

English Summaries

The change in outlook on Danish Monastic sites over the last twenty years

By Rikke Agnete Olsen

In the course of The Middle Ages as many as about 140 monastic sites grew up in Denmark, and until about twenty years ago it was more or less generally accepted, that they dominated towns and landscape as large, regulated structures built of brick and centred around a quadrangular core with three wings attached to a church. This picture was founded on the existing examples, and it was overlooked, how late they are.

From the 1970-ies, however, when The Department of Medieval Archaeology at the University of Aarhus took to excavating first the nunnery at Ring near Skanderborg and later the important cistercian monastery of Øm nearby, the picture changed gradually.

Now it is evident, that many even important places were never "fully" finished. Perhaps it was even often never the plan. Now we look as much for varieties as for a general picture.

Monasteries on the river Gudenå

By H.N. Garner

The river Gudenå is the major river of Denmark. It measures 160 kms from its source in the heart of the Jutland Peninsula to its mouth in the Kattegat. The main river with its tributaries drains an area of the size of the island Funen. The central part of the river passes the Danish Lakelands, which includes about fifty lakes.

The Gudenå River System and its surrounding area had its cultural bloom in the Middle Ages as – all things considered – 15

smaller and larger monasteries have been situated here. The advantages of settling down on inland waters were obvious. Transport by boats and barges was more effective, than by carts. Fishing in fresh waters was most profitable, and the inland waters were safe as opposed to the coastlands, as at the time, most of the monasteries were founded, there was a state of war between the pagan, slovanian nations at the southern coast of the Baltic Sea (the Wends) and their Christian neighbours. Hostile invasions from the sea might always be expected. And last not least, the streaming waters were most useful for constructing hydrotechnical systems.

The Cistercian Øm Abbey, the major monastery of the region, especially has had advanced hydrotechnical constructions. A system of canals for transportation and a water mill. Archaeological investigations have brought to light relics of water pipes from beneath the abbey hospital. Barge transport has been proved by the finds of chalk stones for preparing mortar etc. for the buildings. These chalk stones stem from the cliffs by the sea north of the town Grenå. Øm Abbey is the historically and archeologically best investigated monastery of the region. But also the Benedictine abbey Voer has constructed larger hydrotechnical works like dams, dikes, canals and mills. And even near many of the smaller monasteries and convents traces have been found of different water systems, mills and bridges.

The Dominicans in Holbæk

By Henrik Græbe

Dominican friars arrived in Holbæk either in 1269 or 1275. The churchyard was consecrated in 1276. The settlement was swept by a townfire but the church was rebuilt and consecrated in 1323, containing a single vaulted nave and a polygonal choir. Far later

the church was enlarged with aisles, on the south side probably including the northern passage of the cloister. The cloister garth was enclosed by four wings, the church on the northern side, the other wings with two floors and a vaulted passage on the ground floor with open arcades towards the garth. The west wing and parts of the south wing still exist and have been reconstructed as far as possible.

In the south wing is the refectory with two pillars and six vaults, with large windows towards south and west. Wall-paintings had scenes with apostles. A large room above the refectory no longer exists. – In the west wing are five rooms next to the passage, three of them with two vaults each, while two other smaller had barrelled vaults. Traces of an entrance in the northern gable might be from about 1323, while the surviving wing is mainly built in the middle of the 15th century, probably in connection with the building of the south wing. On the upper floor were about nine small windows to the west, probably belonging to the cells.

The medieval church was consecrated to S. Lucius, the patron saint of Roskilde Cathedral. The Dominican church in Holbæk was pulled down in 1869, and a new church was built on the same spot, but orientated north-south.

