

**FROM SAXO GRAMMATICUS TO PETER
FRIEDRICH SUHM**
Danish views on medieval Estonian history

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A line of early Danish historians, who wrote on Medieval Estonia in relation to Denmark, is presented. Each author's social background and the date of their contribution stand out through their sympathies and antipathies. Likewise, every author also had a Danish bias. German views were challenged, whereas Estonian views never mattered to these Danish authors. To them, the Estonians only played the part of silent extras on the historical stage; first as barbarous enemies, then as faithful subjects or allies and finally as victims. The most attractive theme to the Danish historians is the dramatic conquest in 1219, and its royal or clerical front figures, and the legends of a divine origin of Dannebrog – the national flag. The latter has been the single most popular subject, taking precedence over everything else.

The history of Danish-Estonian active political and diplomatic relations until 1346, let alone until 1645, has been a mere niche in Danish history writing. It is possible to follow the different roles of the Danish historians in a changing political and ideological context and to view their position towards topical subjects such as justification of conquest, the means of Christianisation, colonialism and the genesis of medieval polities or states. Historiographic studies such as the present enable to understand the long and winding road towards establishing a concord on the simple course of events and critically question the written evidence, let alone the aristocratic and clerical traditions.

FOREWORD

Danish historiography on the common kingdom with Estonia during the high Middle Ages is a separate field of study. No Danish historian has bothered to treat the historiographic perspectives of history writing by Danish authors on medieval Danish-Estonian relations, even if every study on the subject of course has led various historians to refer and discuss views of relevant predecessors to his own chosen subject.

The relevant literature has been written mostly in Danish, which to average Estonian historian is a problem. In comparison it is hard to imagine an Estonian medievalist, who cannot read German, whereas Danish is not in high demand.

Danish history writing of the First Danish Period in Estonia is not very accessible either. The database of Estonian libraries, “Ester”, clearly shows that important Danish studies and most general overviews are simply not available in Estonia. No one orders general overviews in Danish brought to Estonia by inter-library loan, just in case there might be something relevant, when you pay EEK100 per title.

So there exists a number of reasons why no one has approached the subject described above. Why then do it and why now?

Since Estonia reappeared as an independent state, relations with Denmark as with any other Western European country have intensified also among scholars within historical disciplines. Thus it is as a contribution to a renewed inter-regional discourse on medieval Northern European societies in which we, the authors of this article, offer our bit of historiographic hindsight. In order to evaluate the originality of new historical contributions, the scholarly and national background of the authors and their national discourse should be examined. To the Estonian reader, the explicit national Danish bias presented below, indirectly places German and Estonian history writing into a perspective.

INTRODUCTION

In the opinion of most historically minded Estonians, the Danish conquest of northern Estonia from 1219 led to a disastrous development, ending an independent Estonian political, religious and cultural development.

Among historians only the sympathies are shifting, from siding with the Danish kings, the German lords or the Estonian peasants, but the general pattern remains the same. Medieval historians have tried to soften this rigid and simplified image of Estonian society, but instead of actually offering another interpretation of the national and religious conflict and general line of development, merely grey tones are added to the well-established historical picture. The fact that Estonians were represented among the burghers in, for instance, Tallinn and among the nobility is usually ignored as minorities of no importance.

In historical overviews, the Danish period in medieval Estonia lasted from 1219 to 1346. The dramatic battle on 15 June 1219 at Lyndanise was the beginning of a great battle at the site, where subsequently the flourishing Hanseatic town Reval, now the Estonian capital Tallinn, rose on the former battlefield.

Following the dramatic and to the Estonian audience most intriguing episode of St. George’s Night uprising, the Danish kings selling Estonia to the Teutonic Order in 1346 seems almost a shabby bureaucratic transaction in comparison. The sale lacks the public appeal, as do invasions into sparsely known pagan lands or an armed resistance against Christian aggressors. Important as both occasions were to the fate of the joint Danish-Estonian kingdom during the high Middle Ages, they were neither an actual beginning nor a final end to Danish political

involvement in Estonia and Livonia. Although only involving the island of Saaremaa (Øsel to Danes), another Danish-Estonian common state existed from 1561 to 1645.

With the dwindling power in the Baltic Sea of Denmark-Norway, versus the growing powers of Sweden-Finland in the second half of the 17th century, one might point towards the outcome of the Great Northern War in 1721, as establishing a political balance between the archivals Sweden and Denmark. It also came to mark a final end to Danish hopes of territorial gains around the Baltic Sea. From the Danish point of view, the 18th century became a peaceful century with armed neutrality. The 19th century, on the other hand, saw the dissolution of the twin kingdom Denmark-Norway in 1814 and in 1864 the loss of all Slesvig-Holsten (Schleswig-Holstein). The conflict from the middle of the 19th century with German states, united under Prussian leadership, and the pro-German views of Baltic German historians came to dominate history writing. The Danish-German conflict and competition still holds a strong grip on national Danish history writing, also in regard to Estonia.

Beside national history writing, issues dealing with crusades and the schism between Roman and Greek Catholicism, as well as Christian versus Pagan, held an attraction to historians during the 20th century, and has not disappeared in the early 21st century. In fact, during the Soviet years, the Orthodox Church became an enigmatic, almost exotic phenomenon, increasingly a study object and seen in Scandinavia with some sympathy, as an ancient and oppressed popular institution. On the global scale, sympathy towards the struggle for independence of small nations inside and outside of Europe has increased an interest in aspects of ethnic division and religious intolerance. Finally new global conflicts between Secular or Christian Europe and renewed Muslim orthodoxy even in the midst of Europe, have been generating an impression of a struggle between global civilisations, influencing historical writings as well. The enhanced international cooperation and coordination within the European Union does not seem to diminish the studies in national identities, rather the contrary.

Thus Danish historiography on Estonia needs to be seen in correlation with the changes in the bilateral relations of Denmark and Old Livonia, Denmark and Germany and today the global conflicts. Also the social role and self-image of historians in changing political circumstances influenced the viewpoint of the authors treated below.

SHIFTING PARADIGMS

Through the eight centuries from Saxo Grammaticus *Gesta Danorum* until the latest major national history synthesis, popularly named the *Poli-Gylde, Politiken & Gyldendal's Danmarkshistorie* (1992–1993, new edition 2002), runs a straight line of tradition of national history writing in Denmark. National enthusiasm may be a lifelong companion and driving force for many scholars and as the means of popularisation, and it is undoubtedly the safest means available to

history writing. However, chauvinism and narrow-minded approach are its ugly downside. Chauvinism or blind nationalism of the type *'right or wrong, my country'* was more the rule than the exception of the authors at least until the Enlightenment of the 18th century. However intolerant and subjective eulogies of national heroes were, the emotional honesty of the authors has given them a long life in the public mind, a life that lasts longer than most dispassionate and impartial accounts of later days.

To sum up, the development in Danish history writing – as part of the general trends in Europe from England over France and Germany to Poland¹ – may be split up into three overall paradigms:

1. Feudally politicising historiographers – until the 17th century
2. Enlightened universalistic ethics – 18th, early 19th century
3. Professional particularism – late 19th century and onwards.

A direct comparison between national history writing of Danish and Estonian origin is not possible because of the differing national state building process of Denmark and Estonia.

Within our focus on Danish historiography, we will instead look at the course of developments within writings, preceding what we call “the Paradigm of Professional Particularism”. While we will treat the two first paradigms more thoroughly, the third and latest need a comment, although a strict definition escapes us. From the end of the 19th century, many works became strictly regulated to avoid criticism of slack documentation. Such professionalism also derived from intensified history teaching at universities. The need to document your claims also brought about a need of small-scale studies of particular subjects and documents, sometimes with general claims attached. Many studies were certainly national, be they democratic or elitist, but the degree of documentation made the authors' bias much more hidden, than e.g. during the Middle Ages.

Perhaps we see even a fourth paradigm for the 1990s and onwards with more global or interregional interest. For the Baltic Sea countries one may e.g. point to the ideals of the organisers behind the now closed CCC-project (publications 1998–2004), which also included a minor Danish participation. Has the pendulum swung back to a position that favours global ethics and interregional studies as it happened during the Enlightenment period and Romanticism?

PRE-CONQUEST ARGUMENTS FOR MISSION AND WAR

The first mentioned Danish accounts of conquest in Estonia is found in the chronicle called the Annals of Ryd, a Cistercian monastery at the Flensburg Fjord

¹ Parallel developments within Polish and German historiography: **Ekdahl, S.** Crusades and colonisation in the Baltic: a historiographic analysis. – XIX Rocznik Instytutu Polsko-Skandynawskiego, 2004, 1–42; also parallels in French and English historiography: **Jensen, K. V.** Introduction. – In: Medieval History Writing and Crusading Ideology. Eds T. M. S. Lehtonen et al. (Studia Fennica. Historica, 9.) Finnish Literature Society, Helsinki, 2005, 16–33.

in the duchy of Slesvig (Schleswig), known in both Latin and Danish version. King Knud² I (1018–1035), often later addressed as ‘the Great’, allegedly made successful conquests in Estonia, but this source dates to the end of the 13th century. The chronicle is famous for its outspoken hostility towards Germans, frequently quoted by Danish historians, but well-known also to German history writing from an early stage.³ The anti-German sentiment may, as Anders Leegaard Knudsen believes, reflect a widespread anti-German feeling around 1300, despite the fact that Norway was a bigger military threat at the time.

