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1965—68

The Cathedral priory of Odense in the Middle ages

By Peter King

The cathedral priory of Odense is of particular interest to English scholars[1]. Not only was it founded as a daughter house of the famous abbey of Evesham, but as a Benedictine cathedral chapter it transplanted to the European mainland an institution hardly known outside the Anglo-Norman kingdom. Yet there are difficulties in writing its history. It is not as rich in records as other Danish religious houses. The Odensebog preserved in Upsala[2] is a late medieval collection of documents, roughly arranged for a fair copy which, if it was ever made, has now disappeared. It contains a number of early documents but no other historical information. More can be gleaned from the numerous official documents, papal, royal, and episcopal, which refer to the priory, and from the notes which Cornelius Hamsfort made in the 16th century. The single leaf in the Rigsarkiv giving the privileges of Pope Paschal II[3] may be from an early "Liber Authorizatus"[4]. In 1469 the bishop of Slesvig was shown a book belonging to the monks, on the last 14 folios of which were copies of their privileges, and the records of the priory[5]. This book is no longer in existence.

There is a certain amount of information of the chronicles of the bishops of Odense which were compiled at various times by

[1] I should like to express my warm thanks to Dr. Niels Skyum-Nielsen for his generous help and advice over a long period on every aspect of this article, of which an earlier version has appeared in "Saga book" XVI, parts 2-3 (London 1963-4).

[2] Stephanius MS.—Cod. Ups. D.G. 39. I have used the photocopy in the Royal Library.

[3] Printed in *Diplomatarium Danicum* (abbreviated *DD* hereafter) I, 2, No. 42.

[4] See Kr. Erslev, *Repertorium Diplomaticum Regni Danici Mediaevalis*, I, p. 1; IV, p. 39 n. 1.

[5] *Ibid.* 2r., ed. W. Christensen, II, No. 2627.

Cornelius Hamsfort[6]. Hamsfort had certain Lutheran prejudices about the medieval church and sometimes misunderstood his sources, but he was a careful scholar, and his word can usually be trusted on facts, if not interpretations. His chronicles were largely based on the public diplomas. For the early part of his story, however, he quoted facts found “in membrana et diplomate anno Christi 1439 scripto”[7], and in which he found the names of the bishops. It has been suggested by Erslev that this is a reference to the Odensebog[8]. If this were so, however, Hamsfort would have had no reason to choose the year 1439, since the book contains a number of dated documents subsequent to that year[9]. Moreover the word “membrana” implies a single leaf. It seems more likely that Hamsfort saw a single piece of parchment with the episcopal annals of Odense on it, and the last entry dated 1439.

St. Knuds priory owed its foundation to a bishop of Odense. Nothing certain is known of the early life of bishop Hubald. Hamsfort, possibly relying on an old source at Odense, states that he was an Englishman and a Benedictine[10]. That he was English seems probable, to judge by his later actions at Odense. That he was a monk is unlikely, since he is known to have been a canon at Lund[11]. Soon after 1086 he was consecrated by bishop Asser[12], and is first recorded acting as bishop in Odense around 1095[13].

Hamsfort insisted upon the fact that Hubald was the first bishop of Odense[14]. There had been missionary bishops active

[6] *Scriptores Rerum Danicarum* (abbreviated *S.R.D.* hereafter) VII, 216–243; I, 266–334. Six unprinted chronicles in the Royal Library, Kallske Sml. 668, 8vo, referred to as MS chronicles hereafter.

[7] *Series Episcoporum Otthoniensium* in *S.R.D.* VII, 218. In the unprinted MS chronicle IV he says “ex veteri membrana et quodam diplomate circa annum 1439 dato”.

[8] Erslev, *Repertorium* IV, p. 123 n.1.

[9] On pp. 13–14 (1471); 23 (1449); 32 (1449); 45 (1444); 50 (1447); 64–5 (1459).

[10] *Series Episcoporum Otthoniensium* in *S.R.D.* VII, 218; *Chronologia Secunda*, *S.R.D.* I, 271; MS Chronicles IV, VI.

[11] L. Weibull ed. *Lunds Domkyrkas Nekrologium* (Lund 1923), 113. See also *ibid.* 98.

[12] *S.R.D.* VII, 218.

[13] M. C. Gertz, *Vitae Sanctorum Danorum* (1908–12), 134.

[14] MS Chronicle VI. See also the obscure verse “Hubaldus quorum primus regimen populorum”, *Series Episcoporum Otthoniensium*, *S.R.D.* VII, 218. The verses, however, contain little of historical value.

there before[15], but no permanent episcopal institutions had been created. Hubald was interested in the reform of the Danish Church[16]. He may have felt that English Benedictines in his cathedral would give him valuable support, as well as giving a good example in the centre of the diocese. Monastic cathedral chapters were well known in England, where they had been an instrument of reform in the 10th century. They were, however, extremely rare elsewhere[17]. The foundation of a Benedictine cathedral chapter at Odense[18] is a strong indication of English influence.

King Erik Ejegod was encouraging the veneration of his murdered brother Knud as a martyr, and a number of English ecclesiastics were trying to spread the cult and obtain papal recognition. In 1095 the dead king's relics were translated into a stone church dedicated to St. Alban and St. Knud. On the advice of Hubald[19], king Erik applied to Evesham in England for a community of monks who would serve the new church and tend the shrine. Evesham had had an earlier connection with Denmark[20], and, with the permission of king William II, twelve of its monks arrived at Odense[21] around 1095–6[22]. Prominent among them was probably Agelward, who is later mentioned as prior of St. Knud's in the *Necrologium Lundense*[23]. Four other names of Odense monks in the *Necrologium's* earliest hand, may be of survivors from the first community: the priests Arkil and John, Simon the deacon, and James the subdeacon[24]. It is also possible that the inscription placed inside the tomb of St. Knud was composed by a member of the priory during these early days[25]. It gives the

[15] On the early bishops see H. S. Holbeck, *Odense Bys Historie* (1926), 31–4.