The first year/s of Viborg Franciscan Monastery and two notes

By Jens Velleu

A composite manuscript in The Arnamagnæan Institute in Copenhagen (AM 107,8) written by Peder Olsen (c. 1490-c. 1570) in two leaves 107 and 108 treats the origin of the Nordic Franciscan monasteries. In a number of short notes we are here informed of the years of foundation of several of the monasteries: 1234 (Schleswig), 1236 (Randers, Svendborg) etc. There are not exact notes of all foundations the first time the manuscript was written down; through later studies Peder Olsen has, however, added new observations. The main text of the manuscript (leaf 107b) indicates that the Viborg monastery was “built from the ground by the Countess Mariana and her sons Count Albert of Eberstein and Marshal Ludvig of Eberstein”. Mariana’s husband died 1289, and we must assume, that the building activities mentioned are initiated after this year. In a marginal note on leaf 107a Peder Olsen has added the

essential information that “1235 Viborg’s Franciscan monastery was founded”, which counts it among the number of earliest founded Franciscan monasteries in the country. – Later in that century the family Eberstein has, however, apparently played an important part in the ecclesiastical institutions in Viborg. Thus Mariana’s husband in 1285 presented the town’s monastery of St John with an estate, and to the same monastery Mariana gave a farmstead.

The short notes by Peder Olsen will together with earlier and future archaeological investigations of the surviving remains of the Franciscan monastery make up the backbone of all attempts to give a more subtle picture of the history of the illustrious institution.

Norwegian monasterial archaeology

By Hans-Emil Lidén

Within present-day Norway there were 27 monastic houses in the Middle Ages. After the Reformation all of them lost their monastic function and were taken over by the King and eventually endowed to members of the aristocracy. Gradually their buildings became redundant and fell into decay.

Scholarly research on Norwegian monasteries started in the 1840’s when the Cistercian monastery at Hovedøya near Oslo was excavated by J.H. Nebelong. The excavation was in fact mainly restricted to unearthing the ruin. Typically enough, the historian C.L. Lange who was the author of the History of the Norwegian Monasteries (Kra. 1847) paid no attention to the results of the archaeological investigation.

Under the supervision of N. Nicolaysen a series of excavations of monastic sites took place in the course of the second half of the 19th century. One might say that the practical result of these excavations was the clearance of the site which added to the preservation of the monument while the scholarly work aimed at dating and identifying the different rooms and buildings. Gerhard Fischer, the Nestor of medieval archaeology in Norway, continued Nicolaysen’s work on the same lines. He took up further excavation at Hovedøya, and excavated the Augustinian abbey at Utstein in Rogaland and the Dominican priory in Oslo.

Today the churches and the other buildings around the cloisters of the Norwegian monasteries of which there are still some-

thing left, are relatively well known. Archaeological research ought to focus on the domestic buildings on the outskirts of the monastic site. They have to be spotted and excavated in order to throw light on the economic and social history of the Norwegian monasteries. Or one may take up special problems. Thus an investigation now in progress at Selje, Nordfjord, tries to elucidate the early history of the place including the foundation of a sanctuary, a bishop's seat and a Benedictine monastery – all within the 11th century.

The religious houses of Norway in the Middle Ages: The written sources

By Erik Gunnes

One single work still holds authority as far as Norway's religious houses are concerned: In 1847 was published, by C.C.A. Lange, *De norske Klosters Historie i Middelalderen*. It appeared in a revised edition in 1856, and remains the only all-embracing reference work on the question; it must still be considered, slightly out of date as it may be. Research on the subject has been performed ever since, however. But what do we have to work on?

1) An important lot of archeological material has been brought forth. Several monasteries have been excavated more or less thoroughly, and "restored", more or less happily. 2) Very few written documents survived. Some letters, remnants of disputes over property and the like, some testaments, still survive, and have been published. 3) Land registers reviewing the property of the houses also survive to some extent – some medieval, some 17th century. 4) Narrative sources are very scarce. 5) Some material can be found in foreign sources. Best example: Letters conserved at the Birgittine Vadstena, concerning the life at the Birgittine Munkeliv in Bergen.

The foundations were not numerous (about 28 throughout the Middle Ages). Their succession was very much parallel to what happened in the rest of Europe – three Benedictine monasteries were founded from c. 1100, then follows a succession of Cistercian, Augustinian (and Premonstratensian), Dominican and Franciscan houses, a priory of Hospitaliers, and, finally, a Birgittine foundation at a former Benedictine abbey – Munkeliv in Bergen (1426). A

study of the names of the inmates can tell something of their origin – how far the houses were locally rooted and to which extent they remained a foreign implantation.