Two Danish episodes of mission with peaceful means are all we have from the very scarce early medieval sources. From the reign of King Sven II Estridsen (1047–1074) we learn of a Danish missionary initiative, according to a personal statement by king Sven himself to the chronicler Adam Bremensis. The king apparently had persuaded a zealous trader to erect a church on the island Curonia⁴ (sic!) by offering him lots of presents.

Later came the initiative of Fulco, the missionary bishop for the Estonians from 1169–1179, likely in Estonia 1171–1172 in the company of an Estonian monk from a Norwegian monastery in the Diocese of Stavanger.⁵ Several overviews have treated these pre-conquest periods of particular Danish activities in the Eastern Baltic⁶ beside the many more examining the German initiatives in Old Livonia.

Gesta Danorum

Turning to proper history writing, one author became the single most influential authority on the history of Denmark before 1200 to later royal historiographers: Saxo Grammaticus. His writings became a role model for the first post-Medieval

² The name Knud is alternatively written in English either Cnut or Canute.

³ **Knudsen, A. L.** The use of Saxo Grammaticus. – In: *The Birth of Identities. Denmark and Europe in the Middle Ages*. Ed. B. P. McGuire. Medieval Centre, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, 1996, 149–151.

⁴ *Hamburgische Kirchengeschichte*. Adam von Bremen/Magistri Adam Bremensis gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum hrsg. von Bernhard Schmeidler. *Capitulum 16: est illa quae Churland dicitur; ...Hanc insulam credimus in Vita sancti Ansgarii Chori nominatam, quam tunc Sueones tributo subiecerunt. Una ibi nunc facta est ecclesia cuiusdam studio negotiatoris, quem rex Danorum multis ad hoc illexit muneribus. Ipse rex gaudens in Domino recitavit mihi hanc cantilenam.*

⁵ **Vööbus, A.** *Studies in the History of the Estonian People*. Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile. Stockholm, 1969, 31 and footnotes here.

⁶ See **Rebane, P. P.** *Denmark and the Baltic Crusade, 1150–1227*. Unpublished Ph. D. thesis. Michigan State University, Xerox University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1969; **Nyberg, T.** *Kreuzzug und Handel in der Ostsee zur Dänischen Zeit Lübecks*. – In: *Lübeck 1226. Reichsfreiheit und frühe Stadt*. Eds O. Ahlers et al. Verein für Lübeckische Geschichte und Altertumskunde, Lübeck, 1976, 173–206; **Lind, J. et al.** *Danske korstog. Krig og mission i Østersøen*. Høst & Son, København, 2004.

Danish historians and a primary source of evidence. Saxo finished the voluminous work “Gesta Danorum”⁷ shortly after 1208 and thus right before the Danish king managed to gain a foothold in Estonia. Saxo Grammaticus is generally in line with the teachings of the church, considering his employer was Archbishop Absalon, who sadly for the author, died before Saxo managed to finish his writing. Yet, he stated openly in his prologue that he descended from a line of warriors, serving the kings, and declared his allegiance to his ancestral warrior ideals.

Although Archbishop Anders Sunesen (Archbishop 1201–1223) and King Valdemar II (1202–1241) must have planned their Estonian campaigns already back in 1206, Saxo was unable to include the Danish victories in Estonia, without altering the entire content of his work. If however to rely on the historian’s attitude and rhetoric, ostensibly regarding the much earlier Danish expeditions against various peoples in the Eastern Baltic, possibly in the years 1060–1085, the main motifs for the later Valdemarian expeditions are probably revealed.

His descriptions of expeditions are detailed and his preoccupation with warfare is hard to overlook. King Knud II in the early 1080s combined offensive warfare with firm support of the Danish Church, and thus became a favourite king of the historian Saxo. Today, Knud II is better known as Saint Canute. According to Saxo⁸ he was constantly on the offensive against Pagan peoples in Eastern Baltic – the Estonians, the Curonians and the Sambians – before and after he won the throne of Denmark.

The most extensive and vivid episode from the historical part of Saxo’s work is the one of an Estonian and Curonian naval expedition to the easternmost parts of the Danish kingdom. It seems as if the main character in the narrative about the Danish defeat of this band of pirates, and also probably the original source of information, must have been the army veteran Esbern Snare of the Zealandic chieftain’s lineage Hvide, also a sworn brother of King Valdemar I.

The farewell speech that Saxo lets King Valdemar I deliver to his fleet, before they set sail to Öland, contains interestingly enough a serious warning against a familiar enemy. The cunning war stratagems of the Estonian-Curonian fleets were apparently well known to the king, instructing his warriors not to underestimate the enemy. Earlier encounters seem thus to antedate the one recorded in 1170.

Otherwise, the few pre-1219 conquest sources on Estonian-Danish armed conflicts may be summed up as claims of conquest by Danish kings and demands for tribute going back to King Knud I “the Great” of the early 11th century.

Written during the heyday of Crusade, but before the successful conquest of Estonia in 1219, Saxo put into words the reasons for the young Prince Knud (born c. 1043) – later King Knud II (1080–1086) – to attack the Estonians and Sambians, as they were “pirates”, in other words, aggressive naval competitors. Prince and later king Knud was constantly trying to safeguard and enlarge his

⁷ **Saxo Grammaticus.** Gesta Danorum, Book 14, Chapter 40, 1–12. <http://www2.kb.dk/elib/lit//dan/saxo/lat/or.dsr/>

⁸ Ibid., 11.8, 11.11.1.

kingdom. Then having won the throne of Denmark, King Knud II, renewed his warfare against peoples in the Eastern Baltic:⁹ “...rather to spread Christianity, than to satisfy his own greed, and because in combination with his improved position he also wanted to enhance his fame.

Saxo delivers a short tribute to King Valdemar II “the Victorious”, but he goes into explicit detail when he deals with his older brother King Knud IV.¹⁰ According to various chronicles, probably all relying on the Chronicle of Ryd, this king launched an expedition to Estonia both in 1194 and again in 1196, besides elsewhere, for example Finland back in 1191.¹¹

Saxo’s rhetoric on King Knud II expeditions stressed the king’s wish to help his country and Christianity, mixed with possibilities of winning personal merits. The importance he attaches to these motifs might seem sufficient explanation, but Saxo adds another interesting reason. It belongs to an undated expedition by King Knud IV and has been read by later historians as a first-rate example of the kind of social mechanism in Denmark, brought along by a country, constantly engaged in warfare: According to Saxo, the reign of Valdemar I saw the warriors constantly in active service, performing all sorts of military duties. Now, on the other hand, during the reign of his son and heir, too much celebration and happiness meant that the warriors’ fighting spirit and strength decreased so ...to maintain fighting spirit /.../ they [i.e. the Zealanders and Scanians] decided jointly to launch a pirate expedition against the Estonians.¹²

The Danish Valdemarian kingdom arose out of a long civil war, only to turn its weapons against the nearest neighbours, then also those further away. Aspirations for reward in plunder, but also an elevated social rank and fame could be reached by partaking in major – mostly royal – campaigns. Suddenly to end such a career opportunity must have upset all those who had learnt to seek their fortune this way.

In a papal bull from October 9th 1218,¹³ Pope Honorius III declared that he agreed to the written wishes of King Valdemar II, including leaving the Danish King in sovereignty of all territory, but also whatever church which he might manage to erect, and to tear land out of the pagans’ hands while taking care that the pagans will see the true light, to which until now they had been blind.

⁹ Ibid., 11.11.1.

¹⁰ By an older tradition often named Knud VI.

¹¹ Historians do not all agree on the exact dates of these expeditions, relying on differing sources. See **Lind, J. et al.** Danske korstog. Dates are here in accordance with those given in the latter publication.

¹² **Saxo Grammaticus.** Gesta Danorum, 16.4.3.

¹³ **Suhm, P. F.** Historie af Danmark fra Aar 1202 til 1241, IX Tome. J. F. Schultz, Kiøbenhavn, 1808, 750. Suhm’s version later copied by Bunge for his **Liv-, Esth- und Churländisches Urkundenbuch nebst Regesten.** Hrsg. Bunge, F. G. v. (**LECUR**), 1857, Band 3, XLI, a; Diplomatarium Danicum the volume covering this period is unfortunately not available in Estonia.

