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Denmark and Early Christianity in Finland

Christianity among Finns prior to “The Age of Crusades”

Before I set out on my actual topic I wish to put that into a broader perspective, regarding the Christianization of Finland. Among scholars, especially linguists and archaeologists, it is well known that the Christian faith must have spread to Finland long before the period we traditionally label the “Age of Crusades” (c. 1150–1350).

The linguistic evidence consists of a number fundamental Christian expressions, like *pakana* (‘pagan’), *pappi* (‘priest’), *risti* (‘cross’), *raamattu* (‘bible’), *rääbkä* (‘sin’) and, perhaps, a few others, which are thought to have been derived from the Church-Slavonic rite. On linguistic grounds at least some of these can hardly be dated later than the middle of the 12th century.¹ That this vocabulary at a later date should have replaced similar terms supplied by the Latin mission, as sometimes suggested, is hardly conceivable. Furthermore, a similar vocabulary is also partly preserved in Estonian and, as we know from Henry of Livonia, writing c. 1227, at least one Finnish priest worked with Henry in Estonia.² Therefore it is natural if an already existing Finnish Christian vocabulary was drawn upon in Estonia.³

For this vocabulary to have survived the Latin mission during the “Age of Crusades,” a substantial number of Christians must already have been present in the region, when it was first targeted by the crusades from the West: that is that part of present-day Finland we now label Finland Proper (Varsinais Suomi or Egentliga Finland) and, presumably, first of all its northern part, Kalanti and Satakunta. This is precisely the region in which archaeologists have uncovered the most extensive evidence of Christian presence already in the 11th century. Most important in that respect is perhaps the fact that Finns during the 11th century in this region “began to bury their dead in separate inhumation cemeteries” some with belfries.⁴ This indicate the existence of some kind of church organization a century prior to the crusades to the region.

Here I shall not go into details on of how this came about. This will be done in a different context.⁵ Let me just say that, while we do not encounter any trace of a Russian Orthodox mission or even presence in this part of Finland,⁶ it is here we uncover Viking Age finds similar to finds in Scandinavia. This is often explained by the proximity to Sweden. The combination of a Church-Slavonic rite and Scandinavian-type finds, however, rather suggests influence of Varangians, i.e. mainly Scandinavians – but not excluding the presence of Finns – travelling between

Anglo-Saxon England and Byzantium. We know from the Rus'-Byzantine treaties from the first part of the 10th century that Varangians in Kiev by 944 had become Christians to such an extent that Christianity had acquired a semi-official status.⁷ These Varangian Christians, living among a Slavonic majority would as a matter of course have drawn on the already existing Church-Slavonic rite. Their influence in western Finland could explain both the Church-Slavonic vocabulary and Scandinavian-type archaeological finds.

If a substantial number of Christians and a kind of church organization were already present in Finland Proper, when it was hit by the crusades, then, what were these really about. This question will also be further elaborated in another context.⁸ Here I will just venture the opinion, that – similar to the so-called Wendish Crusades from 1147 onwards – it had more to do with forcing Christians, not directly subordinated to the Roman Church of the Reform Papacy, to conform with its wishes to unify and centralize the Western Church under the pope, just like the entire crusading movement can be seen in this light. In recent years this papal policy and its implementation in the periphery has often been labelled Europeanization, presumably under the influence of present-day attempts to unify Europe.⁹

The First Swedish Crusade to Finland

Thus it appears that the First Swedish Crusade and the ensuing Danish involvement had less to do with bringing Christianity to Finns in Finland Proper than to incorporate them and their region into the Western Church. On the other hand there is no reason to doubt that the Swedish crusade did take place, as is sometimes done. Although the immediate sources of the crusade, the Lives of Saints Erik and Henrik, are too weak for us to pin-point a date of the Crusade based on them, the famous *Gravis admodum* letter from Pope Alexander III from 1171/72 does confirm the Swedish involvement prior to that date.¹⁰ Furthermore, Pope Alexander's September Letters, of which *Gravis admodum* is one, also, in their entirety, indicate that this involvement forms part of papal crusading policy. Therefore the Swedish crusading engagement in Finland should not be minimized.¹¹ On the other hand it is doubtful whether it was just one expedition as indicated by St Erik's Life and whether it necessarily took place in the period in which he was sole king of Sweden, hence the dates 1155/57. We know far too little of events in Sweden to exclude that Erik earlier had royal status in some part of Sweden or that he was already the unnamed earl or king, mentioned as *kniaz'* in the Novgorod chronicles, who together with a likewise nameless bishop in 1142 was on expedition across the sea.¹²

Danish crusades to Finland - historiography, sources and concepts

It is against this background the Danish involvement has to be seen. This involvement has not attracted much scholarly attention. In preparing this paper I have only been able to record four scholars who, over a period of almost a century, have focused directly on the Danish crusades to Finland, beginning with a couple of articles by

J. W. Ruuth, first, in 1910, in Finnish, and a year later in Swedish.

It was indeed Ruuth who introduced the Danish chapter on the Christianization of Finland, when, in opposition to his predecessors, he argued that the information in the Danish Annals on two expeditions to Finland could not be discarded as result of mistakes in reading or interpretation, so that Wenden or Winland was meant rather than Finland.¹³

Later, in 1923, Juhani Rinne published an article on the Danish crusades, based on his fortification studies,¹⁴ and, most importantly in 1952, Gunvor Kerkkonen, elaborating on Rinne's results, wrote about the ports of the Danish crusades in Finland.¹⁵ Finally, a Danish scholar, Ervin Nielsen, prompted by a recent study of the Danish annals, wrote a small article with the probing title *Have the Danes performed crusades to Finland?*¹⁶

If we start counting sources that explicitly mention Danish involvement in Finland we get even less than four, namely three. These are two entries in Danish annals or yearbooks and one letter from Pope Innocent III, often referred to by its initial words as *Ex tuarum*. In view of this scarcity one might, indeed, be tempted to deny any significant Danish contribution to Christianity in Finland. However, that is not the line I am going to take in this paper. Moreover we can, in fact, add one more source to the three, *Historia de Projectione Danorum in Hierosolymam*, which explicitly refers to Danish activity in Finland.¹⁷

Historia de Projectione Danorum in Hierosolymam is an almost contemporary account of a crusade to the Holy Land by five Danish and Norwegian aristocrats. It was a result of a compelling speech by Esbern Snare, the brother of the Danish Archbishop Absalon, after he, the Danish King Knud VI, and other notabilities, celebrating Christmas at Odense in 1187, had heard the disturbing news of the Muslim conquest of Jerusalem that same year.