Fragments of a monastery church. Recent excavations in the Benedictine Abbey of Nidarholm

By Christopher McLees

Excavations conducted on the island of Munkholmen near Trondheim in 1988-89 have revealed the location of the abbey's long-lost church building within the monastic complex. Part of the church's square-ended chancel was uncovered, together with the stump of a small apse on its N. side. Both structures bear traits consistent with Norwegian Romanesque stone building tradition. The fragmentary and disturbed nature of the church's remains makes more refined dating impossible. The chancel's walling comprised a mortar core faced externally (and probably internally) with coursed rubble. The apse was composed of soapstone ashlar masonry, typical of local 12th-century workmanship centred on the Nidaros cathedral workshops. Two building phases were identified on stratigraphical grounds, the apse post-dating the construction of the chancel. The partially excavated graveyard produced 6 inhumations. The chancel's interior had been thoroughly cleared out and re-used as the basis of a primitive shack in the mid 1600s.

Unfortunately, the church remains do not provide evidence of sufficient clarity to finally determine the exact date of the abbey's foundation. Conflicting historical evidence has it that King Knut (Canute) might have founded the abbey as early as 1028, or alternatively that a local noble, Sigurd Ullstreng, was responsible for its founding in the first decade of the 12th century. The surviving structural evidence, viewed in the light of known contemporary historical and architectural developments, could conceivably be consistent with the erection of a first-phase rectangular or two-celled church at the beginning of the 12th century, followed by the addition, perhaps within the first half of the same century, of an apsidal-ended side-building, possibly in response to liturgical demands and/or economic benefit.

Trøndelag in the Middle Ages

By Jørn Sandnes

The article gives a short survey of the medieval political and ecclesiastical organisation of the region of Trøndelag, and of the churches, monasteries and parishes of the region at that time. In the High Middle Ages Trøndelag was a central part of Norway. When the Norwegian province of the Church was established in 1152, the seat of the Archbishop was located in Nidaros/Trondheim.

The ecclesiastical organisation of the region in the Middle Ages is closely connected with the political-administrative organisation of Trøndelag, which consisted of eight counties ("fylker"). In each county there were, in the High Middle Ages, two main churches, built of stone, one of them, however, being the real *fylkeskirke*. So, the counties of Trøndelag were also the oldest parishes of the region. Later on, new churches were built, by the congregations or by private persons, and a subdivision of the parishes took place, so that the area had c. 110 parishes round 1350.

At the same time there were at least eight monasteries in the region, most of them located in or near Trondheim.

The author argues that there must have been a strong cultic continuity between the old heathen centres and the main christian church places.

Religious orders in Sweden at the end of the medieval period

By Jan O.M. Karlsson

At the beginning of the 16th century, at the eleventh hour of the Middle Ages, there were some fifty convents and monasteries in Sweden, in which eight orders were established by the end of the period.

More than half, (31), were in Swedish towns, principally the Dominican, (11 priories and 2 convents), and Franciscan, (16 priories and 1 convent), and were usually found in the older medieval towns.

The St John, St Brigid, Carmelite and Carthusian Orders each

had one city priory, while in the country areas of the Swedish midlands, the Cistercians had six monasteries and seven nunneries; the Order of St John had two priories, as did the Franciscans; the Carthusian and St Anthony Orders had only one priory each.

Three main establishment periods can be enumerated: Christian abbey-life (*vita regularis/vita communis*) appeared principally in medieval Sweden in two main establishment periods, followed by a 'supplementary period':

1. Cistercian monasteries were founded during the hundred-year period between 1140 and 1240 and included those institutions which were relocated between the end of the 12th and the beginning of the 13th centuries. Not taking account of the relocation of certain institutions, eleven of thirteen Cistercian monasteries were founded between 1143 and 1200 at the latest. Within this first period must be included those nunneries which were nominally Benedictine, initially, but were strongly Cistercian influenced.

During this early phase of Swedish monasticism there was the establishment of only one priory of another order, namely the hospice and knight Order of St John, which, during the period 1174-1185, founded its first and only Early Medieval priory in Sweden in (Eskils-) Tuna in Södermanland (the shire to the south of Stockholm).