THE DANISH CONQUEST IN HIGH-MEDIEVAL HINDSIGHT

In the aftermath of an Estonian uprising, quenched by the Swordbrethren, the Brethren had forced out the royal Danish administration by taking advantage of the Danish King Valdemar II's kidnapping and imprisonment by a dissatisfied German vassal, who quickly enjoyed support by a major league of the King's German enemies. After a haltering support from the Holy See in Rome, while the legates William and Balduin tried out the possibilities for direct papal rule in Livonia, Pope Gregory IX in 1236 finally ordered the Swordbrethren to hand over the ancient provinces Revala, Harjumaa, Virumaa and Järvamaa to the King of Denmark. The Livonian branch of the Teutonic Order, built on the remains of the Swordbrethren, were seriously defeated in a battle against the Samogitians on September 22nd 1236, among others losing the wilful Master Volquin.

However, time went by and nothing happened until the Danish King, who had already blocked Lübeck since 1234 to fresh military reinforcements on the German side, now two years later gathered a major fleet and army, ready to disembark and set sail for Estonia. Finally, the negotiators of the Teutonic Order, now representing the decimated Swordbrethren, agreed to retreat from northern Estonia.

The treaty of Stensby¹⁴ in 1238 near the navy base and favourite royal castle at Vordingborg on the southern tip of Zealand (Sjælland) was signed and sealed by both the Preceptor of the Teutonic Order, the papal legate, the Danish King Valdemar II, Eric, his new heir to the throne, and two other sons, who were accompanied by his faithful vassals, count Albert of Orlamünde and count Ernst, and in the presence of witnesses of the Danish bishops, and representatives of convents and of the Danish nobility. The reasons for handing back four Estonian provinces *Reualia et Gerwia et Wironia et Haria* (Revala, Järvamaa, Virumaa, Harjumaa) to the king of Denmark, as they were called in the treaty, appear to have been strictly secular, only stating facts of contemporary realpolitik. The verdict of the Pope and cardinals, and the military threat from the Danish King is pushed forward, since such realpolitik was the safest way to convince the knights of the Teutonic Order back in Livonia to yield. A possible Danish invasion of the disputed provinces, occupied by the Teutonic Order's Livonian branch would bring "the loss of many souls and offence to many more". It is hard to find the earnest Christian fraternity among the numerous military threats, stated in the treaty.

Estonian conversion in the eyes of Danish rulers

To reach this far, the Danish government had repeatedly reminded the Holy See in Rome of its readiness and achievements in conversion and military campaigning, to press for support in winning back the lost Estonian provinces. The old King

¹⁴ **Diplomatarium Danicum (DD)**, 1. række, bind 3. Det Danske Sprog-og Litteraturselskab, nr. 9. Also in **LECUR**, 1853, Band 1, CLX.

Valdemar II emphasised the same line in order to secure his and his successors' right to choose the future Bishops of Tallinn in a charter of 15 September 1240.¹⁵ In a charter to the Bishop of Tallinn of 11 September 1241, King Eric IV 'Plovpenning' (1241–1250) repeats as a formula the same,¹⁶ as a recollection of his father King Valdemar II, who had recently passed away. Several later charters all refer to the "illustrious" King Valdemar and to his successors,¹⁷ or the conversion itself.¹⁸ After careful consideration the royal dynasty of Denmark cultivated an ancestral Valdemarian epic. The Episcopal epic of the Archbishop Anders Sunesen (c. 1167–1228) probably existed parallel to its royal counterpart, even if only documented by historians at the end of the Middle Ages.

In 1315 King Eric VI Menved (1286–1319) issued a charter, only preserved in Low German versions, but as Latin was used in all other letters from the Danish government to Estonia, the original must also have been in Latin. In the prologue to the charter, later known as the Valdemar-Erician Law the King referred to rights presumably issued orally by his predecessor to the Danish throne, King Valdemar II, which he himself had stated in writing and further supplemented.¹⁹ Basically, the message is the same as referred above in Latin versions:

King Valdemar II is commemorated for the conversion of Estonia, but in this version the efforts of others were not forgotten, including Danes and Wends, bishops, Danish noblemen, knights, esquires and other good men. King Eric VI aimed in his prologue to the infeudation of the country as a result of the efforts of

¹⁵ **DD**, 1990, 1. række, bind 7, nr. 56, 50–51. Also in **LECUR**, Band 1, CLXVI. *Quod cum nos terram Estoniæ de infidelitatis deuio abiectis idolis, cum dei auxilio ad cultum conuertimus nominis Ihesu Christi...*

¹⁶ *...quod cum foelicis recordationis illustris rex Danorum Woldemarus, pater noster, terram Estoniæ de infidelitatis deuio abiectis idolis deO auxiliante ad cultum conuerterit nominis Christiani...*: **DD**, 1990, 1. række, bind 7, nr. 82 (compare nr. 86 of 21st September 1241). Also in **LECUR**, 1853, Band 1, CCVI (compare CCVII). NB! Bunge dated this letter erroneously to 1249 (and CCVII), and other dates have also been applied by other authors, e.g. Suhm used the same letter twice under two different years! For an overview of earlier dates and discussion see DD.

¹⁷ E.g. Charter from king Abel (1250–1252), 8th of August 1251 to the Bishop of Saare-Lääne: *“...pater noster felicis memoriæ rex Woldemarus et frater noster rex Ericus, piæ recordationis...*: **DD**, 1938, 2. række, bind 1, 46. Also in **LECUR**, 1853, Band 1, CCXXVIII.

¹⁸ Charter from Queen Dowager Margrethe, *domina Estoniæ* to the Chapter of Tallinn, August 21st 1277: *Licet per quosdam dominos inclitos reges Danorum prædecessores nostros terra Estoniæ tracta sit ad cultum nominis Ihesu Christi...*: **DD**, 1941, 2. række, bind 2, 298. Also in **LECUR**, 1853, Band 1, CCCCLV.

¹⁹ *De edle Wolmar van Gades gnaden konink der Denen unde der Wenden, mit der hülpe Gades, mit der hülpe sines gemeinen rikes, der bischope unde der edlen Denen, riddern unde knapen, unde ok andern guden luden, sik nalende over see, Gade ton eren unde siner benedieden moder, sunte Marien, der reinen junkvrowen, dat lant Esten bedwank to dem Christen geloven van der heidenschop, unde vorlende dat riddern und knapen ofte knechten, unde begnadede se mit sodanem rechte, also noch hudes dages hebben sine manne in den landen, unde noch in den binnen beseten to Rige, to Darpte, to Ozele unde in der bröder lande, unde dat recht beholden is van koningen to koningen bet an dusse tiit: Bunge, F. G. v. Altlivlands Rechtsbücher. Breitkopt und Härtel. Leipzig, 1879, 55–70.*

all these “good men” in the past. Interesting for later historians’ vision of the past, the King offered these laws primarily to the royal provinces of Estonia, but adds Riga, Tartu, Saaremaa and even the territories of the Livonian Order!

RENOUNCING THE SALE

Later Danish historians, rather than inventing new ideas of old claims in Eastern Baltic, instead never strayed off the old and beaten track, which we can follow as far back as King Eric VII (1412–1436/39) and perhaps even Queen Margaret (1375–1412), the daughter of Valdemar IV (1340–1375) who carried out the sale in 1346.

The Sales Contract of 1346

Reading the charters from both the King’s Councillor, the last Captain of Tallinn Castle, and in reality acting viceroy from his arrival in 1344 to his departure in 1346, and comparing them with the King’s later charters as he received the final amount of money from the sale of Harjumaa-Virumaa, there seem to be no doubt of the sincerity of all parties, nor the authenticity of the sealed sales contract. Anyhow, it lasted little more than half a century, before the authenticity of the sale was seriously questioned. This may be because King Valdemar IV, although using plenty of privileges for his Estonian vassals and the Church, never put the issue of sale before the Knighthood of Harjumaa-Virumaa, nor his Danish Council for that matter. This is, at least as far as the written sources are able to tell.

Not sold, but pawned and illegally occupied

Eric VII “the Pomeranian”, King of the Calmar Union (Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland etc.) argued that the permanent possession of Harjumaa-Virumaa by the Livonian Order was unlawful and the King pursued a hostile policy towards the Order and its subjects.

In 1421 the Livonian Master together with the Archbishop of Riga presented copies of the letters to the Danish government on which the Order based its claim to sovereignty in Harjumaa-Virumaa.²⁰ However, the King would only be allowed to inspect the originals at a meeting between the Grand Master and the Danish King in person. In 1423, i.e. two years later, King Eric VII had a more positive attitude towards the Order. Had the delivered testimonies actually convinced the King or did the situation by then not offer him any space for political manoeuvres, rendering him additional enemies?

²⁰ **Mollerup, W.** Danmarks Forhold til Lifland fra Salget af Estland til Ordensstatens Opløsning (1346–1561). Jacob Erslevs Forlag, Kjøbenhavn, 1880, 10–11.