[16] *Series Episcoporum Otthoniensium*, S.R.D. VII, 219.

[17] Monreale in Sicily is one of the rare examples, probably also imitating English practice. See M. D. Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England* (1950), 619.

[18] That Hubald intended the monks to form the cathedral chapter from the first is made clear by the papal confirmation of 1117: "ut in loco sedis uestre religiosorum monachorum cetus adunaretur". *DD* I, 2, No. 42.

[19] *Ibid.*

[20] M. D. Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England*, 163.

[21] Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum* (2nd. edition, 1817–30) II, 37.

[22] On the date see Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England*, 164 n.1.

[23] Lauritz Weibull, *Lunds Domkyrkas Nekrologium* (Lund, 1923), lxiii, 104.

[24] *Ibid.*, lxiii, 67, 70, 94.

[25] Gertz, *Vitae Sanctorum Danorum*, 60–2.

names of the murdered king's companions; four of these are spelt according to Anglo-Saxon sound laws[26]. The reference to the king's brother "nomine et gratia martyrii Benedictus" echoes the opening of St. Gregory's *Life of St. Benedict*[27]. The author of the inscription could well have been an English Benedictine.

It is probable that the community at first depended largely on the generosity of Hubald, whose gifts were later confirmed by the pope and the archbishop of Lund[28]. The first royal gifts seem to have been made by king Niels[29]. In 1117 the king was claiming to be the founder of the house[30].

In an agreement[31] confirmed by king Erik[32], Evesham defined its rights as the mother house. The document declared that Odense derived its foundation from Evesham and stood in relation to the English house as a daughter to a mother. A monk of Evesham who went to Odense with the permission of his abbot, must obey the prior of the Danish house, and take his place in chapter and elsewhere with the other brethren. But if such a monk came without the permission of his abbot he was not to be received. Evesham promised to act in the same way towards visitors from Odense. Mutual arrangements were made for suffrages for the dead. The election of a new prior of Odense needed the permission of the king of Denmark and the bishop, and could take place either in Evesham or in Odense. In every case however, it required the confirmation of the abbot of Evesham. This agreement was solemnly renewed in the same terms by bishop Riculf of Odense in 1135-9[33], after a visit from one of the Evesham monks[34].

It was natural that the new monastery should become influential.

[26] M. C. Gertz, *Knud den Helliges Martyrhistorie* (1907), 46.

[27] "Fuit vir vitae venerabilis, gratia Benedictus et nomine" *Dialogues* II, Prolegomena (*Patrologia Latina* 66, 126).

[28] *DD I*, 2 Nos. 42, 77.

[29] *Ibid.* Nos. 34, 35.

[30] *Ibid.* No. 42.

[31] *Ibid.* No. 24 (undated). See also L. Weibull, "S:ta Maria i Evesham och s:t Knut i Odense", *Scandia* XIII (1940), 196-205, in which all the relevant documents are analysed.

[32] W. Holtzmann, "Urkunden zur Geschichte des Domklosters von Odense", *Schriften des Vereins für Schleswig-Holsteinsche Kirchengeschichte*, 2 Reihe, 9 Bd. (1930-5), 63.

[33] *DD I*, 2, No. 66.

[34] *Ibid.* No. 67.

Probably the only other monasteries in Denmark in 1095 were All Saints, Lund, and St. Michael's, Slesvig. King Valdemar, in a diploma of 1180, declared that the priory of Odense was especially dear to him since it contained the relics of a royal saint who was a member of his family [35]. In the early twelfth century the priory must have preserved the best traditions of English Benedictinism, and as such it influenced the foundation of other houses. King Valdemar stated, in the diploma quoted above, that many monks and nuns had made their profession there. There seems to have been a link between Odense and the monasteries of Sorø and Ringsted. Sorø was a small house for Black monks, founded about 1142-5, whose first prior had previously been prior of Odense [36]. In Ringsted, Benedictines were introduced in 1135 [37]. In 1144-5 the prior of Odense had previously been prior of Ringsted [38]. Probably from 1157 there was a Benedictine nunnery in Odense directed by the monks [39]. In 1193 the nuns stated that the monks of St. Knud had founded their house [40]. At some unknown date, probably during the reign of Knud VI, the nuns moved out of the city to Dalum [41].

So important a house as that at Odense naturally attracted the attention of the great. Already in 1139, archbishop Eskil confirmed the property and rights of the priory, particularly mentioning the right of the monks to form the cathedral chapter and elect their bishop [42]. In 1144-5 an ecclesiastical council met at the priory attended by king Erik Lam, the papal legate cardinal Hubald, archbishop Eskil and other bishops [43]. Erik Lam visited the cathedral of St. Knud in 1141 and made generous gifts at the altar [44]. In 1147, after his abdication, he returned to the priory to take up the monastic habit [45].

[35] G. J. Thorkelin, *Diplomatarium Arna-Magnæanum* (abbreviated *Dip. AM* hereafter) I, 261; Erslev, *Repertorium* I, No. 34.

[36] *Liber Donationum Monasterii Sorensis, S.R.D.* IV, 466.

[37] *DD* I, 2, No. 65.

[38] *Ibid.* No. 86.

[39] J. Hansen og K. Mortensen, *Dalum Sogns Historie* (1959) I, 1, 43-4.