2. Dominican and Franciscan city priories appeared during the 70 years between 1230 and 1300 and were founded naturally within the framework of Swedish urban development of the decades in mid-13th century.

3. The 'Supplementary' period was at the end of the 14th century and continues during the 15th. Sweden's only national order, the St Brigid Order, establishes between 1380 and 1420, two double institutions, the main abbey of the Order in Vadstena and a subsidiary in Nådendal, in the south of Finland.

Throughout this period, Dominicans and Franciscans, already firmly established in older Swedish, medieval cities, founded separate, new subsidiary institutions, in certain towns with rapid growth (Viborg, Växjö and Nya Lödöse), but also built priories beside some of Sweden's main land and sea trade-routes, (as for example Krokek in Kälmaröden and Kökar in the south-east archipelago of the Åland islands). The Order of St John, also founded two new priories during this period; the short-lived Köpinge on the island of Öland and Kronobäck in Småland in the south of Sweden.

Other orders appearing in Sweden, during the 15th century for the first time are the Carmelites (Örebro); the Order of St Antho-

ny (Ramundeboda) and the Carthusians (Mariefred) each establishing separate priory institutions.

At the end of this revival in the Swedish monastic movement, the Cistercians established a subsidiary abbey in Dalarna, (Gudsberga Mons Domini), during the years 1477-87, which was to be the northernmost in Sweden and the only abbey in Dalarna. Accordingly the monastery Mons Domini of this Benedictine reformist order completes the circle together with the Carthusian Pax Marie in Mariefred. Some forty years after this Late Medieval boom in religious interest, almost all Catholic abbey life ceased as a result of the confiscation of church property by the State, a process started after the Swedish Parliament met in Västerås in 1527.

Medieval monasteries in Finland

By Markus Hiekkänen

Five mendicant convents and one Bridgettine monastery were founded in Finland in the Middle Ages (Fig. 1, 7, 21, 22). The earliest of them was the Dominican convent in Åbo (Fi. Turku), founded in 1248. Near the Novgorodian border in the town of Viborg (Fi. Viipuri) a Dominican convent was founded in 1398. The first written sources mention the Franciscan convent in Viborg in 1403. Approximately at the same time the Franciscan convent in Raumo (Fi. Rauma) was founded according to the writer's studies. Previously the Franciscan convent on the island of Kõkar, in the Åland Islands, was dated to the middle of the 15th century. Recent studies have claim that it more likely was founded in the beginning of the 15th century. The Bridgettine monastery of Nådendal (Fi. Naantali) was founded in 1438.

Finnish monasteries have been excavated archaeologically since the 1860's (Fig. 2). Remains above the present ground level are scarce (Fig. 3). Only two of the churches have survived almost intact (Raumo and Nådendal). Other cloister structures have perished except one cellar in Kõkar.

In the convent in Åbo (Fig. 4) many structures were excavated and connected to the convent. The writer regards these interpretations partly incorrect, e.g. in the case of the hall which in fact may be the convent church (Fig. 5 and 6). A new reconstruction of the earliest phases of the church of the Dominican convent in Viborg is presented (Fig. 8-10). The results of the excavations in the

Franciscan convent of Viborg is analysed and a new approach is presented (Fig. 11). The area comprehended by the Franciscan convent in Raumo as presented by the author in 1983 is overviewed critically and a new, smaller area is suggested (Fig. 15). New points of view are presented on the disposition of the buildings in the convent (Fig. 12-14). In the Convent of Kõkar the choir of the church is proposed to have been built only after the nave (Fig. 16-17). This layout is connected with the possible taking over by the Franciscans of an older parish church. In Nådendal the planners of the monastery (Fig. 18, 20) also laid out the town plan of Nådendal (Fig. 19).

In the general development of the medieval monasteries in Finland attention is given to the fact that five of the six monasteries were founded in a period of 50 years between 1390 and 1440 (Fig. 21, 22). According to the writer the central government of the union state in Denmark in cooperation with the episcopal leadership of Finland made efforts to develop the economics, administration and the court of justice. In this development the founding of monasteries was an important tool. Though small in number, the five Mendicant orders and the Bridgettine monastery were a shield against the schismatic orthodox church of Novgorod in the sparsely habited country.