The next kings of Denmark, Christopher III “the Bavarian” (1440–1448) and Christian I (1448–1481) were not deterred from interfering in Livonian internal struggles, by appearing as patrons to bishops of Saare-Lääne and Riga. As it was, also the chapters of Tallinn and Tartu (Dorpat) were interested in whatever help they might receive from Danish Kings in their internal political fights with the Livonian Order. Christian I used the title “Dux Estoniae” and in charters also maintained that Livonian bishops were suffragans to the Archbishop of Lund. Later in 1499 King Hans (1481–1513) demanded Harjumaa-Virumaa back and with accrued interests!

The Kings’ political partners in Livonia

Livonian bishops and noblemen repeatedly tried to involve Danish kings as patrons or as their liege lords by openly appealing to revanchist currents still alive at the Danish court. Calculating loss and gains from such political manoeuvres abroad was probably easily done: Livonian bishops and chapters could seek the patronage of the rulers of the Calmar Union without any serious threat of actual interference from the side of their patrons. If all they had to do was to boost Danish historical vanity with carefully chosen words, it should be a price easily paid.

Denmark back on Estonian ground

During the reign of Christian III (1534–1559) the wish to place a Danish prince in Old Livonia intensified and finally materialised, when his younger son prince Magnus became Bishop of Saare-Lääne in 1561.

It is perhaps necessary to emphasise that here we are not discussing matters from a point of objective rights or legal possession to Harjumaa-Virumaa of the Danish kings, but only if they were a genuine contention, existing within court circles from which the Danish government was recruited. William Mollerup put forward some well-founded evidence that such stubborn notions persisted, as legends do, often ignoring any facts, which conflicted with the favoured notions among aristocratic spheres at the Danish Court during the Late Middle Ages.

Kim Esmark²¹ has called attention to contested donations to Esum Monastery in Denmark and for example Stephen White’s cases²² from Western France, how any gift or inheritance, particularly from a dying proprietor to a religious institution, was the subject of contentions by the heirs of the proprietor in the years following

²¹ **Esmark, K.** Godsgaver, calumniae og retsantropologi. Esum Kloster og dets naboer ca. 1150–1250. – In: Ett annat 1100-tal. Individ, kollektiv och kulturella mönster i medeltidens Danmark. Eds P. Carelli et al. (Centrum för Danmarksstudier, 3.) Göteborg, 2004, 143–180.

²² **White, S. D.** Proposing the ordeal and avoiding it: strategy and power in Western French litigation, 1050–1110. – In: Cultures of Power. Lordship Status and Process in Twelfth-Century Europe. Ed. T. Bisson. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1995, 89–123.

the official transfer of property to its new owners. *Calumnia* meant in classic Latin literally an *unlawful accusation*, but in Middle Latin it more neutrally meant any kind of *lawsuit*, according to Esmark. To 19th century Baltic German historians in general and the Danish historian Arthur William Julius Mollerup in particular,²³ any contention against the sale of Estonia to the Teutonic Order in 1346 was an abomination to the truth. In the light of legal anthropology, the Danish court's contentions were not so unusual for the Middle Ages and should be treated as any other *calumnia*. Esmark points to some cases of dispute over property, usually ending with a compromise in which a descendant of the original donor gave up after years of struggle, when he received public acclimation for the donation in the same way as the original donor by the monks of the Cistercian monastery at Esrum. Of course there is a difference between handing over part of your patrimony in the size of e.g. a village to a monastery and the transfer over entire provinces from one sovereign to another. However, no legally safe distinction existed between possessions of a sovereign or a polity and those belonging to an individual proprietor, in as far as feudal relations were concerned. A king was a feudal liege to his liegemen, who again acted as lords to others, further down the social ladder.

It is not hard to find historians, angry about Danish aspirations in Estonia among Baltic German historians, or Estonians or Danes, either making sarcastic remarks or simply embarrassed on behalf of late medieval Danish governments. How could Danish representatives act like that?

Given the nature of medieval lawsuits in general, sealed parchments were only one kind of legal evidence among others, particularly the personal oath, seconded by friends and relatives. Possession of land or titles afforded a person social esteem, as it gave a country its international reputation. Many medieval lawsuits seem aimed at stating claims in public, rather than actually expecting to get one's losses redressed and achieve rehabilitation to titles.

In a historiographic overview such as this, it is worth observing how political claims interacted with the notions of historians and civil servants, particularly at the end of the political dispute between the kings of Denmark and the Livonian Order in the 16th century.²⁴ In 1554 King Christian III of Denmark claimed that Narva was only held by the Order from the hand of Valdemar IV as a security and mortgage for the money spent by the Order, when it suppressed the Estonian Uprising in 1343. This resulted in a renewed attempt by the Order to document their legal grounds for possessing Harjumaa-Virumaa by presenting a copy of the original sales contract.

While in 1558 the citizens of Tallinn were desperate to find a foreign power to defend them against the Russian emperor Ivan IV Vasilyevich (1533–1584), Christopher Munichhausen, manor owner in Kolga, had taken control of the Toompea Castle by promising Danish assistance in the Livonian War. This promise had never been cleared with the Danish government, but the entrepreneurial Danish vassal by his own choice simply took advantage of a situation, and acted in

²³ Mollerup, W. Danmarks Forhold til Lifland, 1–48.

²⁴ Ibid., 2–6.

anticipation of Danish support which, given his quick response and fair results, might have had some grounds.

Reluctance on the part of the sick and ailing King Christian III of Denmark to rush into unforeseeable troubles in Estonia and his subsequent lack of will to act, made the citizens of Tallinn prefer the open-handed offers by the younger Swedish King Eric XIV. To the late 19th century William Mollerup, the Danish incompetence at the right moment was probably the main issue. Watching the epoch just treated above from the point of view of a historian of the late 18th century, other ideals were fashionable. Ove Malling was a Danish historian who in 1777 wrote a schoolbook full of historical role models and moral ideals from the period of Enlightenment, and to him both the roles of Christopher Munichhausen as a Danish vassal in Estonia, trying to help his king, and the king's hesitant response were treated as honourable attitudes:²⁵

“But he [king Christian III] did not want to enhance his power at the expense of a cowed neighbour. He answered, “*that the countries, which God had given him, were enough for him; he only wished to govern them well, and was far from wanting to take advantage of others' weakness to win what was not due to him.*”

Although the Danish side from 1555 officially accepted the sales contract and more or less the position of the Order, it still continued to demand sovereignty for the kings of Denmark. Furthermore, suspicion was now thrown on the legitimacy of the transaction. The position of the Danish side was now that it could only have taken place by *foul play*, because to civil servants of the middle of the 16th century, it was impossible that a single councillor on behalf of the king could legally have transferred part of the kingdom to a foreign state.

Mollerup sums up an anonymous comment by a civil servant, found next to a copy of the sales contract from the *Geheimerarkiv* in Copenhagen, written sometime in the 16th century. It states that:

1. No such transaction and conveyance may be found anywhere from the royal archives and
2. The sales contract is only known in a copy presented by the Order.

Then follow doubts on the legitimacy of such a transfer, in case such a transfer took place at all:

1. King Christopher II, father of King Valdemar IV, had in a charter to his Estonian vassals²⁶ bound himself and his descendants never to conclude such actions.
2. The transactions had not received the consent of the King's Council and finally, queens and kings hereafter had continuously granted privileges for those countries.

Even the historian Arild Huitfeldt in 1601²⁷ continued to cast some doubt on the legitimacy of the whole transaction, because it happened in conflict with both

²⁵ **Malling, O.** Store og gode Handlinger af danske, norske og holstenere. København, 1777, 353–354.

²⁶ 21st of Sept. 1329 see **LECUR**, 1855, Band 2, DCCXXXVII.

²⁷ **Huitfeldt, A.** Danmarks Riges Krønike. Chronologia, II. Fra Erik Menved til Valdemar Atterdag. København, 1601 (photographic reprint Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1977).

King Christopher II's promise to his vassals and their pledge never to part with the kings of Denmark. Huitfeldt was the last to defy the legitimacy of the conveyance of the Danish king's Estonian provinces to the Teutonic Order, which finally transferred them to its Livonian branch.

With Huitfeldt ended a chapter of what some authors later angrily considered the Danish inability to face up to historical facts or scandalous attempts to falsify history writing. History writing has become increasingly self-critical during the last decades, and the awareness of every scholar's limitations to his own time and milieu has perhaps rendered such self-confident judgement of predecessors' writings obsolete. The political activism of the medieval and renaissance authors, referred above, does not make them objective, nor completely wrong. Probably they saw more clearly than we do today the possibilities for political intervention in Old Livonia with its confederation of bishoprics and territories under the Order. Also they knew the inconstancy of legitimacy, and the negotiable character of rights and titles during the existence of the Old Livonian confederation.