[40] *Dip. AM* I, 285; Erslev, *Repertorium* I, No. 56.

[41] *Dalum Sogns Historie*, 44.

[42] *DD* I, 2, No. 77.

[43] *Ibid.* No. 86.

[44] *Ibid.* No. 81.

[45] *Series Episcoporum Otthoniensium, S.R.D.* VII, 219.

It was natural that the priory should make enemies. Its position as a cathedral chapter had no parallel in Denmark or northern Germany. Moreover the civil wars after the death of king Niels provided an opportunity for the invasion of monastic properties. The confirmation granted by archbishop Eskil stated that the brethren were being persecuted by evil men[46]. One source of trouble to the monks was their claim to have appropriated the old church of St. Alban. It was in this church, then a modest wooden building, that St. Knud had been killed. When the new stone church was built the relics of the king were moved there, with those of St. Alban[47]. The old church was left without its treasures. Nevertheless it continued to be a place of special devotion to St. Alban[48].

In 1142 king Erik Lam wrote to Livo, provost of Odense, ordering him to stop disturbing the monks. They were right, stated the royal letter, to claim St. Alban's as their own. In future, however, the church was to be free of St. Knud's, which would receive compensation[49]. It is unlikely that this agreement stopped bad feeling. Quite possibly the extraordinary story of the theft of relics from the priory was current among the clerks of St. Alban's.

According to Matthew Paris[50], the Danes, in one of their raids on England, stole the relics of St. Alban from his abbey in Hertfordshire, and brought them to Odense. Egwin, a monk of the English abbey, after a vision from the saint, made his way to Denmark and became a monk at Odense. Within a few years he had become sacrist. He took advantage of his position to steal the relics out of their shrine and sent them to England in a sealed box which, he pretended, contained books. On receiving news that his parcel had arrived safely, he asked leave to return home. On his arrival in England he sent a message to the monks at Odense telling them of what he had done.

The story contains many improbabilities. Matthew Paris puts it into the middle of the ninth century, when there was no priory

[46] *DD I*, 2 No. 77.

[47] E. Jørgensen, *Helgendyrkelse i Danmark* (1909), 18.

[48] *Ibid.*

[49] *DD I*, 2, No. 71. See also A. Köcher, "Biskop Livo af Odense", *Dansk Historisk Tidsskrift* IX, 2 (1924), 338-342. I am grateful to Mr. Troels Dahlerup for information about the provosts of Odense.

[50] *Gesta Abbatum Sancti Albani* (Rolls Series, 1867), I, 12 ff.

at Odense. It is difficult to see how a monk of St. Albans would have been received at a daughter house of Evesham. The relics of St. Alban in Denmark came, most probably, from Ely, where St. Knud was plundering in 1070[51]. Knud placed them in St. Alban's church in Odense "shortly before" his martyrdom in 1086[52]. There is no lack of evidence that the relics remained in Odense, and that they were removed, with those of the holy king, into the new stone church. In 1183 Knud son of Prizlav desired to be buried in the priory church and made gifts "Deo sanctisque eius martiribus Kanuto et Albano quorum reliquie in eadem ecclesia requiescunt"[53]. In the 15th century the dowager queen Dorothea made a gift to "St. Alban's arm" in the priory church, and the printed breviary of Odense states that the cathedral church had the relics of St. Alban[54]. It also seems likely that the monks emphasised their possession of these relics by depicting them on the priory seal. This shows in most examples[55] St. Knud, holding in his right hand a sceptre, and in his left an object described by H. Petersen as a monstrance[56]. It is far more likely that the king is here shown with the relic with which he was always associated, and which seems also to be shown on a late medieval carving of Knud from Næstved[57].

There may be further confusions in Matthew Paris's story. In the late eleventh century Ywar, sacrist of Peterborough, was in Denmark and probably at Odense, collecting the relics belonging to his abbey which had been taken away in 1070[58]. The Egwin of the story sounds like a confusion with St. Egwin of Evesham, who was venerated at Odense[59]. But Matthew Paris quotes as witnesses Englishmen who had lived long in Denmark. They

[51] R. Vaughan, *Matthew Paris* (1958), 202.

[52] *Vitae Sanctorum Danorum* 60-2.

[53] *Dip. AM I*, 272; Erslev, *Repertorium I*, No. 42.

[54] E. Jørgensen, *Helgendyrkelse i Danmark*, 18 and n. 2.

[55] See e.g. the example described by H. Petersen, *Danske Gejstlige Sigiller* (1886), No. 532. I am here most grateful to Mrs. Thelma Jexlev of the Rigsarkiv, for her help and advice.

[56] *Danske Gejstlige Sigiller*, No. 536. On the figure of St. Knud with relics see *Danske Magazin IV*: 2, p. 102 and n. 2.

[57] In the National Museum. I am most grateful to Mrs. F. Lindahl of the National museum, for her information on the iconography of St. Knud.

[58] W. T. Mellows ed. *The Chronicle of Hugh Candidus* (1949), 82.

[59] *Helgendyrkelse i Danmark*, 19.

were Odo, the treasurer and butler of king Valdemar II, John of St. Albans, the goldsmith, and his son Nicholas, who had long been in charge of Valdemar's mint[60]. Clearly, Matthew's story was known in Denmark, and most probably circulated among the Odense monks' Danish enemies.