In the hope that some of those present would now take the Cross for the Holy Land, Esbern, in his speech, first praised the good old days of Danish deeds during the Viking Age before he turned to more recent exploits in Finland, Sambia and Pomerania. Since this text was written no later than 1202 and probably already during the late 1190s, it does seem to confirm Danish activity in Finland along with the Danish crusades to other regions in the Baltic.

With this addition to the sources, there can be no doubt that parts of Finland were indeed targets of Danish crusades in the years around 1200.

Before we take a closer look at the sources I have mentioned, a few further considerations on the chosen theme is needed. Thus it has a slightly anachronistic ring to it to talk about "Denmark" and the Christianity in "Finland". First it is necessary to avoid to throw present-day concepts like "Denmark" and "Finland" back to a period when their meaning and significance was quite different from today.

I have already briefly touched on the problem concerning the name "Finland" and the expansion in its meaning during the Middle Ages that made it necessary already for our 18th-century predecessors to construct concepts like Varsinais Suomi/Egentliga Finland about the region that was originally Finland in the 12th-13th century. To this I will briefly return later.

Next, concerning the concept “Denmark”, we have at least to distinguish between the Danish kingdom and the Danish Church; and with regard to the Danish Church, which, in our context, is first of all its archbishop: he may act in several roles. He may act as head of the Danish Church as such, but he may also act as primate of the Swedish Church¹⁸ or, indeed, on behalf of Rome as papal legate. In all of these roles he may act independently of the Danish king, but mostly he would act in accord with royal power, especially after the Danish kings in the late 1180s began to turn their attention from the south coast of the Baltic Sea towards its eastern and northern regions.

The Danish Crusades and Finland

The Danish Archbishop and the September Letters

Let us now consider the Danish involvement in Finland. Although the first two explicit references to Danish activity in Finland are to be found in the Danish Annals from 1191 onwards, we have actually to go some further twenty years back in time to find the earliest recorded evidence of Danish interests in Finland as part of a plan to extend crusading to the regions around the Gulf of Finland, that is to the so-called September Letters, already mentioned, from 1171 or 1172.

These are often thought of as a corpus because the altogether nine letters are issued over a short period between September 7 and September 17 by Pope Alexander III to various recipients in Scandinavia, concerning a number of different issues. They do, however, themselves form part of a larger corpus, consisting of a number of letters, not issued by the pope, but linked to one another by subject matter and also linked by being preserved as part of one and the same collection of letters, named after Petrus Cellensis. These were either written to or written by Peter, or were, as Pope Alexander’s letters, somehow of particular interest to Peter. Peter, one time Abbot of La Celle, later of St Remi i Reims before becoming Bishop of Chartres, was a close friend of Archbishop Eskil of Lund. Jointly they supported one Fulko, who had been invested as monk in La Celle by Peter and later ordained bishop of the Estonians by Eskil, presumably during his exile in France in the 1160s.¹⁹ The reason for Pope Alexander’s letters to have been included in Peter’s collection, although he was not a recipient, must be that they most of them somehow related to the preparation of Fulko’s mission to our region.²⁰

As regards the September Letters as such, although Archbishop Eskil is not mentioned in all letters and only appears as joint recipient of one, there can be no doubt that these letters were all procured on his initiative. As Danish Archbishop he was also primate of the Swedish Church and he was the only centrally placed Scandinavian ecclesiastic, who, during his long exile, had established close official and personal relations to a number of the leading churchmen of his time, including Pope Alexander.²¹

Only one of the September Letters explicitly concerns Finland, the *Gravis admo-*

dum, dated September 9. Three others, in addition to *Gravis admodum*, directly or indirectly have to do with planned crusades in the region, all in support of Fulko. One, also dated September 9 and addressed to the archbishop of Trondheim and the former bishop of Stavanger, asks them to let a monk of Estonian birth, now in a Norwegian monastery, join Fulko.²² Two days later, September 11, Pope Alexander issued a genuine crusading bull to kings, princes and other Christians among Danes, Norwegians, Swedes and Goths against the ferocious Estonians *and other pagans in those regions*.²³ On September 17 Pope Alexander adds a letter to all Christians in Denmark to support Fulko in his effort to convert people in his [Estonian] diocese.²⁴ It would seem that these letters, as a whole, were procured in order to further the Christianization of pagans on both sides of the Gulf of Finland. In contrast to later crusades in the Baltic – not least those that were dispatched from Denmark, it seems that this was an entirely ecclesiastical initiative.

Based on this analysis of the September Letters, it would seem that the Danish Church, through its archbishop and primate of the Swedish Church, was already then an interested party in the Christianization of Finland. In contrast to the Danish Church, the Danish king, still fully occupied by the Wendish Crusade, had so far shown no interest in this part of the Baltic region. That is at least one good reason why the *Gravis admodum* letter only mentions Swedish forces in connection in Finland. It is, however, important to stress that the actual crusading bull for the region, the Pope's September 11 letter, addressed as it is to kings, princes and other Christians among Danes, Norwegians, Swedes and Goths, demonstrates that crusading in the region was not intended as national enterprises in any modern sense but as a Christian enterprise.