EARLIEST COMPILATIONS DURING THE REFORMATION

Two historians of the 1520s are relevant for Danish history writing on Estonia. On the one hand, we have the Canon of Lund Christiern Pedersen (c.1480–1554), humanist and publisher of the first printed version of Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*, who eventually chose to side with the reformation. On the other hand, we have the Franciscan history writer and monk Petrus Olai (i.e. Peder Olsen, died c.1570) from Roskilde Grey Friar Monastery. They both collected stories about the time of Danish conquest in northern Estonia,²⁸ finally to hand over their manuscripts to the Royal Historiographer Anders Sørensen Vedel (1542–1616).

The interest in Livonia²⁹ was certainly present. Both historians were first and foremost earliest compiling collectors, who were facing immense troubles from the lack of a simple chronology and dating historic events correctly. Their purpose was simply to compare the sparse written information at their disposal and establish a coherent course of events. They had access to more or less the same material: chronicles with dates of expeditions and names of nations, religious hagiographies and stories of the flag named *Dannebrog* and naturally its divine origin, falling from the sky and bringing good fortune to the Danish side in dire circumstances during a battle.

Their own views are not very explicit. The material at their disposal did not give them many choices to differ from each other, but one accumulated all

²⁸ **Fabricius, L. P.** Sagnet om Danebroge og de ældste Forbindelser med Estland. Kirkehistoriske Samlinger, række 6: 1, bind 1933-35. København, 1933, 485–533.

²⁹ "Livonia" instead of "Estonia" became the favourite term used in Denmark, following German custom, towards the end of the 15th century; see **Jørgensen, A. D.** Historisk Tidsskrift, 6, I. København, 156.

important actions in the year 1208, the other preferred the year 1219. They struggled to match famous personalities, less or better known place names, the institution of a fast day in honour of St Laurentius and the King's alleged change of character, influenced by clergy and in commemoration of a late bishop, of course not to forget the banner dropping from above.

Both Peder Olsen and Christiern Pedersen were writing at the time of the first struggles of the Reformation in Denmark in the 1520s, but still within the Catholic context, as the official Reformation only took place in 1536. They do not deny the hagiographies of Bishop Niels of Århus, popularly known as Saint Niels, or the sense of divine omens in the shape of a banner or the impact of an archbishop's prayers on the battlefield.

ARILD HUITFELDT – INTERPRETATIVE HISTORIAN AND COLLECTOR

Arild Huitfeldt (1546–1609) belongs to the Protestant era of history writing in Denmark,³⁰ but he was a firm Christian and not secularised in any way. In fact he maintained a belief in divine omens and the kind of God, who shows his will to punish in this world, not waiting for his revenge in the other world. He paints a vivid picture of the Lord's nature:³¹ “*God is a righteous God, who hates sin and wickedness. Particularly God will punish the innocent blood, which is spilt. And therefore has given us in the nature of a body and blood of a dead person that when it senses its killer, then blood bursts out from rage and vengeance, has it even been hidden for a year or more, thus a certain example, which is something you can touch...*” At the time of writing, Huitfeldt occupied the office of Chancellor of the Realm (*rigskansler*), which made him the highest presiding legal authority in Denmark-Norway in those days.

Let us turn towards his comments on Old Livonia and Estonia in particular.³²

For the year 1186, Huitfeldt wrote about an expedition led by King Knud IV in which Huitfeldt seems to have borrowed his arguments for the expeditions from passages of *Gesta Danorum*, already mentioned above,³³ in which Danish warriors were complaining how they had been used before to fight during the reign of the former king, but now their strength goes to waste... *Therefore, an*

³⁰ **Huitfeldt, A.** Danmarks Riges Krønike (reprinted version). Rosenkilde & Bagger, København, 1976–1978, originally 1595–1603. The 2 volumes relevant for the period 1219–1346 in Estonia were originally in two volumes respectively 1600 (Chronologia, I. Fra Knud VI til Erik Glipping) and 1601 (Chronologia, II. Fra Erik Menved til Valdemar Atterdag).

³¹ **Huitfeldt, A.** Chronologia, I, 227–228.

³² *Ibid.*, 107–108. While describing the geography of Estonia, clearly the name encompassed more or less the area of the present republic and knowledge of Swedish insular population, mixed with Estonians.

³³ *Ibid.*, 17 (year 1186, King Knud IV).

expedition was granted against Estonia, who was Unchristian, always robbing and taking to the sea; it was not unfair that they were to suffer what they did themselves.

An important argument to Huitfeldt has already been touched upon above: the presumed right to land by conquest and its original conversion in case it is pagan. The same argument is found in the Danish kings' charters from the years 1219–1346, and probably never forgotten, particularly by a Scanian aristocrat and reader of the same original charters, such as Huitfeldt himself.³⁴ Huitfeldt had seemingly no scruples about Christianity spread by force. His argumentation is of the same sort as he would know in the Livonian Chronicle of Henry, a source that he generally relied on. It was crucial to Huitfeldt that full-scale Danish activity had taken place – military actions hand in hand with missionary activities. An important aspect in papal bulls, justifying the rights for crusaders was the defence of neophytes and the building of churches and castles, along with tremendous efforts by warriors. In the eyes of Huitfeldt, these deeds were all equally admirable and worthy of recognition by posterity. To describe what he considered the extent of Danish involvement in Estonia, before the German conquests, he used the Latin terms *Ius* and *Dominium*³⁵ i.e. *Right and Dominion*. This is written for the year 1196. Already by the year 1206 he saw the aim of the expeditions as forcing apostates back to Christianity!³⁶

It is clear that his aim was not to infuriate the Estonians, as might easily be the result today. Huitfeldt aimed instead at substantiating the position of his own government in foreign affairs contrary to the claims of the Baltic Germans, particularly those who supported the side of the Teutonic Order, even if already disbanded for a number of years, when he wrote this in 1600. He also stressed that the first Danish church in Estonia was built in *Vigside*, i.e. Läänemaa or Wiek, which had again become important to Danish governments because of its possession of the territory of former bishopric of Saare-Lääne. The continental part of the diocese was quickly lost, but not forgotten.

The most famous Danish expedition in 1219 was, according to Huitfeldt³⁷ intended to rescue Christians and Danish vassals. He did not, however, call this expedition a crusade, using instead the term *leding*. This military phenomenon has for long interested historians, who have not agreed completely on its develop-

³⁴ Scanians and Zealanders appear to have been the driving force behind the expeditions in the Baltic Sea while Jutlanders turned their attention further westwards. For usage of this regional division among Danes during the Valdemarian era, see e.g. **Heine, N. G.** Valdemar II.s Udenrigs-politik. Østersøproblemer omkring 1200. Humanistiske Studier, II. Institutarbejder fra Aarhus Universitet. Universitetsforlaget i Aarhus, København, 1941, 23, 61. For the opposite opinion see **Johansen, P.** Die Estlandliste des Liber Census Daniae. København-Reval, who argued that the Jutlanders were tougher and therefore more suitable for colonisation under hard conditions!

³⁵ **Huitfeldt, A.** Chronologia, I, 56.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 83.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 104–105.

ment or usage. To claim that it was only meant for defensive purposes would be confusing, rather it should be compared with a sort of national conscription, which rested on landowners and had to pass through regional *things* or parliaments in order to launch an attack against a chosen enemy. Contemporary Danish Provincial Laws contain the duties to equip warships and to muster crews with weaponry, serving in *leding*. It is likely that Huitfeldt thought any major Danish naval expedition from the time of the Provincial Laws, would have been levied, according to the regulation of *leding* and not merely as a royal enterprise, supported by the king's faithful Wendish vassals. Given the vast size of the Danish fleet, which is noted in Danish chronicles, as the one landing at Lyndanise in June 1219, Huitfeldt could not imagine this without such a national muster effort.

Like his predecessors, Huitfeldt goes through the various legends connected with the battle in 1219 at the site of *Lyndanise*, i.e. modern Tallinn, but the author moved all actions to Wolmar, German name for Valmiera in Vidzeme, Latvia. This can be explained by the often-used versions of king Valdemar's name as *Voldemar* or *Volmar* during the Middle Ages. Probably in this case the author listened to popular etymology, originating inside Livonia. The legends, staging Dannebrog's appearance in Viljandi³⁸ in central Estonia may also have played a trick on him.

In his description of e.g. the archbishop's prayer *as Moses* or of the banner, appearing from the sky *as for Constantine*,³⁹ distinctive Protestant scepticism becomes obvious. Rather than a flag of divine nature, Huitfeldt suggests a papal *cruciata*. The same protestant scepticism, perhaps simply caused by the conformity of his days, led him to finish the story of a dream by King Eric IV 'Plovpenning', who was foretold of his own martyrdom and how he had to start building Padise Monastery:⁴⁰ *however it might have been, or simply invented by monks, who have made a saint out of this King Eric, and written an entire book about which miracles took place, after his death.*

The downfall of King Valdemar II and the dissolution of his entire Baltic Sea Empire seem typical of the lifetime of Arild Huitfeldt,⁴¹ but perhaps it derives further back to the Middle Ages, as biblical motifs might easily have supported such neat moralistic argumentation. Huitfeldt supported the notion that the king had committed adultery with the wife of one of his German vassals, while, to make things worse, the king was entrusted with the guardianship of the vassal's

³⁸ Given as *Felin*.