After the second half of the twelfth century, Odense priory seems to have been in difficulties. The privilege granted to it by archbishop Eskil in 1171 repeats earlier complaints that the monks are troubled by persecutors[61]. In 1174 king Valdemar found it necessary to appeal to Evesham to come to the aid of its daughter[62]. The links between the two houses seem to have been long neglected. Already in 1139 archbishop Eskil affirmed the right of the monks to elect their own prior[63], without mentioning the rights of Evesham, although these had been defined a few years earlier by bishop Riculf[64]. In 1174 the connection with the mother house was renewed. Brother William, a monk of Evesham, was sent to Denmark and installed as prior by the king. Valdemar then solemnly confirmed the earlier regulations about the subjection of Odense to Evesham[65]. It seems probable that a thorough reform of the monastery followed[66] which culminated in 1180 with the solemn confirmation of all its properties by king Valdemar[67] and archbishop Absalon[68].

The earliest agreement between Evesham and its daughter expressed the hope that, although separated by long distance, the two houses would always be one and the same in spirit[69]. The relation between the two was confirmed by pope Alexander III in 1179[70]. But it was impossible for Evesham to direct the fortunes of so distant a dependency for very long. The last renewal

[60] *Gesta Abbatum Sancti Albani*, 19.

[61] *Dip. AM I*, 253-4; Erslev, *Repertorium I*, No. 27. It is possible that the scribe was simply following the wording of the confirmation of 1139.

[62] "Urkunden zur Geschichte des Domklosters von Odense", 64. See note 32 above.

[63] *DD I*, 2, No. 77.

[64] See above p. 4.

[65] "Urkunden des Domklosters von Odense", 63-4.

[66] "S:ta Maria i Evesham och s:t Knut i Odense", 202-3. (See note 31 above).

[67] *Dip. AM I*, 261; Erslev, *Repertorium I*, No. 34.

[68] *Ibid.* 263-6; Erslev, *Repertorium I*, No. 35. See also *DD I*, 4, No. 52.

[69] *DD I*, 2, No. 24.

[70] "Urkunden des Domklosters von Odense", 64-5.

of links between the two houses in 1191–1205 was of quite a different nature. Modelled on the compact between Evesham and Malmesbury, it was concerned with suffrages for the dead and mutual visits, but contained no mention of the subjection of one house to the other[71]. A papal bull of 1226, confirming the possessions of St. Knud's and the right of its monks to elect their prior without outside interference, makes no mention of the ancient rights of Evesham[72]. The part played by the English house in the foundation of the Danish one seems to have been practically forgotten in the later Middle Ages and is not mentioned by Hamsfort.

The endowments increased rapidly and from the first Hubald distinguished the possessions of the priory from those of the bishopric[73]. In Eskil's confirmation of 1171, the bishop of Odense was forbidden to convert anything belonging to the monks to his own use, or create a prebend out of their property without their consent[74]. The same document confirmed annual payments made to the convent in Jutland, Sjælland, Laaland, and other islands[75]. Such annual payments were often granted by kings. Niels granted the twenty marks a year paid to him, probably in Odense, and twenty marks' tribute from Jutland[76]. It appears that, of the twenty marks from Odense, four were, for a time, diverted to the church of St. Alban. When the priory abandoned its claim over the church, the whole twenty marks were once more paid to the monks[77]. In 1141 Erik Lam also granted the monks the thirty marks a year from the island of Sild due to him[78]. The tribute from Sild and Odense was later set aside to provide clothing for the monks, and according to the royal confirmation of 1180, did not go through the hands of the king's bailiff but was paid directly to the priory's representative[79]. In 1245, the pope confirmed various dues, known as "St. Knud's penny"

[71] "S:ta Maria i Evesham och s:t Knut i Odense", 203–4. On the date of this arrangement, see *DD I*, 5, p. 9.

[72] A. Krarup ed. *Bullarium Danicum* (1932), No. 205.

[73] *DD I*, 2, No. 42.

[74] *Dip. AM I*, 253–4; Erslev, *Repertorium I*, No. 27.

[75] *Ibid.*

[76] *DD I*, 2, No. 35.

[77] *Ibid.* No. 71. See also A. Köcher, "Biskop Livo of Odense", 339. (See note 49 above).

[78] *DD I*, 2, No. 81.

[79] *Dip. AM I*, 261–3; Erslev, *Repertorium I*, No. 34.

in Fyn, Jutland, Taasinge, Als, Ærø, Langeland, Laaland, Falster, and Bornholm[80].

Among the valuable privileges enjoyed by the monks was one-sixth of the fishing rights in Lønborg[81], granted by king Niels[82]. Like all medieval landlords, the priory derived much profit from its mills. In 1175 king Valdemar declared that the citizens of Odense might bring their corn only to the monks' mill[83]. In 1193, in exchange for one of their estates, the Odense nuns were allowed to use the mills of St. Knud for one hour every week without payment[84]. In 1242 the king confirmed that the monks mills were free from every royal exaction, and that no one could interfere with the free flow of water by damming up or fishing in the millstreams[85].

The priory also had extensive rights over its men. King Niels allowed it every royal right in its possessions, except wreck and the fine for not following the host. The church should have the goods of outlaws on its lands, but not the fine for coming back into the king's peace. The monks could have half the goods of those who died on their properties without heirs, but any man who had no heir could leave them all his land and half his money, the other half to go to the king[86]. In 1288 the monks were freed from all royal exactions whatsoever[87], and they and their servants were also exempted from paying toll in the Belt[88].

The church which the English monks were given in 1095–6 was still unfinished when the relics were transferred to it[89]. The building, with the land on which it stood and space for the monastery, must have been given to the community by Erik Ejegod. The earliest mention of this land, however, is in 1226, when pope Honorius III confirmed "locum ipsum in quo prefatum monasterium situm est"[90]. No other royal gifts of land are recorded.

[80] *Bullarium Danicum* No. 346.