Nevertheless, there was always a practical, secular side to the crusades. Even though this is not mentioned in any of these letters. This was already spelled out, when an early crusade was called for in the Wendish region in 1108, if only on the individual level. Thus future crusaders against the Wends were enticed to take the Cross with promises of landed possessions in the region. Who eventually were to rule the region, if conquered, was not mentioned.²⁵ From Livonia, where many agents of the crusades were active simultaneously, we know how complicated decisions about secular overlordship could become. That was undoubtedly why the Danish king, Valdemar II, when he procured a crusading bull in 1218, made sure that it contained a clause, promising the rule of conquered territories to him.²⁶ However, as long as only one ruler and one church was active in a region, there can be little doubt that they, with papal support, could incorporate conquered regions under their rule, and that would also apply to the Swedes in Finland as long as they alone were active there.

The First Royal Danish Crusade to Finland

Some 20 years later that had changed. Now we find the first of two entries in the Danish annals that explicitly mentions Danish expeditions to Finland. The first is in the majority of annals entered under the year 1191 and it simply tells us, in its

presumed earliest version, that the “lething (or levy of ships) sailed to Finland and won the country”.²⁷ The lething was at the time undoubtedly a state institution led by the king, who in one of the annals explicitly is said to have sent the expedition,²⁸ and therefore we have to consider this a state operation. Having secured the results obtained during the Wendish Crusade after the conquest of Pomerania, the Danish king had, obviously, now turned his attention towards the eastern and northern parts of the Baltic Sea. As such the expedition to Finland was followed few years later, in 1196 or 1197, by a similar expedition to Estonia, this time explicitly led by King Knud VI himself.²⁹

... and a Family Crusade?

The second entry in the annals is of an entirely different nature. It relates how “Bishop Anders and his brothers led an army into Finland”.³⁰ These were the famous Sunesons of the dominating Hvide dynasty, nephews of the brothers Esbern Snare and Archbishop Absalon. Anders was Archbishop Anders Suneson of Lund, another brother, Peder Suneson, was bishop of Roskilde and chancellor to the Danish king, while the remaining four brothers, Johannes, Lars, Jakob and Ebbe belonged to the highest secular aristocracy in Denmark.³¹

Is this a crusade by the Danish Archbishop or is it a family affair? The question naturally comes up, because this is only the first of three occasions, where the Suneson brothers are reported to carry out expeditions outside Denmark without any mention of royal involvement. The second time is in 1206, when Archbishop Anders with his brothers led a large army to the Revalia region in Estonia.³² The last time we simply hear that two of the brothers were killed at the battle at Lena in Sweden in 1208, in which Erik Knutsson defeated King Sverker, forcing him into exile in Denmark.³³ At least in the last case, it does seem primarily to have been a family affair, because the King Sverker had been married to a daughter of one of the Sunesons killed in the battle, Ebbe Suneson.

This does not exclude that the Danish king may have looked favourably on this family link. And as far as the Estonian expedition is concerned, it would seem, on the basis of Henry of Livonia, that this expedition was supported by the king.³⁴ This entanglement in family, state and church matters was accentuated, when a new Swedish archbishop had to be appointed, after Archbishop Olov Lambatunga had died in 1206 at the latest. King Sverker then managed to get his chaplain, Valerius, appointed to the archbishopric in 1207. And at least initially Valerius followed Sverker in his Danish exile after the defeat in 1208.³⁵

Therefore all the activities of the Danish Archbishop and his brothers, both in Finland and Estonia, may have been carried out in all of his three capacities, leader of the Danish Church, primate of the Swedish Church and Papal legate.³⁶ It is true that Archbishop Anders first in 1204 stepped into his predecessors' legatine office, but that was probably only a formality. Thus Pope Innocent had already prior to the formal appointment as legate charged the Danish archbishop with collecting the Peter's Pence, that is a tax primarily to be used for crusades, not only in Denmark but

also in Sweden,³⁷ and at least from that time onwards much of papal policy in the Baltic region became channelled through Anders. Therefore we cannot as a matter of course take for granted that the expedition by the Danish archbishop and his brothers to Finland was part of an attempt to further exclusively Danish interest in Finland.

Pope Innocent III's Ex tuarum 1209

The same may very well apply to the last of the three sources I mentioned, the *Ex tuarum* letter from Innocent III to Anders Suneson, dated 30 October 1209, in which the pope, responding to a letter from Anders, authorized him by dispensation to ordain a person, born out of wedlock, as bishop to the vacant See in Finland. Judging from the wording of the letter the See had already been vacant for a lengthy period.³⁸ The letter is often seen exclusively in a Finnish context, sometimes in connection with attempts to reconstruct the life and career of the notorious Bishop Thomas. It does, however, have to be seen in context with a number of other papal letters.

As to its contents *Ex tuarum* has parallels in both earlier and later letters from Innocent to Anders. Thus, in January 1206, Pope Innocent authorized Anders to ordain a bishop in a town he might be able to win for the Christian faith, while simultaneously warning anybody who might try to obstruct the archbishop.³⁹ In time this authorization coincides with Archbishop Anders and his brothers' expedition to Estonia. The bishopric in question is therefore thought to have been intended for Saaremaa or somewhere else in Livonia or Estonia. In 1213, Pope Innocent then authorized Anders to appoint bishops in Sakkala and Hugenhusen in Estonia.⁴⁰ Together these letters demonstrate the crucial position Innocent at the time assigned to Anders and the archbishopric of Lund in the Baltic region.

More importantly, based on its dating, we can see that the *Ex tuarum* letter is part of a series of altogether four letters issued by Innocent III to or on behalf of the Danish king and church. In the papal administration we often see such series of letters, which are interlinked and conceived according to shared local and papal policy, whether or not the recipient or recipients is one and the same person or group of persons. Such a group of letters was the September letters in 1171/72, the same must apply to these four 1209-letters.