³⁹ The Roman Emperor Constantine the Great before the Battle of Milvian Bridge in front of Rome on Oct. 28th in the year 312.

⁴⁰ **Huitfeldt, A.** *Chronologia*, I, 194.

⁴¹ Exactly the same narrative pattern as explanation in a manuscript committed to paper c. 1590 by a lady Anna Munk. Again a king (Erik V, murdered in 1286) is punished for the rape of a vassal's wife, by the husband, and as an aggravating point, similar to that of king Valdemar, king Erik was at same time guardian of his vassal's family. Compare **Grundtvig, S. et al.**, *Danmarks gamle Folkeviser*. København, 1853–1883, 145 Ab and 145 D.

possessions and family! Count Heinrich of Schwerin, while kidnapping the king and his oldest son in 1223, acted according to Huitfeldt simply as a deceived husband and betrayed liegeman, entitled to have his revenge.

The loss of the principality, as Huitfeldt called the king's Estonia, he explained by:⁴² 1) Internal strife in Denmark, 2) the king's need and distress, and finally 3) desire to further the Teutonic Order (!). The sale of Estonia is thus not denied by Huitfeldt, but commenting it in the following way:⁴³ *...against the covenant made by his liege [and] father that the mentioned principality never should be disposed of the realm and against the pledge, which the nobility in Estonia had taken, never to part from the Crown of Denmark. Neither had his council sealed this letter, except Stig Andersen.*

The fact that King Valdemar IV (1340–1375) went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, only few years after the sale of Estonia, convinced Huitfeldt that King Valdemar IV simply spent the remaining money, received from the sale of Estonia, on this adventure. This drove Huitfeldt to criticise princes in general for squandering money either on warfare, on building works or consumption⁴⁴ – probably an ill-conceived attack on the late King Frederik II (1559–1588). It makes up a popular moralistic verdict lent to some of his successors, ungrounded and refuted.⁴⁵ It is interesting to note how a conservative Chancellor of the Realm at a time of elected Danish kings, with a powerful Council of nobilities to control royal politics, felt confident enough of his own rank and that of the position of his peers to deliver such attacks. The late King Frederik II had recently fallen out of favour after a disastrous war and a subsequent economic chaos. At the time of writing in 1601, his young son had ascended to the throne, but a Danish king, even the wilful and long-reigning Christian IV (1588–1648) never enjoyed absolute power as monarchs did after 1660, nor were they safe from public criticism as the later absolute monarchs.

THE 18TH CENTURY AND THE TIME OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Three authors are worth mentioning among historians, who approached Danish-Estonian history: Ludvig Holberg (1684–1754), Peder Friedrich Suhm (1728–1798) and Ove Malling (1747–1829).

⁴² **Huitfeldt, A.** *Chronologia*, I, 193–194.

⁴³ **Huitfeldt, A.** *Chronologia*, II, 481.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 485.

⁴⁵ **Holberg, L.** *Dannemarks Riges Historie*. Deelt udi 3 Tomer. J. Levin, Kjøbenhavn, 1856, 302 (1st edition published 1732). For a different point of view see **Arup, E.** *Danmarks Historie*, bind II-A, 1282–1523. Gyldendal, København, 1961, 97–98 (original published 1926). On a *danehof* or diet in January 1249, King Valdemar presented financial accounts on the spending of his income, both national and personal. Apparently, the down payment for Estonia went to pay for several mortgages or for troops, capturing some strongholds on the Danish Isles from German knights.

Dannemarks Riges Historie (1st volume, 1st edition 1732)

Ludvig Holberg was born in the small, but cosmopolitan Norwegian town of Bergen, later educated at various Western European universities and rose to the rank of baron and professor of history in Copenhagen. He was markedly Western European disposed; Germany was not nearly as beloved as France, Italy and England. His heroes were rationalistic figures in history. Economic common sense, both in private matters and in public affairs not only made him a rich man, but also helped to reshape the economic basis for the University of Copenhagen under his shrewd management. Holberg would have agreed with the favourite motto of today's economic journalism, once coined by the anonymous informant known as 'Deep Throat': *Follow the money!* In religious affairs, only the pressure from an open-minded monarch Frederik IV saved him in his youth from the wrath of protestant theologians at the University of Copenhagen. Holberg maintained a critical mind towards religion and in his comedies he mocked every social group in the country, except the Court of the absolutist Danish monarchy.

Among his many works, Holberg wrote a new national history of Denmark. *Dannemarks Riges Historie* was published in various editions until 1764 following its first edition 1732–1735. Holberg is regarded highly for his fresh ideas and critical mind about Danish culture, but also for literary theft before any copyright was invented. Dealing with Denmark's Estonian past, Holberg does not add new original studies, but borrows all his information, particularly from his predecessor Arild Huitfeldt. The originality of Ludvig Holberg lay in his approach and the questions he asked about what motifs the involved historic figures and organisations might have had for acting as they did.

Holberg repeats Huitfeldt's mistake, staging again the battlefield of King Valdemar II in 1219 in *Wolmar*. He does not question assertions made by Huitfeldt of Danish dominion in Livonia originating from alleged conquests dated to the reign of King Knud IV, nor did he question that the same king supposedly built churches and provided priests for Estonia. Giving the background for King Valdemar II's expedition in 1219, Holberg writes:⁴⁶ *But the Pagans in Livonia had reinforced themselves from Prussia, Lithuania, Semigallia and Russia in order to drive the Christians out again, and all those who had sworn allegiance to the Danish kings. Valdemarus learned about this in 1219 and therefore equipped a navy...* The defence of crusades interpreted as the rescue of Christians repeated in papal bulls, was equalled to the national need for defence of vassals, again in the words of Holberg as his predecessor Huitfeldt had said it before him.⁴⁷

Huitfeldt could not help his innate deference to the ancient religious legends of divine flags and nationwide fast day for men and big boys, and to a presumed character change of the king or faltering between whether to believe or not. Such deference on the other hand had vanished completely from the retelling

⁴⁶ Holberg, L. *Dannemarks Riges Historie*, 195.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 197.

of the same legends by Holberg in the middle of the 18th century (1732–1764). On the contrary, in the eyes of Holberg, it only improved King Valdemar II's position as an indisputable national hero that he had not shown reverence to Saint Niels (i.e. Nicolas) in Århus. Holberg's own reverence to clergy is hard to find:⁴⁸ *Thus this alone bears witness to the fact that the King was no serious worshipper of the saints, as he jested in such way with St. Nicolao. It also seems as if the good bishop [Peder of Århus] must have been interested, since he only recommended the patron of his own town and pleaded for his income.* Danish clergy in his own days had a similar interest in the income from their posts, but Holberg could only make such accusation against clergy from Denmark's Catholic past.

Ludvig Holberg manages to make King Valdemar II not only ruler of Estonia, but Curonia, Livonia and Prussia, too. The absolute monarch Christian V (1670–1699) had in 1671 introduced the *Order of Dannebrog* as a way of decorating distinguished supporters of the absolutist monarchy, only established in 1660. The ribbon of the Order of Dannebrog until this day (2007) comes with a cross-shaped emblem with a *W* for Valdemar and a *C5* for Christian V – the founder of the Order. By the time of its foundation, the royal heralds explained how Valdemar II was the original founder, but that Christian V had had to redo it, since the Order had been out of use for a long time. Holberg, however, evaded direct criticism against such a heraldic fabrication, flattering the monarchy: *the foundation of the Order is very old, but the time is uncertain...*⁴⁹ Instead he took pains to attach the heraldic source to this legend.⁵⁰

The great success of King Valdemar II, but subsequent ruin to his Empire is, according to Holberg: *one of the greatest examples in history of fortune's inconsistency.*⁵¹ The fate of the historical figure of King Valdemar II fascinated Danish historians then, as it does now. In opposition to such a *good king*, there had to be *bad kings* and one of these was King Abel (1250–1252), who was behind the murder of his older brother and predecessor, committed by one of Abel's knights. King Abel's cession of any former claims to Danish sovereignty and to metropolitan status for archbishops of Lund in the Bishopric of *Osiliensis et Maritimæ* i.e. Saare-Lääne or in the Order land,⁵² were dressed up as a pious institute to redeem the king's soul, along with those of his parents and successors.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 196, 206.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 197.

⁵⁰ *De ordine Dannebrogæ*, whose author claims to have verbal confirmation from the famous antiquarian Wilhelm (erroneous for Ole) Worm, supported by written evidence in old manuscripts kept at the Royal Archive: **Holberg, L.** *Dannemarks Riges Historie*, 209.

⁵¹ **Holberg, L.** *Dannemarks Riges Historie*, 198. To his contemporary readers, an image of a cupid, blowing soap bubbles might have come to mind. The inconsistency of life was a particular favourite motif of the rococo period, in imagery as in writings.