[81] Possibly the Lønborg river in Fyn, see Holbeck, *Odense Bys Historie*, 46.

[82] *DD* I, 2, No. 35.

[83] *Dip. AM* I, 255; Erslev, *Repertorium*, I, No. 28.

[84] *Dip. AM* I, 255; Erslev, *Repertorium* I, No. 56.

[85] *Dip. AM* I, 135–6; Erslev, *Repertorium* I, No. 149.

[86] *DD* I, 2, No. 32.

[87] *Ibid.* II, 3, No. 324.

[88] *Ibid.* II, 3, No. 326.

[89] *Vitae Sanctorum Danorum*, 129.

[90] *Bullarium Danicum*, No. 205.

In 1147 bishop Riculf endowed the monks with his own estate at Geltofte[91]. Most of the other estates were granted by laymen. In 1183 Knud, son of the Wendish chieftain Prizlav, granted two *mansi* in Tandslet, and his other lands and properties in Als[92]. In 1239 Ostrid, the knight's man, gave to St. Knud's all his property in "Haustedt" with its mill and fish-pond, arable and meadow, wood and heath[93]. In 1180 it was estimated that St. Knud's owned about 30 *mansi* in Fyn[94], but there is no complete list of its possessions to date, in any diploma. The priory naturally acquired much land in its neighbourhood. In 1245 it had recently obtained the estate of Bjørn near Odense, with its farm buildings and bath-house, the three fields and the wood[95]. Typical of the smaller gifts from Odense citizens is that of a tenement in the city given by the widow of Aril Kremer in 1423[96].

The laity were encouraged to be generous by the offer of a share in the suffrages of the community, through burial in the priory grounds. Archbishop Eskil, in 1139 and 1171, confirmed the monk's right to administer the last sacraments to their benefactors and bury them in their cemetery, saving the rights of the parish priest[97]. The gift of Knud son of Prizlav in 1183 was made after he had been assigned his burial place before the altar of Our Lady in the priory church[98].

Like all medieval religious houses, St. Knud's had appropriated a number of churches. The dispute with provost Livo in 1142 concerned their unsuccessful attempt to appropriate St. Alban's church[99]. In 1314 the rector of Fraugde resigned. The bishop of Odense shared the patronage of the church with a number of laymen. These resigned their rights to him and he thereupon granted the church to the priory[100]. At the request of the king, it was annexed to the school at Odense to clothe the master and provide

[91] *DD* I, 2, No. 99.

[92] *Dip. AM* I, 272; Erslev, *Repertorium* I, No. 42.

[93] W. Christensen, *De ældste danske Arkivregistraturer* (1910), V, 1, 238. "Haustedt" is possibly Hauge-Stige, Lunde Herred, see index, *ibid.* V, 2, 1186.

[94] *Dip. AM* I, 265; Erslev, *Repertorium* I, No. 35.

[95] *Bullarium Danicum* No. 346.

[96] Erslev, *Repertorium* III, No. 6001.

[97] *DD* I, 2, No. 77; *Dip. AM* I, 253-4; Erslev, *Repertorium* I, No. 27.

[98] *Dip. AM* I, 271-2; Erslev, *Repertorium* I, No. 42.

[99] See above p. 6.

[100] *DD* II, 7, No. 206.

the books. It was a condition that a perpetual vicar should be found, to serve the church and exercise cure of souls[101]. It is likely that later, when the school passed into the hands of the provost of Odense, Fraugde church went with it[102]. Here too, the provost seems eventually to have got the better of the monks[103].

In the time of prior Hennekin (1277–86), St. Knud claimed the church of Stenløse to provide bursaries for the young monks who were sent to France to study[104]. The claim was not realised until 1316 when, on the resignation of its rector, Erik Menved and the other patrons granted the church to provide books and sustenance for the student monks abroad[105]. A further benefaction to the student monks was the gift, in 1339, of the church of Paarup for the support of brothers studying in France[105a]. In 1335, following complaints from the parishioners of Ubbørød that they could get no priest because of their poverty and the meagre endowments of their church, the bishop of Odense, who had the advowson, annexed it to the priory, on condition that a priest should be found[106]. In 1349 bishop Niels confirmed the church of Særslev to the convent, to uphold the school in Odense[107]. By 1360 the brethren also held the church of Aasum[108]. In 1369 the monks were involved in a dispute with the patrons of the church of Marslev, over the allegiance of a neighbouring hamlet, whose inhabitants, because of some disagreement, had ceased to attend service in Aasum and were going to Marslev instead. The bishop firmly assigned them to Aasum[109], and his decision was confirmed at a provincial council in 1374[110]. In 1377 a papal

[101] *DD* II, 8, No. 133.

[102] Erslev, *Repertorium* II, No. 2901. *Acta Pontifica Danica* (abbreviated *APD* hereafter) IV, Nos. 2834, 2846. Troels Dahlerup, *Det kgl. Rettertings Domme* I (1959), 795.

[103] I am most grateful to Mr. Troels Dahlerup for his information on this and other problems connected with the priory in the later Middle Ages.

[104] *DD* II, 2, No. 289.

[105] *Ibid.* II, 7, Nos. 406, 424.

[105a] *Ibid.* II, 12, No. 162.

[106] *Ibid.* II, 11, No. 224.

[107] *Ibid.* III, 3, No. 119.

[108] Erslev, *Repertorium* II, No. 2604.

[109] *Ibid.* No. 2864.

[110] *S.R.D.* I, 313.

judge delegate ruled that the church of Rise in Ærø had belonged from ancient times to the monks of St. Knud, though unlawfully occupied for three years by a priest of the archbishopric of Bremen, apparently with the support of the Danish king[111].