Day after *Ex tuarum* the pope responded to a wish from the Danish King Valdemar II "once more" to depart on a crusade. This he did by first issuing a crusading bull to the king, so that he could fight paganism and "expand the borders Christendom".⁴¹ Quoting this letter, Pope Innocent then issued a letter to all Christian Danes exhorting them to support King Valdemar in this.⁴² Finally, again referring to a wish from King Valdemar, the Pope sent a letter to the German emperor, Otto IV, telling him not to allow attacks on Denmark while the king was on crusade, as it had happened last time the king went on crusade.⁴³

There can be no doubt that all these letters were issued on request from the Danish king and archbishop. As is often the case, these crusading bulls do not give any clue to the immediate target of the intended crusade. The same was the situation, when

Pope Honorius III in 1218, again responding to King Valdemar's request, issued a crusading bull to the king.⁴⁴ Because this bull was next summer followed by the Danish conquest of Northern Estonia it is often seen as authorizing precisely this crusade. But both in 1209 and 1218 King Valdemar was engaged on several fronts of the Baltic crusades not least in Prussia.⁴⁵ Therefore it was probably by intention that no precise target, geographical or ethnic, was mentioned.

That these letters are issued now must have been the result of a Danish policy decision, followed by a dispatch of envoys to the Curia, where this policy was accepted, at least to the extent expressed in the letters. The important question in our context is now, how closely the *Ex tuarum* letter was linked to the King's wish for the crusading bulls. The fact that the request for the ordainment of a bishop to the Finnish See seems to have been made only after a lengthy vacancy, does seem to suggest that there was a link. And that Finland was somehow included in King Valdemar's plan for the imminent crusade.

The assumed Danish interest in Finland at this time finds further support in another letter Pope Innocent issued a few years later, 4 April 1212. The letter is formally addressed to Archbishop Anders Suneson, who undoubtedly requested it from the pope, but indirectly it is also addressed to the Swedish Archbishop Valerius.

As we saw, Valerius had been closely linked to King Sverker and through him to the Suneson brothers, apart from also having Archbishop Anders Suneson as his primate. Presumably he followed Sverker in his exile in Denmark after the defeat at Lena in 1208 and he may also have followed Sverker in his attempt to regain the throne, when Sverker was killed at Gestilren in 1210. After the battle the victorious Erik Knutsson was more or less undisputed king of Sweden. A position he further secured in 1210 by marrying a sister of King Valdemar II. At this point Valerius presumably returned to Sweden, where, it seems, he engaged on a church policy more independent of his Danish primate. At least, that is what Pope Innocent's letter suggests.

Initially, the pope confirms Anders in his capacity as papal legate in his effort to convert neighbouring pagans. But then in an abrupt change of tone Pope Innocent turns to Archbishop Valerius and his suffragan bishops, instructing them together with other bishops and prelates in Denmark and Sweden to bear Anders' legate power in mind, so that he with their help can continue the work he has begun converting pagans. Furthermore, Pope Innocent gives Anders a free hand in how he sets about this work.⁴⁶ It is difficult not to see this letter as result of a conflict between Anders and Valerius in their shared field of mission in or before 1212. Anders has then appealed to Pope Innocent, who gave him his unequivocal support. Since, so far as we know, the only field of mission shared by the Swedish and Danish Churches was Finland, it does seem that there was at the time a conflict between the two Scandinavian churches in Finland. To which extent this conflict may have been brought about by pressure upon Valerius from the new king, we cannot say.

Let me sum up the argument so far. Despite the scarcity of sources in this period we can conclude that there has been a continuous interest in Finland from the Danish Church ever since the 1170s and from the Danish kings from the 1190s onwards.

To some extent this interest can be explained by the authority vested in the Danish Archbishop as primate of the Swedish Church and as papal legate to the region. Until the collapse of the Danish Baltic Empire in 1223, it seems that successive popes saw the Danish archbishops as the main executors of papal policy in the region, mainly with the help of the Danish kings, who likewise in several cases received strong support from the Curia. In fact, as crusading got under way in the Baltic region with the aim of expanding western Christianity, it seems that the Curia mainly relied on Denmark as the strongest and most stable power in the region. On the other hand, with the possible exception of the incident in 1212, there does not seem to have been any serious conflict between Swedish and Danish interests in Finland in this period. Therefore, when Kerkkonen almost by instinct reads a Danish-Swedish rivalry into this period's crusades,⁴⁷ she seems to be more influenced by anachronistic notions than the sources and the contexts, in which they have to be interpreted.

Finland in Danish crusade strategy

As we have seen, the Danish Church, on its own behalf or on behalf of the Western Church as such, had been engaged in the conversion or integration in the Church of Finns since the 1170s. At that time, however, only Swedish secular rulers had the military resources in the region necessary to react to this interest. Only in the late 1150s, after several decades of civil war between pretenders to the throne, had a strong, unified and centralizing kingship emerged in Denmark. It immediately engaged itself in crusading, but had, by tradition or immediate need, concentrated its military resources on the Wendish Crusade along the south coast of the Baltic Sea.

This campaign had been successfully completed by the mid-1180s. Only now could the Danish kings turn their attention to more distant regions of the Baltic Sea. A sign of this is the early expeditions to Finland and Estonia in the 1190s. By then Denmark was well on way to become the dominating power in the Baltic region. As such it emerged from the early years of the thirteenth century through its involvement both in the Prussian and the Livonian Crusades and it reached its most powerful position in the short period 1221–23, when the Danish king, Valdemar II the Victorious, had brought almost the entire southern and eastern coastline of the Baltic Sea from the Slesvig in Denmark to River Narva, bordering on Novgorod, under his control.

A constant aspiration of Danish policy from the late 1190s to 1219 was to establish Danish control in Estonia and expand its power from that stronghold. Apart from a wish to expand Christianity and at the same time gain influence over the lucrative trade on Novgorod, that probably had to do with Denmark's supremacy as a naval power. It was relatively easy for the Danish kings to move forces over long distances and sustain communications with distant strongholds. Precisely communications were the main weakness of the German mission in Livonia, a weakness King Valdemar several times made use of by blockading Lübeck, the main port of embarkation of crusaders, bound for Livonia. This was the main reason, why Bishop Albert of Riga in 1221 grudgingly had to acknowledge Danish overlordship over all Livonia.⁴⁸

How does the Danish involvement in Finland fit in to this? We have to a certain extent denied that the Danish crusades to Finland was an attempt to extend Danish influence in an area, in which Sweden was already engaged, as part of a traditional contest for power, which we are used to read in to Danish-Swedish relations. Rather, at least the leadership of the Danish Church, supported the Swedish effort, even though, vis-à-vis the Swedish Church, it saw itself as the ecclesiastical leader of this effort. But does that mean that Finland as such did not play a role in the overall strategy of the Danish crusades in the region? Hardly, because there is no doubt that the Swedes prior to the so-called Second Crusade to Tavastia concentrated their resources on Finland Proper, we do not know which part of Finland was targeted by the Danish crusades.