⁵² The disputed territories of the Teutonic Order are given as *Alenpoys. Normecunde. Moche. Weigele*. Both charters dated august 8th, 1251: **DD**, 1938, 2. række, bind 1, nr. 45, 46. Compare **LECUR**, Band 1, CCXXVIII, CCXXIX. See also **Huitfeldt, A.** *Chronologia*, I, 220.

This had outraged the author Huitfeldt back in 1600, but then again he agreed that Abel's soul had been in serious need of redemption.⁵³ Holberg, on the other hand, argued against the pious attitude of his predecessor to this case: *Huitfeldt thinks he made this gift as penance for the killing of his brother. But it was an odd penance, for you do not calm the wrath of God by weakening a state, committed into your care.*⁵⁴

The split with Estonia gets a typical rationalist comment of Holberg:⁵⁵ *Many blame the King for this action, particularly since his father had taken the pledge of the nobility of Estonia that the country in question should never be parted from Denmark. However, when one realizes, how small an advantage Denmark had of this far-off principality, one should rather praise than blame such an action; for the possession hardly amounted to more than a pure title, and the expenses were unavoidable, as governors and fortifications had to be provided. Also the realm became drawn into troubles...* After another reference to the loss of money and domestic needs, Holberg agrees with his predecessor Huitfeldt in criticising King Valdemar IV's pilgrimage to Jerusalem, as *untimely devotion*, not only squandering money, but in contradiction with the king's entire character and general *lack of bigotry*: *...I admit in no way to comprehend, how such a sensible and even amorous gentleman might get such a whim.*⁵⁶

Historie af Danmark (published posthumously 1808)

Peter Friderich Suhm, who passed away in 1798 before his work was published, spent much time investigating the original sources, instead of simply borrowing from Huitfeldt as others had done. Where Huitfeldt was a conservative aristocrat, who considered the importance of his own estate in society as a control mechanism against the follies of kings, Baron Holberg had avoided from siding with any social group. Suhm, on the other hand, openly expressed that he saw the nobility as the adversaries of his own social group, identifying himself with the aspirations of what he named *Middle Class or Bourgeoisie*,⁵⁷ while kings were considered more lenient, but not terribly seriously.⁵⁸ That might also have proved difficult for

⁵³ *But now his heart was so embittered that he did not spare his natural brother, a cruelty, which a Pagan would have been ashamed to commit, not to mention a Christian: Huitfeldt, A. Chronologia, I, 226.*

⁵⁴ **Holberg, L.** *Dannemarks Riges Historie*, 224.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 301, compare 213.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 302.

⁵⁷ **Suhm, P. F.** *Historie af Danmark*, 654. On king's minor importance, compared to that of their ministers see 352.

⁵⁸ *It has thus happened as now, and as it always will happen that it rests on the ministers' presentations, and that the regent, as a human being, cannot remember everything: Suhm, P. F. Historie af Danmark, 342. In turn first the king's physician, aided by the queen, then the Queen Dowager and her son, the Prince Heir and in the end the matured Crown Prince, who could not rule in his own name, until the death of his father. In this instance, though, the critic of the authors is hidden as aimed at the Pope!*

someone who very well knew that the absolute monarch was insane and made to sign the decisions of ministers, installed by shifting cliques dominating the Danish Court, one after the other until ten years after the author's death.

By the second half of the 18th century, Christian Europeans felt safe from any imminent threat of a non-Christian big power in the heart of Europe, such as the Ottoman Empire before 1700. Perhaps this created the emotional background for Suhm and many of his liberal contemporaries in e.g. Poland, Germany, France and England, when they now took a negative stance towards crusades in general and forced baptism in particular.⁵⁹ Furthermore, the Danish author lived in one of Denmark's longest periods of peace, albeit armed, and died right before the British naval attack in 1801 that suddenly changed the mood of the country. Suhm openly expressed his appreciation of peace, not seeking adventures in a bellicose past. Not thrilled by the detailed descriptions of warfare in the Livonian Chronicle by Henry, he for example dryly sums up the cruelties of war: *The exploits of both [Latvians and Russians] consisted of plundering, burning down and murdering.*⁶⁰

His objectivity had its limits, though. His usage of expressions such as – *the Danes's great bravery*⁶¹ – shows that national enthusiasm was not foreign to his nature. When Suhm assumed that Valdemar II must have demanded extraordinary taxes of his people to pay for all the expeditions⁶², we may see a reflection of the expensive arms race in the monarchy Denmark-Norway-Holstein during the 18th century. The same could be said about Suhm's particular interest in the early medieval phenomenon *leding*⁶³, and the way in which troops were summoned by consent of the *landsting*, i.e. the regional parliaments. This was a more democratic manner compared to later feudal armies he gives us to understand. In his opinion the whole attitude to the introduction of feudal military service was negative. When the summoned people were no longer given the choice, whether or not to consent to war, this was a loss of freedom. Furthermore, the domestic defence became weak by only using feudally obligated knights and their hired troops.⁶⁴ The lack of troops to spend a winter on Saaremaa in 1206 is given as a prime example of a Danish king's limited command over a traditional *leding*'s army.

This author was no stranger to criticism against royal power as such, or to King Valdemar II 'the Victorious', or to imperialistic Danish assertions. Suhm displays empathy with the populations in Old Livonia and elsewhere, who became the victims of the crusades. Discussing interpretations of the expedition by Valdemar II to Saaremaa in 1206⁶⁵ Suhm doubts if this expedition was really a matter of payback, supposedly for an earlier Saaremaa attack on a Scanian

⁵⁹ Ekdahl, S. Crusades and colonisation, 12; Jensen, K. V. Introduction, 20–21.

⁶⁰ Suhm, P. F. Historie af Danmark, 339.

⁶¹ Ibid., 332.

⁶² Ibid., 333.

⁶³ Also written *leiðangr* in Old Norse.

⁶⁴ Suhm, P. F. Historie af Danmark, 75.

⁶⁵ The year 1205 or 1206 has become a controversy between Baltic German and Danish historians, however Suhm was convinced of 1205, thus agreeing with his foreign colleagues.

peninsular Lister (since late 17th century part of Blekinge):⁶⁶ *...perhaps this has contributed, but as Valdemar was an ambitious, courageous and belligerent Lord and successful in his enterprises, it is no wonder that he attempted to expand his domain to all sides, laying ancient Danish claims to many countries, and thus the expansion of the Christian belief came as a desirable opportunity and pretext.* Later Danish historians are divided between those in favour⁶⁷ and those who deny⁶⁸ the link to Saaremaa operation in 1203 with the Danish operation in 1206.

P. F. Suhm corrected the mistake of his predecessors as for the site of the battlefield in 1219, himself determining the site in nowadays Tallinn, calling it *Lyndanise* as in the Livonian Chronicles by Henry. Also in many other aspects, he altered the former version given by for example Huitfeldt and automatically repeated by several others since then. On the important question to the predecessors of P. F. Suhm, as to numerous of his successors, who came first to the Baltic Sea countries as conquerors, Scandinavians or Germans, Suhm does agree that Swedes and Danes were there before any Germans.

Suhm sided with the conquered natives in the Baltic Sea countries. This was a major break with history writing until his time:⁶⁹ *...but the strangest thing about this is that foreign people under the pretext of promoting the inhabitants' bliss and to make them Christians, raped, burned and murdered in their countries, and seemed to forget that no one had any bigger right to these countries, than the inhabitants themselves.* Keeping in mind that the framework of Suhm's work was to write a book of the History of Denmark, the author's disappointment not to find an opportunity to balance the picture of Danish enterprises, weighted against those of the Germans, is understandable. For all Suhm's sympathy with the native peoples, victims of the crusades, it must be remembered that the aim of his narrative was to write a national Danish history, so a clear bias towards Danish interests runs through his book: *In case a good Danish history or chronicle had been preserved from those times, then many things would be seen in another light, for however good the Latvian Henry is by measure of his days, he is anyhow partial and one-sided; Livs, Latvians and Estonians do not need any native history writer from those days, since it is obvious anyhow, what violence and injustice have been committed towards them.*⁷⁰

Seemingly conflicting emotions of Suhm may sometimes confuse the reader. Oscillation between criticism and admiration, sympathy and antipathy as Suhm described Danish kings, papal legates, the Swordbrethren or Teutonic Knights and even the native people in Old Livonia, victimised, yet bloodthirsty, turning

⁶⁶ **Suhm, P. F.** *Historie af Danmark*, 74; *Chronicles Henry*, only implies that it is vengeance for attacks on Danes.

⁶⁷ **Nyberg, T.** *Kreuzzug und Handel*, 185.

⁶⁸ **Skyum-Nielsen, N.** *Kvinde og Slave. Danmarkshistorie uden retouch.* København, 1971, 162, 221; **Lind, J. et al.** *Danske korstog*, 199.