As the chapter of the cathedral church, the monks claimed the right to elect the bishop of Odense. In 1139 Eskil confirmed their "prima vox" in the election[112]. In 1171 he again guaranteed them "precipuum vocem in electione vestri pontificis, utpote qui cathedrali ecclesie inservitis"[113]. It was not unusual, in the twelfth century, for a cathedral chapter to allow other prominent ecclesiastics in the diocese to take part in these deliberations[114]. It is more than likely that the later claim of the provosts of Odense to take part in the elections of bishops was based on the informal practice of earlier times.

The first serious trouble occurred in 1246. The monks complained that, during the episcopal election, Niels, provost of Odense, invaded the chapter-house with layfolk and forced the monks to elect him. The archbishop of Lund was also obliged, by threats, to consecrate him, although Niels was a man of evil life, who gave a bad example to his flock[115]. The action of the primate, and the fact that the provost of Odense was a royal appointee, seem to suggest that the king was behind this interference with the election process[116]. The Odense election dispute was one of the matters submitted to Simon of Auvergne, who had been sent to Denmark by the pope in 1247[117]. Niels seems to have remained in possession[118]. There is little positive information about the part played by the monks in episcopal elections at Odense during the period of the Church-State struggle[119]. In 1286 Erik Klipping declared that neither he nor his successors had any right

[111] Erslev, *Repertorium* II, No. 3182.

[112] *DD* I, 2, No. 77.

[113] *Dip. AM* I, 253; Erslev, *Repertorium* I, No. 27.

[114] I am most grateful to Miss V. Flint of University College, Dublin, for information about episcopal elections in the twelfth century.

[115] *Bullarium Danicum* No. 378.

[116] See Niels Skyum-Nielsen, *Kirkekampen i Danmark 1241-1290* (1963), 37-8.

[117] *Ibid.*

[118] *Series Episcoporum Otthoniensium*, *S. R. D.* VII, 222.

[119] *Kirkekampen i Danmark* 278, 325-6.

to interfere in the election of bishops of Odense[120]. It would be unwise, of course, to take such a promise from a medieval ruler literally. The document was issued when an election at Odense was pending. The choice fell upon Gisico, a Dominican, who appears to have been a friend of the king[121].

On the death of Gisico in 1300 there was another disputed election. The chapter was divided. The "maior et sanior pars" seems to have voted for the Franciscan Peter Pagh. But the provost of Odense and his clergy insisted on taking part in the proceedings, and forced the election of a Dominican, Peter Pigard[122]. The monks appealed to the pope, who decided, in 1304-5, in favour of Peter Pagh, but it was some time before the latter was able to obtain possession[123].

The most important dispute however broke out on the death of Peter Pagh in 1339. In the election which followed the provost of Odense once more attempted to take part, as did the prior of Dalum (corrupted, according to Hamsfort, by the provost[124]. The prior of Dalum was a secular clerk, who lived in the neighbourhood of the nunnery and looked after the nuns' business affairs[125]. It is more than likely that the monks of St. Knud had originally performed this function, and that the prior of Dalum claimed his rights as their successor. Neither he nor the provost were able to make good their claim and the monks elected the Franciscan, Niels Jonsen[126]. In September 1348, at a synod of the diocese of Odense in the presence of bishop Niels, the electoral rights of the monks and the legality of the late election were settled. Several of the oldest parish priests of the diocese, some over 60 and others over 70 years of age, declared that, in their recollection, no provost of Odense or prior of Dalum had any right in the election of bishops, and that none but the monks of St. Knud might participate[127]. A declaration to this effect was drawn up by the bishop[128],

[120] *DD II*, 3, No. 215.

[121] *Series Episcoporum Otthoniensium*, *S.R.D.* VII, 225. See also *Kirkekampen i Danmark*, 283.

[122] *DD II*, 12, 197-8.

[123] *Ibid.* See also *S.R.D.* VII, 226-7. Both these accounts are from Hamsfort.

[124] *Series Episcoporum Otthoniensium*, *S.R.D.* VII, 230.

[125] J. Hansen og K. Mortensen, *Dalum Sogns Historie* (1959) I, 1, 49.

[126] *Series Episcoporum Otthoniensium*, *S.R.D.* VII, 230.

[127] *DD III*, 3, No. 63.

[128] *Ibid.* No. 64.

and the prior of Dalum was obliged to renounce all his claims[129]. After the synod of 1348 the electoral rights of the monks were not seriously questioned so long as the Odense chapter remained Benedictine. The declaration of bishop Niels mentions that those who had usurped the election rights were "theotonici clerici"[130]. The disputed election had taken place during the interregnum when Denmark was ruled by the counts Gerard and John[131].

The bishop of Odense's rights to enforce discipline were bound to be resisted by a monastic chapter. In 1139 and 1171 archbishop Eskil had allowed the monks of St. Knud virtual autonomy. The bishop of Odense was not allowed to correct their faults unless his intervention was desired by the prior and community. Then he might enter the chapter-house and, together with the brethren, give judgement according to the Rule of St. Benedict[132]. In the archbishop's confirmation of 1171 the bishop was also prohibited from appointing the obedientiaries[133]. It seems unlikely that the bishop was ever called upon to exercise his limited disciplinary functions. The documents referring to his relations with the priory are entirely concerned with external matters. In 1348 and 1365 the bishop confirmed the monks' sole right in episcopal elections[134]. Bishop Peter Pagh[1301-39] occupied some land they claimed as theirs[135], and in 1369 bishop Erik Krabbe decided in their favour the dispute about Aasum parish church[136].