Chapels, Friars and the Sea

By Helena Edgren & Markus Hiekkänen

The aim of the authors has been to testify the hypothesis according to which the ruins of chapels found in the Archipelago of the Gulf of Finland are connected with the activity of the Franciscan Friars in the province of Dacia. The impulse to take up this theme was partly given by professor Jarl Gallén who in 1988 maintained that the famous Itinerary, describing the sailing route from Denmark via the southern coast of Finland up to Reval in Estonia, in King Valdemar's "Jordebok" was originally written down by Franciscans.

In order to get an overall view of the material the authors collected all the information stored in the Archives in the National Board of Antiquities as well as in relevant literature. As a result of this work the authors could localize 22 remains of chapels which can be dated to the Middle Ages. All except three of these are situated

in the area covered by the sailing itinerary. Thus there are good reasons to believe that they are physical remains of the preaching activity of the Franciscans. The Kõkar convent seems to be the focal point of this work. The chapels have been quite small except a few of them near the Kõkar convent where the fishing activity of the local people has been greatest. Even the historical documents record that the friars were taking part in this business.

Medieval monastic architecture in Estonia

By Kaur Altoa

By the turn of the 12th-13th centuries missionary work which had begun in Old Livonia in the late 12th century turned into an armed crusade in which monastic orders were involved. This created a state of affairs that had an effect also on the local monastic architecture. This is particularly true of the Cistercians. The setting up of the first house of the Cistercian Order at Dünamünde in present-day Latvia in 1205 was followed by the founding of one at Kärkna near Tartu before 1234. Another monastery was erected at Padise where a chapel of the Dünamünde monastery was founded after the middle of the 13th century; the building of the monastery started in 1317 after the house at Dünamünde was liquidated. Both monasteries had remarkably strong fortifications. In both cases the church of the monastery has a simple rectangular shape, and there is a lower church or chapel under the main floor, obviously for stowing away the obligatory altars.

The Dominicans founded a monastery in 1246 in Tallinn and 1300 in Tartu. The 13th century monastic church in Tallinn was a long unarticulated box-like structure which later influenced other monastic churches in Tallinn as well as 14th century parish churches in North Estonia. Of the three Franciscan monasteries (in Tartu, Viljandi and Rakvere) only the monastic church in Viljandi has survived, rebuilt for the needs of the town congregation in the 17th century.

The house of the Brigittines near Tallinn, built at the beginning of the 15th century, had a number of peculiarities. Owing to the location of the territory the typical ground plan of the church was

abandoned here – normally the entrance for lay people was in the east. Contrary to the rules of the order the church seems to have been begun as a basilica that was very much a fashion in Tallinn at the time. However, the completed structure was a traditional hall church.

On the study of the material culture of Estonian monastic buildings

By Jaan Tamm

The number of monasteries and convents set up in Estonia by the Dominicans, Cistercians, Franciscans and Brigittines is only 12. By the 16th century monastic establishments along with the bishops had become a major economic and ideological force in medieval Livonia. In the course of the Reformation (1525) the Dominicans' establishment in Tallinn, Tartu and Narva were disbanded, despoiled and closed down. The same fate befell the Franciscans in Tartu. The remaining monasteries continued their existence up to the Livonian War (1558-1583), or ended their activity in its course.

New trends and information have been obtained through archaeological excavations in monastic ruins which started in Kärkna in 1888, and continued in Pirita in 1894, Padise 1936, Tallinn Dominican Monastery 1954, Viljandi 1980 and Rakvere 1989.

Considering the extremely abundant material finds brought to light during the excavations – a total of about 30000 items, the author has set himself the aim of making a generalised survey of that rich though hitherto unknown material for historians at large.

An attempt has been made to bring the whole body of finds from the archaeologically investigated monastic buildings with their style, dating, functional and compositional peculiarities into correspondence with everyday life at the establishments. At the same time the aim of the work was not only to describe the individual types of objects, but also to create on their basis a general picture of the material culture in the monastic establishments, as well as to determine their physical appearance, whereas the inner and outer development traits in the 15th and 16th centuries have been pointed out.