However, in an often ignored article, the Finnish historian Gunvor Kerkkonen, in 1952, advanced the opinion that, if the Danish expeditions mentioned in the annals had had some success, they should have left some traces. Such traces, she claimed, did in fact exist and she gathered a number of indications to the effect that the ports of the Danish crusades to Finland were to be found along the coast of what later became known as Nyland/Uusimaa. Since no written sources from Finland has been preserved from that period she had, of course, to rely on a variety of other sources, place names, local traditions of various kind. Combining Juhani Rinne's dating of the hillforts at Sibbesborg (in Sibbo/Sipoo) and Borgå (Porvoo) to the time of the Danish crusades with botanical observations at both places by botanist Bror Pettersson, Kerkkonen saw these two fortifications as possible Danish strongholds.⁴⁹ With regard to Borgå she found further support in the peculiar Finnish rendition, Porvoo, which even to day sounds like a Finnish rendition of a Danish pronounced Borgå. Specialists in all three languages concerned, whom she consulted, agreed that the phonetic changes in Swedish and Danish concerning the *g* in Scandinavian *borg* (castle) had happened already by the time of the crusades. Therefore, a Finnish rendition of a Danish spoken *borg* would have had the *v*-sound, while the Swedish pronunciation would have corresponded to Finnish *puri*, like in the slightly later Viipuri.⁵⁰

To this Kerkkonen added various types of toponymy first of all contrasting ethnonyms, mainly known from 16th-century sources or later. Some of these, like Danskarby, Danskarudd along the Nyland coast, explicitly indicates an early presence of Danes. Others like a number of Svinös along the same coast, usually interpreted as island (ö) of the Swedes (svear), implicitly testify to the presence of another Nordic ethnic group that produced the name. It cannot have been a Finnish population. They would have produced a *Ruotsaari*, like Russarö in the archipelago further to the west, where a Finnish population similarly contrasted Swedes and Danes by, in close proximity, producing a Jussarö (<*Jutsaari*+*ö*, i.e. island of the Jutlanders of Denmark, known c. 1300 as Juxaræ).⁵¹ Therefore there must have been a period when Swedes and Danes both lived and moved along the coastal region of Nyland/Uusimaa.⁵²

One reason why Kerkkonen's article has gone fairly unnoticed is, perhaps, that the most tangible part, Rinne's dating of the fortification at Borgå, has been refuted by later archaeologists, although systematic excavations have yet to be made. Thus

Torsten Edgren, after rather limited excavations in 1971, on one hand found a layer of coal and soot, C14 dated to 830 +/- 90 AD, and on the other a number of arrowheads dated to c. 1300. Therefore he tended to discard the possibility of a Danish phase in the history of the Borgå hillfort.⁵³ However, considering the limited scope of the excavations and the fact that a Danish presence at most would have lasted some twenty years prior to 1223, it may seem premature to exclude the possibility of a Danish phase.

Later Carl Jacob Gardberg, accepting Edgren's conclusions, further dismissed the idea of linking Borgå with the Danish crusades with the argument that the concept "Finland" did not yet in that early period extend to this region.⁵⁴ That may, of course, to a certain extent be a valid argument. On the other hand, which name would Danes or Swedes, expanding Western Christianity from Finland Proper, apply to this more or less uninhabited part of present-day Finland, which only later got its present name New Land (Nyland/Uusimaa)? Would they not as a matter of course extend the name Finland to this nameless region; and is that not precisely how the name Finland was eventually extended to all of present-day Finland?

Irrespective of the possible Danish link to the hillfort at Borgå, Kerkkonen was undoubtedly right in pointing to the coastline of the future Nyland as an area of particular interest to Denmark. This is proved by the text we know as "The Danish Itinerary", a description of partly parallel navigation routes in the Baltic Sea from Danish territory in present-day Sweden to present-day Tallinn in Estonia. The Itinerary was c. 1300 entered in a famous manuscript, the *Codex ex-Holmiensis A41*. This codex contains a number of texts pertaining to the reign of Valdemar II, of which several are closely linked to Danish crusading activity. That applies to the two lists on settlements in Estonia, a list of provinces linking the crusading areas of Prussia and Livonia, the so-called List of Brothers, and, immediately preceding "The Danish Itinerary", a description of the navigation route from Ribe in Denmark to Acre in the Holy Land.⁵⁵

The last part of the Danish Itinerary leads eastwards from the outskirts of the Stockholm Archipelago, through the southern part of the Åland Archipelago and, finally, along the South Finnish Archipelago before turning south to "Ræuelburgh". Apart from the fact that the routes end in Reval, which after the Danish conquest in 1219 became the centre of Danish rule in Estonia, it is the section of the itinerary that describes the route in the South Finnish Archipelago that is important with regard to the Danish interests in Finland. It begins at Hangö and reads,

et de Hangethe que finnice dicitur Cuminpe usque Lowicsund. ii. [ukæsio⁵⁶] Inde usque Karienkaskæ. i. Inde usque Iuxaræ. ii. Inde Horinsaræ quod danice dicitur Hestø. ii. Inde usque Purkal iii. et ad hanc insulam de Hangethe iter uersus orientem. et aliquantulum tamen uersus aquilonem. Item de Purkal usque Narigeth ultra mare Estonum. vi. Inde usque Karlso. i. et dimidia. Inde usque Ræuelburgh dimidia. Et notandum quod de Purkalæ usque Ræuelburgh uelificandum est inter australem plagam. et orientalem.⁵⁷

In this section the description from Hangö to Porkala enumerates altogether six

points partly in the archipelago partly on what became the western coastline of future Nyland: Hangethe, Lowicsund, Karienkaskæ, Iuxaræ, Horiensaræ, Purkal. Twice the author or compiler of the description adds parallel names. First, that the Scandinavian Hangethe in Finnish, *finnice*, is called Cuminpe, next, that the Finnish name Horinsaræ in Danish, *danice*, is called Hestø – a correct translation. It is obvious that our author/compiler was a person who understood both Danish and Finnish and that he was familiar with the topography and toponymy both in the archipelago and on the coast of the Finnish mainland. The fact that Jussarö (Iuxaræ) already appears in Finnish form shows that it must already have had a long tradition both as an important point in Danish navigation in the Baltic Sea and as a point where Danes and Finns have met.