⁶⁹ **Suhm, P. F.** *Historie af Danmark*, 342.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 533.

against each other as well as against the Danes. If Huitfeldt believed in a general Estonian preference for Danes, as compared to Germans, Suhm on the other hand, has no such illusions.⁷¹

By rephrasing an episode slightly that took place somewhere in Harjumaa in 1220, and derives from Henry's Livonian Chronicles, Suhm's aversion towards killings in the name of Christianity stands out: *Many from Harjumaa had hidden themselves together with their wives in subterranean caves, where the Christians suffocated them with smoke, and killed about 1000 of both sexes.*⁷² As it might be expected, the baptismal race between Danish and German priests is also ridiculed.⁷³ The freethinking but earnest Christian that Suhm seems to have been was appalled by the speedy baptism e.g. at Valjala on Saaremaa in 1227.⁷⁴

Danes and Swedes had finally stopped their many wars against each other, whereas Germans were appearing once again as the major opponent in the lifetime of P. F. Suhm. In the second half of the 18th century ideals of *Scandinavism* as a brotherhood of all Scandinavians arose and P. F. Suhm found it so important that he emphasised the peaceful periods between Denmark and Sweden.⁷⁵ In fact, it would also be more difficult for the 13th and 14th centuries to find peaceful periods between Denmark and the third Scandinavian country Norway or on the southern border with all the Northern German states.

One key to Suhm's renewal of Danish historiography on Old Livonia relied on his original studies of the sources; one of the most important, the Livonian Chronicle of Henry, proponent of Bishop Albert von Buxhövdén. For Danish authors this is a difficult source, due to his open ridicule of Danish accomplishments and bias towards Bishop Albert of Riga and towards Germans in general. Unfortunately, there is no way to avoid this chronicler for an author such as Suhm, who wanted to get as close to the eyewitnesses as possible. Still, Suhm cannot help himself, but laments repeatedly the lack of a comparable Danish chronicler in order to get a balanced image of history.⁷⁶

The closest Suhm gets to a Danish alternative source to balance the weight of the Chronicler Henry's interpretation was the works of Huitfeldt, published in 1600–1601. Critical as he must be towards the views of his predecessor, Suhm prefers to believe in Huitfeldt since he was once Denmark's Chancellor of the Realm,⁷⁷ in the question of whether or not Curonian bishops had had a seat in the Danish king's Council. Yet dealing with Huitfeldt in general, Suhm maintains a very critical stance.⁷⁸

⁷¹ Ibid., 555.

⁷² Ibid., 357.

⁷³ Ibid., 358.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 553.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 361.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 533, 555.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 365–366.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 683, 707.

Also the Chronicler Henry's devoted praise of Virgin Mary as the Patroness of Livonia is not only papist rubbish to a historian in a protestant country of the 18th century, but *...a big and daft superstition* after which Suhm adds *...and one may therefore fear that from time to time, in spite of his simple and plain narrative, he has wrongly presented several events also regarding the Danes, when the German Christians and the Livonian bishop's advantage required it.* Suhm went on: *One has got to repeat after him, as no better exists.* Hardly a trump card, but more as clutching at straws, came Suhm's tiny consolation: *...except when it is clear to see that he suppresses or twists something.* Comforting himself, he ends up saying that *...one must even so be happy to have him, as he is the only one /.../ and in addition, elaborate and detailed.*⁷⁹

Suhm as every other Danish historian took pride in emphasising how King Valdemar II enjoyed a firm support from the popes and the office of the Holy See,⁸⁰ but he also stressed the weak support among the King's vassals, apart from the Prince of Rügen *...to his own benefit* and the Count of Nordalbingia *...for the sake of kinship and personal affection ...All the rest were only lying in wait for a convenient opportunity to cast off their yoke. The Germans preferred to be subjected to the Emperor, who was far away, than to Denmark, which was next to them; and the Estonians loved yet too much their own freedom and ancient Pagan belief, for them voluntarily to be subjected to others and to adopt the new belief.*⁸¹

The Estonians' hatred against Danes⁸² or Danish killings among them, which the Chronicler Henry never missed an opportunity to mention, are earnestly referred to by Suhm. Suhm tried hard to be fair all around, regardless of faith or nationality, thus also to Germans, particularly those from Holstein, which in his lifetime were still subjects to the kings of Denmark:⁸³ *...not to mention that the foreign language [i.e. Danish] was intolerable to the Germans, as were the foreign [Danish] customs, so as how many that have hated the Danes and their kings, one may infer from the Low German Rhymed Chronicle... which ends with 1231.*

It is surprising to read how a historian from Protestant Denmark could be so critical in his descriptions of a Danish king's intentions to rule the entire Baltic Sea, and yet at the same time be so positive of papal rule. As he writes: *...From the letter of Pope Honorius of January 3rd [1225] to all the believers in Livonia and Prussia one sees that he took under the protection of St. Peter and of his own,*

⁷⁹ Ibid., 384–385.

⁸⁰ Popes did work against Danish interest from time to time, see **Suhm, P. F.** *Historie af Danmark*, 555. The papal legate William is even described as anti-Danish, so why did Suhm maintain that popes were supporters of Danish kings?; **Suhm, P. F.** *Historie af Danmark*, 532, 642. It has always been a favourite notion among Danish historians until the latest synthesis: **Lind, J. et al.** *Danske korstog*.

⁸¹ **Suhm, P. F.** *Historie af Danmark*, 430.

⁸² Ibid. Estonians against Danes 399–401, 509; Danes against Estonians, 358, 383.

⁸³ Ibid., 430–431.

*those who let themselves be converted in such a way that they would remain in their freedom and only serve Christ and show faithfulness towards the Roman Catholic Church. And Suhm goes on ...by the order of the Pope, and it was the Pope's intention to set these people free, so that no Germans, Danes, Poles or any other should have any say over them; certainly a commendable purpose, since to be under the Holy See, meant no more than the spiritual submission, that all Catholic Christians had to perform, and... (pay) a modest Peter's Penny, which nearly all countries had to pay...*⁸⁴

In all fairness, Suhm did not think any better of imperialism, if of German origin than if Danish and he mocked an Emperor, enfeoffing Old Livonia, even when it was never his either by traditional belonging or – as coined by P. F. Suhm – *Right by Conquest*.⁸⁵

In short, Suhm declared that Estonians had first right to the country by historical rights, Danes second by right of primary conquest, while Germans had no rights at all.⁸⁶

CONCLUSION

The history writing after 1800 saw renewed pride in a past, when Denmark had been more than a European dwarf, as first Norway, then Slesvig-Holstein were lost for the kingdom. Interest into the myths of a national emblem as the flag “Dannebrog” and popular national heroes such as King Valdemar II, and – at least to historians – also archbishop Andreas Sunesen increased during the 19th century. The 20th century has seen an emphasis on social and economic models, such as the importance of trade and merchants, then religious brotherhoods such as the Saint Canute Guilds, Franciscans, Dominicans and Cistercians and towards the end of the century colonialism and fight between civilisations have struck a cord among several historians.

The complicated and detailed work, compiling a reliable chronology, establishing a proper historical context in which to view the Danish involvement in Old Livonia, politically, militarily and today again religiously, has improved considerably since 1800. However, we believe that nearly every major favourite notion of Danish history writing on Medieval Estonia may be traced already in history writing before 1800.

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⁸⁴ Ibid., 510–511.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 575. In Danish *Erobringsret*.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 666.

SAXO GRAMMATICUSEST PETER FRIEDRICH SUHMINI

Eesti keskaja ajalugu läbi taanlaste silmade

Tyge ANDERSEN ja Priit RAUDKIVI

Eesti-Taani keskaegsete suhete siiani domineeriv narratiiv toetub suures osas baltisaksa ajalookirjutusele. See on paratamatult vaade ajaloole läbi kohalike sakslaste silmade. Samas on probleemistikul ka Taani-poolne vaatenurk, mille hinnangulised aktsendid erinevad baltlaste omadest oluliselt. Nüüdisaegse ajaloo-teadusliku sünteesi tasandil pole need kaks historiograafiat kokku saanud. Artiklis on analüüsitud taani ajalookirjutuse probleemiasetusi alates Saxo Grammaticusest kuni Peter Friedrich Suhmi 1808. aastal postuumselt ilmunud Taani ajaloo üld-käsitluseni. Seda perioodi taani historiograafias võib tinglikult nimetada annalist-likuks või siis kriitilise ajalooteaduse eelseks ajajärguks. Kuid samas on selle väärtuseks just nimelt ehedus ja kitsalt Taani-keskne vaatenurk. Mitmete Eesti kesk-aja ajaloo justkui ammuilma selgeks räägitud probleemide puhul on ilmselt vajalik taanlaste arvamusega tõsiselt arvestada või vähemalt kontrollida nende paikapida-vust, kõrvutades seisukohti meil käibel oleva historiograafilise pärandiga.