn from reading the Bible, and so on—truly central for political decisions. It seems to be difficult for a modern enlightened person to accept that any kind of more or less “superstitious” belief could really have been taken seriously by the men and women in charge of historically important actions. At best, we tend to classify those beliefs as mere symbolic communication, thereby often recasting the problem by understanding symbolic communication as only a kind of expression layered over the real facts that made politics happen, a kind of “opiate of the people” that rulers implemented but did not themselves believe in. We may not consider that any symbol can only have an effect once there is real meaning and real belief behind it and the symbol itself becomes an inseparable part of action.

When saints are reported to have helped in battles, for example, we, as believers in the laws of nature, tend to attribute that to the psychological impact on the armies, be it the ones being helped or the ones who see a strong force against them. Rulers, with a fine sense for psychological warfare, allegedly supported these superstitions in order to mislead people with less insight. Speaking ironically, it must have been really important for rulers to convince their foolish followers, if we think, for example, of the enormous sum of money the French king, Louis IX, was ready to pay for the crown of thorns that he planned to use to emphasize his own vocation as a king in the biblical tradition with holy legitimation in which he himself supposedly did not even believe. Saints and sanctity did not just supplement hard politics; they were a determining factor in it. Thus, dealing with saints and their multiple presences in medieval reality is not only an important part in understanding any facet of the Middle Ages—the Middle Ages cannot be understood without them.

Consequently, this collection of articles, *Saints around the Baltic*, addresses an important general topic of cultural-political history: the expansion of Christianity into the regions around the Baltic Sea during the Middle Ages (from the point of view of modern cultural memory completing Europe, at least as a virtual entity). The comparative approach brings together regions touched by, and even more included in, “Christianity” at very different times and by very different Christianities. This not only means “Latin”/“Roman”/“Catholic” or “Orthodox”/“Russian”/“Greek”—a topic that has been researched frequently of late, but takes into consideration how much “Christendom” itself developed throughout its history. The collection’s main emphasis
is cultural change following the introduction of new ideas, features, and people. And since transfer and transformation are, as in modern world historical approaches, considered a two-way street, this introduction resulted in change in the newly Christianized regions and also change among the adjacent Christian culture(s), which themselves changed considerably between Carolingian times and the later Middle Ages—a topic that should be elaborated much more in future studies.

How can saints, their emergence, transfer, and change help us to learn more about emerging and changing cultures? Clearly a history of Christianization must incorporate saints—but are saints one of the crucial indicators for cultural and even political developments and change? As the tangible element of Christian religion, saints were also local and therefore part of the neighborhood, so to speak, first and foremost bound to their places of death and burial, to memories of martyrdom and conversion. Through body relics, cults, and legends they were actual as well as symbolic centers of Christian communities. They were (and are for historians) among the most tangible nuclei of local, regional, and even “national” identity.

While saints were in principle bound to their graves, at the same time they proved to be adaptable to new groups and functions and quite mobile early in Christian history. Their relics could be taken anywhere: saints could be imported and adapted, their cults transformed, their legends translated (literally and culturally). Consequently, many saints were venerated in more than one place: Mary, the Mother of God, owns many churches and serves many peoples and social groups as their preferred person of identification, and this volume is full of other examples of saints who traveled great distances. Christianity around the Baltic, as elsewhere, knew patrons of towns, dioceses, or even whole realms as well as the people of these entities, and it knew patrons of specific functional groups (such as guilds, a feature evident in several articles in this volume) or for specific troubled situations. Not least through the possibility of the multiplication and transfer of relics that developed after the fourth century, saints acquired the ability to be present in many places. Saints could travel and multiply their places of impact and thus build bridges between places; they could create peace and trust; they could bind societies together more or less seamlessly and create new communities. At the same time, they could separate, cause competition, and become manifestations of boundaries and hostilities even up to open war between groups, different saints against each other, or the same saint in different places. Identities defined
by saints could strengthen the group from within or clash with outsiders. Settlers brought their favorite saints with them, merchants brought saints back home, new rulers could exchange saints—foreign missionaries could become, as martyrs buried in their place of destiny, local saints for the newly baptized, and also back home. Thus, saints were one of the most important media of symbolic communication, an idea addressed systematically in this volume that has also lately been considered elsewhere; they could work as argument or statement, as metaphors and as representations of ideas and communities (cf. Jürgensen).

The articles assembled in this book—where heterogeneity is a clear asset—are addressing questions noted above more or less intensively, and the multidisciplinary choice of authors support a variety of foci. They are specifically comparing different neighboring regions, and are looking at specific, or sometimes generic, “international” saints, local but also trans-regional aspects and also features of community and social position. Moreover, they pose methodological questions, such as the type of sources and materiality: How does a saint become a saint and how do they have an impact? The focus on change provides a special emphasis on the recognition of saints (and their official, canonical acceptance or the lack thereof), the replacement of saints, the reactivation of saints, and the presence or absence of specific saints at specific times.

From a cultural-historical point of view on saints, quite a few important questions can be traced in the examples the articles bring into focus here, while others remain open more or less explicitly. The collection does not offer a complete synthesized image since the articles do not follow a standardized catalogue of questions—but the variety of approaches (resulting from the source material as well as the different disciplines of the authors) creates a broad panorama of important questions and procedures. The variety of sources is impressive (also the explication of absence or sketchiness in certain cases), although it seems impossible to reach any general conclusion about the saints of the wider region because the source base differs so much from place to place.