There is little information about the internal discipline of the priory during the Middle Ages. Presumably there was a high standard of observance at the beginning. King Valdemar in 1174 seems to imply this—"celestem Deo laudem et gloriam de sterili exempti mundo feliciter adquisierunt"—as well as suggesting that there had been a falling away in his time[137]. A reform from

[129] *Ibid.* No. 65. See also *Dalum Sogns Historie* I, 1, 57.

[130] *DD* III, 3, No. 64.

[131] *Series Episcoporum Otthoniensium*, *S.R.D.* VII, 230.

[132] *DD* I, 2, No. 77; *Dip. AM* I, 253-4; Erslev, *Repertorium* I, No. 27.

[133] *Dip. AM* I, 253-4. In twelfth century English cathedral priories the bishops usually appointed the prior and all or some of the obedientiaries. See Knowles *The Monastic Order in England*, 626-7.

[134] See above p. 14 and *S.R.D.* I, 311.

[135] *DD* II, 6, Nos. 267, 269.

[136] See above p. 12.

[137] "Urkunden des Domklosters von Odense", 64. (See note 32 above).

England seems to have come some time after 1174[138]. In the early fourteenth century the priory, in common with others in Denmark, was being used by the nobility as a hunting lodge[139].

Although much was written about the spiritual state of the monastery in the fifteenth century, all this evidence is unsatisfactory. The strictures of brother John of Cismar are couched in general terms[140], and he had his own special axe to grind. After the monks had been expelled, their friends in Rome stated: "longo tempore cum odore bone fame Deo servierant"[141]. This was partisan pleading on the other side. When the monks' arguments were answered point by point, this one was left without a reply[142]. But no firm conclusion can be drawn from this.

Brother John of Cismar first came to Denmark in 1457 to effect a reform of the Danish Benedictine houses, and more particularly to persuade them to join the Bursfeld congregation, to which his own monastery of Cismar belonged. Such a work could not succeed without the co-operation of the authorities. He was unfortunate in being able to interest neither the king, nor the nobles, nor a majority of the bishops[143]. Nothing was accomplished in 1457, owing to the unsettled state of the kingdom, and John left. During his absence the bishop of Roskilde began to reform the Skovkloster, and this work was accomplished on brother John's second visit in 1458. The monks of the Skovkloster who opposed the reform left and settled in other religious houses. Three were received at St. Knud's in Odense, where "indisciplinatis indiscipinatus conuersantur", as brother John commented sourly[144]. In 1460 John arrived in Denmark on his third visit, with the object of reforming St. Knud's. By harbouring refugees from the Skovkloster it had become a centre of opposition to reform. Moreover success at so important a monastery would have an encouraging effect on others[145].

[138] "S:ta Maria i Evesham och s:t Knut i Odense", 202-3. (See note 31, above).

[139] *DD* II, 7, No. 259. Cf. *ibid.* No. 197.

[140] See below p. 10.

[141] *APD* IV, No. 3104.

[142] *Ibid.* No. 3156.

[143] On the mission of brother John, with the text of his letters, see W. Christensen, "Et Bidrag til Dansk Klosterhistorie i Christiern I's Tid", *Kirkehistoriske Samlinger*, IV, 5 (1897-9), 84-125.

[144] *Ibid.* 114.

[145] *Ibid.* 107.

John arrived at a difficult time for Odense. Christian I was trying to obtain the right to nominate all high ecclesiastics in his dominions, as the German emperor was able to do after the Concordat of Vienna. By a papal privilege Christian was able to appoint the prior of Odense and, on the resignation of prior Jacob Geeth, he had nominated Gregers Tygesen. Meanwhile, however, the monks had elected Bent Andersen. When the king's wish was made known they seem to have gone through a second form of election for the benefit of the royal nominee. But the bishop of Odense refused to confirm him. Both parties appealed to the pope, who confirmed each claimant in turn [146]. By May 1459 Bent Andersen had resigned his rights to Jens Rød (Redh), and Gregers Tygesen had been able to obtain a second papal confirmation [147]. The dispute was still raging when brother John came to Denmark, and was only finally settled by the death of Gregers Tygesen, whereupon, in 1463, Jens Rød obtained papal confirmation [148]. To add to the confusion, in 1460, when brother John came to Odense, the bishopric itself was in dispute between Mogens Krafse and Peder Axelsson Thott, so that there was no episcopal authority to effect a reform [149].

John's greatest difficulty in reforming Odense was lack of influential support. The Danish bishops were "dumb dogs" [150]. The nobility of Fyn were more interested in schemes to suppress the priory altogether [151]. At brother John's request king Christian appointed a commission to investigate the whole problem. To this commission brother John was able to send his lengthy memoranda, but there can be little doubt that the king had thus begun the leisurely proceedings which were to end in the suppression of the priory. Meanwhile, his failure at Odense compromised all brother John's other schemes.

A Benedictine cathedral chapter was so unusual outside England that there were bound to be special difficulties. It was medieval liturgical practice for all the churches in a diocese to follow the

[146] *APD* III, Nos. 2092, 2098, 2099.

[147] *Ibid.* No. 2162.

[148] *Ibid.* No. 2276.

[149] "Et Bidrag til Dansk Klosterhistorie", 94, 112-3.

[150] *Ibid.* 113.

[151] *Ibid.* 102.