Taken together this in itself indicates that Danes had a particular interest in this part of the Finnish coast. However, apart from the importance Reval assumes by appearing as the end point in the description, the importance of Estonia to our author/compiler is further emphasized by the fact that the sea, we now know as the Gulf of Finland, to Danish crusaders was known as the Sea of the Estonians (Mare Estonum).

If the route outlined in the itinerary really was the main line of communication between Denmark and Estonia, then the coastline from Hangö to Porkkala would be of the utmost strategic importance for Danish Estonia. Consequently, the Danes would have had an obvious interest, if not a need, to have strongholds along the coast and, perhaps, some kind of control within the mainland, not least where the route passed regions that were still pagan. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that this was indeed the part of Finland targeted by the Danish crusades. It is also reasonable to assume that these crusades were in fact part of a wider Danish strategy that would facilitate operations out of Estonia both towards the south and the east.

However, to the extent there was a Danish presence in the form of strongholds or even colonization in the region of future Nyland, at least the strongholds would not have survived the general collapse of the Danish Baltic Empire in 1223, when King Valdemar II and his son were kidnapped and brought safely out of reach of Danish retaliation. The price of their release was the dismantling of the empire, and the early attempt to restore former power failed, when the Danes lost the battle at Bornhöved in 1227. By then even Danish rule in Estonia had been eliminated. Only as result of the Treaty of Stensby in June 1238 with the Teutonic Order were the Danes able once more to establish their rule in Estonia. By then, however, the situation in the region had changed completely. With no strong power to act through and many internal conflicts among the Christian powers, not least in Livonia, Pope Gregory IX had himself taken charge and tried to steer events through legates appointed from his own entourage and no longer from the region.

Through the Stensby Treaty he obviously tried to get the Teutonic Order and the Danish king to collaborate south of the Gulf of Finland, while Sweden, with the crusading bull against Häme/Tavastia in 1237, followed by the so-called Second Swedish Crusade in 1238/39 and the further raid into the Neva in 1240, was to act north of the Gulf. That meant that there was no longer any part for Denmark to play

in Finland, and in any case with the death of King Valdemar II in 1241, Denmark lost the chance to regain the force it once had. At the crucial moment for Swedish expansion into present-day Finland the balance of power between Denmark and Sweden had changed for a period in Sweden's favour. Although the stages in the Swedish colonization of what now became Nyland have been debated, it does seem to have intensified after the Second Crusade. One incentive to this may have been to remove any threat Danish settlements may have posed. In any case it is only about this time we begin to spot a rivalry between Denmark and Sweden in the region around the Gulf of Finland, which came to a head when Sweden launched its so-called Third Crusade into Karelia and Novgorodian territory.⁵⁸

Conclusion

Despite the extreme scarcity of sources, there can be no doubt that Denmark at an early stage in the late 12th and early 13th century played an important role, not so much, perhaps, in Christianizing the Finns, than as a vehicle in incorporating Finland Proper and its inhabitants into the Western Church. At first the dominant figure in this process was the Danish archbishop as primate of the Swedish Church and papal legate to the region. Later the Danish king stepped in as the most powerful instrument of the crusading movement in the region, closely cooperating with the Danish archbishop in all his three capacities. At that stage, the Danish involvement in Finland, concentrated to the coastal region of future Nyland, was closely linked to a strategy that would have made Danish Estonia into a stronghold that could support further expansion of the Western Church into areas still pagan, or, as it eventually transpired, into Russian Orthodox territory. These aspirations were, however, cut short by the speedy collapse of the Danish Baltic Empire in 1223.

For a number of reasons the Danish involvement in Finland has attracted little attention. One reason has been that the Danish involvement in Finland had little permanence. As it turned out it was an episode that, despite its passing importance, left few traces. Another reason has been that historiography in all relevant countries has been more influenced by what was to come than a wish to view events from a contemporary perspective. In Swedish and Finnish historiography, both strongly influenced by much later and even recent events, it was the 5-6 centuries of Finland as part of Sweden and, hence, the West that was important. It led scholars to view the crusading period and the integration of Finland into Sweden more as a Swedish, national project than an ecclesiastical, ideological project. Danish historiography, a little ashamed of what was seen as untimely imperialism, has only reluctantly made a cursory note of the conquest of Estonia in 1219, concentrating on and celebrating the miraculous, if mythical, appearance of the banner Dannebrog. In this, Finland had no role to play.

In all three countries it has largely been overlooked that agents of the crusades, to a far greater extent than we imagine to day, saw themselves as agents of the Western Church in its attempt to convert and unify Christians and pagans alike. To them the

ethnicity, to which they belonged, or, to a lesser extent, the secular power, under which they served, played a much lesser role than they do to us.

Footnotes

¹ Latest discussion by Jan Ivar Bjørnflaten, Chronologies of the Slavicization of Northern Russia Mirrored by Slavic Loanwords in Finnic and Baltic, *The Slavicization of the Russian North. Mechanisms and Chronology*. Ed. by Juhani Nuorluoto, *Slavica Helsingiensia* 27, Helsinki 2006, pp. 50-77.