Modern approaches may reduce this corpus of sources even more. Sometimes saints have only been made by modern historians creating cultural memory, as Dorothea of Montau (cf. Heß) was created or at least considerably inflated by historians looking for “Deutschttum” in the East. This case teaches us that we should carefully assess our own research questions: What does it tell us about our own approach if today we prefer looking for transregional (“international”), peacefully exchanged, saints
instead of national saints that define clear borders between medieval realms or the “national” groups within them?

This basic “Standortgebundenheit” of any historian, bound to his own position, as R. Koselleck calls it, also leads to one of the clear strengths of the collection: Its “Romferne,” the distance from the papacy as the one defining power (an issue Järvinen broaches as a problem of source tradition). While we may explain this with an intrinsic “Romferne” of scholars mostly from Protestant countries, one of the most interesting results in several articles is the returning interest in “saints in the making” (cf. Lind, Selch Jensen, Sands), specifically if they did not achieve canonization on either an official (papal) level or even locally in the long run. Some of these saints have proved to be successful in cults, others seem to have disappeared again (Bisgaard)—especially if they were functionally relatively restricted like Saint–Duke Canute Lavard (Petersen)—but could also be revived, demonstrating the strong option of oral, unofficial, possibly even counterofficial memory. Furthermore, some historians have turned their attention to a kind of self-Christianization or at least the arrival of Christianity long before a region was “officially” Christianized (cf. Lind, Mänd); before we can find any missionaries, merchants seem to have brought home the Christian God and his saints.

Among the saints in the making are some we may rightly call crusader saints, which leads us to another interesting field frequently discussed lately: although crusade appeals seem to have promised that those who were fighting in the right spirit and died in the holy battle would become martyrs, we have astonishingly scarce traces of actual crusader saints, let alone officially canonized ones—probably because the crusade needed victors, not martyrs. In Livonia, however, there seem to have been attempts to create saints in the contexts of crusades (Selch Jensen), while similarly, around 1240, probably in Bremen and thus close to the Baltic region, the Franciscan Alexander Minorita explicitly criticized the Church for its shortcomings in accepting crusade martyrs.

The articles speak relatively little about imported saints and do not at all ask the question of a possible transport and transformation of the saints back to and in the places where the missionaries had come from, except for the fact that some saints spread—like St. Olaf—to Constantinople and elsewhere. Olav (who became probably the most generic saint in the North, reaching the southern coasts of the North and Baltic Seas) is also the best example of the opportunity to step analytically
from local saints to “transnational” or maybe even generic saints, since he spread from Scandinavia to Livonia and then even further.

Along these lines, the volume is relatively compact on questions of Nordic saints. Several examples interlock very well and leave the first-glance impression that the question of identity in these regions concentrates on only a few saints, but deeper consideration of the volume does not give such an easy answer. The comparative approach reaches beyond regional borders and collects interesting observations that open horizons for further comparative research questions.

- Specifically, it seems urgent to have a closer look at St. Lawrence of Rome, who appeared quite prominently in Lund and Uppsala, and at the same time was an important saint in Saxony after Otto the Great’s victory against the Hungarians on the Lechfeld on the day of St. Laurence (August 10, 955).

- St. Mary Magdalene is another important battle saint south of the Baltic Sea who was established as a helper of the burgers of Lübeck against Danish rule and whose presence (as a biblical and thus very generic saint) can also be traced to Scandinavia.

- Starting from Mary Magdalene, it would also be interesting to proceed to a broader comparison of the saints north, west, and east of the Baltic with the saints of the German Hanse and Poland (although the kingdom only briefly reached the Baltic coast).

- Mary as a possible patron saint of countries has been touched on, but would justify further research. Other saints that could have been expected are lacking or appear only marginally, probably due mostly to the different foci of the articles: Peter, very present in the Slavic lands south of the Baltic Sea; Nicholas, saint of merchants and also of knights further south (who appears among the “saints at war,” cf. Villads Jensen); Catherine of Alexandria, who often appears among (German) urban elites; and James the Elder, an important patron of the pilgrimage to Santiago. Are there more universal saints creating regional and even local identities in the South (in Saxony as a land without saints11) than in the North?

This is a rich collection, which results in more questions than it answers, one of the best things that can be said about a publication.
NOTES

1 Dieter R. Bauer, Klaus Herbers, Hedwig Röckelein and Felicitas Schmieder, eds., *Heilige—Liturgie—Raum*, Beiträge zur Hagiographie 8 (Stuttgart, 2010).


4 To quote only a recent study, again from a decidedly archaeological perspective, touching on many issues in topics about the saints: Maciej Salamon, Marcin Woloszyn, Alexander Musin and Perica Špehar, eds., *Rome, Constantinople and Newly-Converted Europe. Archaeological and Historical Evidence* (Krakow, Leipzig, Rzeszów, Warsaw, 2012).


6 Klaus Schreiner, *Maria, Jungfrau, Mutter, Herrscherin* (Munich/Vienna, 1994).


8 A topic that has been addressed frequently lately, see the very recent Constance Brittain Bouchard, *Rewriting Saints and Ancestors. Memory and Forgetting in France (500–1200)* (Philadelphia, 2015).


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