[152] *Ibid.* 94.

rite of their cathedral church. This was felt to be especially difficult when the cathedral was also a Benedictine monastery. In 1431 the Bridgettines of Maribo petitioned to be allowed to follow the rite of Lund, since that of Odense was unsuitable for their order[153]. The papal bull of 1474 also mentioned the inconvenience of making the clergy conform to the liturgical practice of a Benedictine monastery[154]. This in itself would not perhaps have been sufficient reason for suppression. The nobility of Fyn however, wanted a secular cathedral at Odense so that their sons in the church could obtain prebends and dignities there. Brother John had commented on the unworthiness of this motive[155], but they made no secret of it. The papal bulls of the period set out their complaint: how they sent their sons at great expense to be educated abroad, and how these sons returned home only to find that there was no hope of ecclesiastical promotion in their native diocese, so that they must seek it elsewhere[156]. Karl Rønnow, who became bishop of Odense in 1474, and who was a patron of the new humanism, also desired a secular chapter at his cathedral, so that he could surround himself with learned men[157]. Finally, king Christian was in favour of the idea because of the increased patronage which he would enjoy. When he made his journey to Rome in 1474, the establishment of a secular chapter at Odense was one of the questions he had noted for discussion with the Curia[158].

The priory was suppressed by a bull dated 21 April 1474. The monks were to go to other houses of their order. Those who, through age or sickness were too old to be moved, were to receive pensions and be suitably housed near the cathedral. A secular chapter was to be set up, with a provost at its head, a dean who would have cure of souls in the cathedral, a cantor who would rule the choir, and a number of canons who would hold prebends. The provostship was to be in the king's gift, the other two dignities and six of the prebends in that of the bishop. Patronage of the other prebends and of the minor benefices was to be held jointly

[153] *APD* II, No. 1592.

[154] *Ibid.* IV, No. 2582.

[155] "Et Bidrag til Dansk Klosterhistorie", 106.

[156] See e.g. *APD* IV, No. 2582.

[157] *Series Episcoporum Otthoniensium*, *S.R.D.* VII, 237.

[158] *APD* IV, No. 2515.

by the bishop and the chapter[159]. The prelates charged with carrying out the bull finally decided upon 15 prebends with vicars choral for each dignity and canonry. The chapter had been organised by 1477 and the work was duly approved by the pope[160].

It is remarkable that the monks of Odense, scattered in various places, with king, nobles, and bishop against them, continued to work for their restoration. Nothing could be accomplished during the lifetime of king Christian, but the opportunity came after his death in 1481. The monks were able to win over the widowed queen Dorothea, and she brought up the question on her visit to Rome in 1488[161]. The arguments on both sides can be read in the contradictory bulls which now began to be issued by the Holy See. The monks declared that they had led exemplary lives in Odense before their expulsion. Without being cited or given the opportunity to state their case, they had been driven out and robbed of all their possessions and privileges. Deprived of their home they had had to run hither and thither to the scandal of many, and St. Knud had worked no miracles in the cathedral since their departure. The priory had been protected by a papal bull of Paschal II and many other privileges which forbade the monks to be moved[162]. The case for the secular chapter, with which bishop Karl Rønnow associated himself, was that the change in 1474 had been made by the king after long deliberation and with the approval of the pope. It was quite untrue that the monks had been expelled; on the contrary they had gone willingly, realising that it was better for the church of St. Knud, as a public instrument issued by them showed. A decent portion of the revenues had been assigned to the older monks, and the rest had gone to various religious houses. To change arrangements made fourteen years before would cause confusion at Odense and give a bad example in the kingdom[163].

Pope Innocent VIII delegated the case to the bishop of Lübeck and the abbots of the Skovkloster and Sorø, giving them authority, if they found the facts as the monks had stated them, to suppress

[159] *Ibid.* No. 2582.

[160] *Ibid.* No. 2692.

[161] *Series Episcoporum Otthoniensium*, *S. R. D.* VII, 237; *APD* IV, No. 3104.

[162] *APD* IV, No. 3104.

[163] *Ibid.* No. 3156.

the secular chapter and restore the Benedictines[164]. At the first hearing in Odense on 9 May 1489, the judges delegate met in the presence of king Hans and listened to the proctors for both sides. All the parties then agreed to ask the archbishop of Lund to act as arbitrator. The latter, however, refused to act, and the abbot of Sorø, apparently on his own authority, decided to conclude the case himself[165]. This action was of doubtful legality and increased the confusion. Upon the appeal of the seculars, new judges were appointed by the pope in 1490[166]. But by this time a settlement had been made.

In December 1489, both sides agreed to the arbitration of king Hans. His decision was that the monks should return and have back their privileges and properties. Pensions were to be paid to the dignitaries and canons of the suppressed secular chapter, and these were to keep their houses as long as they lived, except the actual claustral buildings[167]. The restoration received papal approval in May 1490[168]. An important condition laid down by the king was that the monks should observe the Rule of St. Benedict to the letter. If they were negligent in this respect the king would have the right to expel them and replace them with Benedictines of the Strict Observance[169]. Even now, the monks did not join the Bursfeld congregation[170]. No further attempts were made to expel them, however, and they continued to serve as the chapter of the cathedral at Odense, until the Reformation.

[164] *Ibid.* Nos. 3104, 3118. The "Summa Processus in causa Ecclesiae Otthoniensis sancti Canuti ordinis s. Benedicti", which is found in two manuscripts in the Royal Library, Gml. kgl. Saml. 2491 4to and 1129 fol., is not an independent account but a resumé of the legal documents.

[165] *S.R.D.* VIII, 475-6.

[166] *APD* IV Nos. 3186, 3202.

[167] *S.R.D.* VIII 476-8.

[168] *APD* IV, No. 3211.

[169] *S.R.D.* VIII, 476-8.

[170] See on this Troels Dahlerup, "Bursfelderkongregationen og Danmark", *Kirkehistoriske Samlinger* VII, 5 (1963), 68-9.