² Petrus Kaikewalde de Vinlandia, *Heinrici Chronicon Livoniae*, ed. Albert Bauer, Darmstadt 1959. Ausgewählte Quellen zur Deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters. Freiherr vom Stein-Gedächtnisausgabe. XXIV, p. 254.

³ Again we have the famous Finnish phrase in Henry's Latin text, "Laula! Laula! Pappi", *Heinrici Chronicon Livoniae*, p. 178.

⁴ A handy overview is given by Pirkko-Liisa Lehtosalo-Hilander in, *From Viking to crusader: the Scandinavians and Europe 800-1200*, eds Else Roesdahl and David M. Wilson. New York 1992, pp. 62-71, quotation, p. 66. See also Paula Purhonen, *Kristinuskon saapumisesta Suomeen* (pp. 184-97: English summary: *On arrival of Christianity in Finland. A Study in the archaeology of Religion*), Helsinki 1998.

⁵ John H Lind, Varangian Christianity – a viable concept?, to be published with *Proceedings of the symposium Christianization in the North. Theology and Archaeology*, held in Nov. 2005 at University of Southern Denmark.

⁶ Some scholars have pointed to the assumed Russian origin of the Finnish parallel name Turku to Swedish Åbo, and seen that as evidence of an original Russian merchant settlement. Therefore, they see that as explanation of the Church-Slavonic vocabulary, see e.g. Kauko Pirinen in, *Suomen kirkon historia 1: Keskiäikä ja uskonpuhdistuksen aika*. Porvoo 1991, p. 32. The implication of such a view would be that Russian merchants had settlements with a marketplace labelled "torg" all over Scandinavia, which is, of course, not the case. Rather the term "torg" of presumed Mongolian-Turkic origin spread within a (Varangian) commercial network which comprised Scandinavia, coastal areas of Finland and Rus'. My view on the Turku-issue has not changed since I touched upon these problems in, John Lind, Varæger, nemtser og novgoroder år 1188. Hvor var Choržek og Novotoržec? *Historisk Tidsskrift for Finland* 1981, pp. 145-77.

⁷ John H Lind, Varangians in Europe's Eastern and Northern Periphery. The Christianization of North- and Eastern Europe c. 950-1050 – A Plea for a Comparative Study, <http://www.ennenjanyt.net/4-04/lind.html>.

⁸ John H Lind, The "First" Finland Crusade – A Part of the Second Crusade, to be published by Brepols together with papers from the section, *The Second Crusade in Perspective*, at the *International Medieval Congress 10-13 July 2006* at Leeds University.

⁹ For a recent survey of papal policy, see, Christian Krötzel, *Pietarin ja Paavalin nimissä. Paavit, lähetystyö ja Euroopan muotoutuminen (500–1250)*, Helsinki 2004.

¹⁰ *Diplomatarium danicum* I:3, København 1976-77, no 25.

¹¹ Against such an attempt to minimize the importance of this and other crusading activities in Finland, see, John H Lind, Puzzling Approaches to the Crusading Movement in Recent Scandinavian Historiography, in *Medieval History Writing and Crusading Ideology*, Edited by Tuomas M.S. Lehtonen and Kurt Villads Jensen with Janne Malkki and Katja Ritari, *Studia Fennica. Historica* 9, Helsinki 2005, pp. 264-83

¹² *Novgorodskaja pervaja letopis' starshego i mladshego izvodov*, Moskva 1950, p. 26.

¹³ J. W. Ruuth, Tanskalaisten kronikkojen mainitsemista tanskalaisten retkistä Suomeen vuosina 1191 ja 1202, *Suomalaisen Tiedeakatemian Esitelmät ja pöytäkirjat 1910* I. Helsinki 1910, pp. 1-16; and Lisä esitelmään tanskalaisten retkistä Suomeen v:ina 1191 ja 1202, *ibid.* 1910 II. Helsinki 1911, pp. 57-63. Några ord om de äldsta danska medeltidsannaler som innehålla uppgifter om tågen till Finland 1191 och 1202. Källhistorisk studie, *Historiska uppsatser tillagnade Magnus Gottfrid Schybergson* 26. 11. 1911. Ruuth returned to the question a couple of times later, cf. J. W. Ruuth, Tanskalaisten annaalien merkintä Suomen retkestä 1191, annalitutkimuksen kannalta valaistuna, pp. 1-29. *Historiallinen arkistö*

- XXXIV, *Festskrift II*. Helsinki 1925. Swedish version repr. in *Kring korstågen till Finland - ett urval uppsatser tillägnat Jarl Gallén på hans sextioårsdag den 23 maj 1968*, Helsingfors 1968, pp. 61-71. cf. also, J. W. Ruuth, »Ex tuarum«-kirjeestä 30/10 1209, *Historiallinen arkisto* XXII, I, 6, pp. 13-15.
- ¹⁴ Juhani Rinne, Tanskalaisten ristiretket Suomeen linnatutkimuksen valossa, *Historiallisia tutkimuksia* J.R. Danielsson-Kalmarin kanniaksi, Helsinki 1923.
- ¹⁵ Gunvor Kerkkonen, De danska korstågens hamnar i Finland. Några synpunkter och ett försök till lokalisering Publicerad i *Historiska och litteraturhistoriska studier* 27-28, Helsingfors 1952, repr. in *Kring korstågen till Finland*, pp. 111-45.
- ¹⁶ Ervin Nielsen, Har danskarna företagit korståg till Finland? *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland* 1972, pp. 140-45.
- ¹⁷ De profectioe danorum in Hierosolymam, *Scripteres Minores Historiae Danicae* II, København 1922, p. 465.
- ¹⁸ That was the price the Swedes had to pay to get their own archbishopric in 1164, see Pope Alexander III's letter, *Diplomatarium danicum* I:2, København 1963, no 153.
- ¹⁹ On Fulko, see, John H Lind, Carsten Selch Jensen og Kurt Villads Jensen, Ane Bysted, *Danske Korstog. Krig og Mission i Østersøen*, København 2004 (2d. ed. 2006), pp. 147-50.
- ²⁰ On the September Letters and their transmission, see, L. Weibull, Påven Alexander III:s septemberbrev till Norden, *Scandia* 13, 1940, pp. 90-98.
- ²¹ On the Danish Archbishopric and archbishops, see, Niels Skyum-Nielsen: Das dänische Erzbistum vor 1250, *Kirche und Gesellschaft im Ostseeraum und im Norden vor der Mitte des 13. Jahrhunderts, Visby-symposiet för historiska vetenskaper 1967*, ed. Sven Ekdahl, Visby 1969, pp. 113-38
- ²² *Diplomatarium danicum* I:3, no 26.
- ²³ *Diplomatarium danicum* I:3, no 27.
- ²⁴ *Diplomatarium danicum* I:3, no 28.
- ²⁵ On this, see, *Danske Korstog*, p. 35.
- ²⁶ *Diplomatarium danicum* I:5, København 1957, no 145.
- ²⁷ "Lething for thil Findland oc vantt thett", according to *Årbog 1074-1255*, in *Danmarks middelalderlige annaler*, udgivet ved Erik Kroman, København 1980, p. 18. The corresponding Latin text in the slightly younger *Annales Lundenses* read, "Expedicio facta est ad Finland, que uicta est a Danis manu forti", *Danmarks middelalderlige annaler*, p. 60. Similar texts can be found in several further annals.
- ²⁸ *Danmarks middelalderlige annaler*, p. 103.
- ²⁹ *Danmarks middelalderlige annaler*, p. 19.
- ³⁰ "Biscop Anders oc hans brothære fordæ hær in i Finland", according to *Annales Ryenses Dansk oversættelse A*, *Danmarks middelalderlige annaler*, p. 199.
- ³¹ The Suneson-family-tree can be seen in, *Danske Korstog*, p. 155.
- ³² "Andreas erchebisop oc hans brothære fordæ stoor hær in til Ræwæl", *Annales Ryenses Dansk oversættelse A*, *Danmarks middelalderlige annaler*, p. 200.
- ³³ "Danskæ, Iebbæ Sonenes oc Laurens mæt thære til fylia, blæwæ slafnæ wed Lænæ", *Annales Ryenses Dansk oversættelse A*, *Danmarks middelalderlige annaler*, p. 200.
- ³⁴ True Henry of Livonia does not mention an expedition to the Reval region but only to Saaremaa/Osilia, *Henrici Chronicon Livoniae*, pp. 60-62. According to Henry it would seem that King Valdemar participated in the Estonian crusade, but that is not supported by Danish sources.
- ³⁵ On Valerius, Bertil Nilsson, *Sveriges kyrkohistoria I. Missionstid och tidig medeltid*, Stockholm 1998, p. 147.
- ³⁶ On Anders Suneson and his various functions, see Torben K. Nielsen, The Missionary Man: Archbishop Anders Sunesen and the Baltic Crusade, 1206-21, in *Crusade and Conversion on the Baltic Frontier 1150-1500*, ed. Alan V. Murray, Aldershot 2001, pp. 95-115; cf. also the anthology on Anders, *Anders Sunesen. Stormand, teolog, administrator, digter*, ed. Sten Ebbesen, København 1985.
- ³⁷ *Diplomatarium danicum* I:4, København 1958, no 94; the appointment no 96.
- ³⁸ *Diplomatarium danicum* I:4, no 161.
- ³⁹ *Diplomatarium danicum* I:4, no 109.
- ⁴⁰ *Diplomatarium danicum* I:5, no 38.
- ⁴¹ *Diplomatarium danicum* I:4, no 162.

⁴² *Diplomatarium danicum* I:4, no 163.

⁴³ *Diplomatarium danicum* I:4, no 164.

⁴⁴ *Diplomatarium danicum* I:5, no 145.

⁴⁵ On this aspect, see, *Danske Korstog*, pp. 199-245,

⁴⁶ *Diplomatarium danicum* I:5, no 13.

⁴⁷ “Under det utgående 1100- och det ingående 1200-talet framstår en tävlan mellan danskt och svenskt om herraväldet vid Finska vikens kuster såsom ogensäglich”, Kerkkonen, p. 113.

⁴⁸ On the ever growing strength of Denmark up to the collapse in 1223, see, *Danske korstog*, pp. 199ff.

⁴⁹ Kerkkonen, p. 117.

⁵⁰ Kerkkonen, pp. 126-27 with notes 65-67. Kerkkonen’s reflections on this point were soon criticized by Åke Granlund with a mix of linguistic arguments and historical assumptions, but without any direct confrontation with the points of views expressed by Kerkkonen’s linguistic consultants, cf. Åke Granlund, *Studier över östnyländska ortnamn*, = *Studier i Nordisk filologi* 44, København 1956, pp. 67-68.

⁵¹ Gallén 1993, p. 51.

⁵² Kerkkonen, pp. 127-33 with maps, p. 115 and 130.

⁵³ Torsten Edgren, Om det medeltida Borgå i allmänhet och Borgbacken i synnerhet, *Finsket Museum* 1985, pp. 35-64.

⁵⁴ “Dessa antaganden kan dock i dagens läge avskrivas utgående från vad man vet om innebörden i begreppet ”Finland” under den tidiga medeltiden,” C.J. Gardberg, Borgbacken i Borgå Historisk Tidskrift för Finland 79 (1994), 578,

⁵⁵ On the *Codex ex-Holmiensis A41* and its link to crusading, see the various articles in *Broderliste, Broderskab Korstog. Bidrag til opklaringen af en gæde fra dansk højmiddelalder*, ed. Janus Møller Jensen, Odense 2006.

⁵⁶ Measure of distance.

⁵⁷ Jarl Gallén, *Det ”danska itinerariet”. Franciskansk expansionsstrategi i Österyjön*, *Skrifter utg av Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland* nr 579, Hfs 1993, 51-52.

⁵⁸ John Lind, Den dansk-russiske traktat 1302. Erik Menveds østpolitik og omvaltningen i de nordiske alliancer i 1302, [*dansk*] *Historisk Tidsskrift* 96, pp. 1-31.

