



CERGU'S WORKING PAPER SERIES 2017:1



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
CENTRE FOR EUROPEAN RESEARCH

Forms of Social Capital in the European Middle Ages

Angels, Papal Legates, and the Scandinavian Aristocratic Elites, 12th-13th Centuries

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January 2017

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ABSTRACT

This paper studies the forms of aristocratic social capital and modes of its conversion into dynastic, educational, economic, and symbolic forms in Scandinavia during the High Middle Ages. By closely scrutinizing the activities of several papal legates sent by Roman Curia to the North as well as the policies of locally appointed papal legates – particularly Absalon of Lund and Anders Sunesen – , the article shows how the Scandinavian aristocratic elites interacted with wider European networks of power in the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The documents associated with the activities of papal legates studied here (papal bulls, diplomas, synodal decrees, and contemporary chronicles) are treated as nodes tying together local Scandinavian powerful families, their local monastic foundations, and political ambitions both home and abroad with wider European networks of papal authority and protection, recognition in international educational circles, and dynastic alliances. By pursuing the high medieval ‘angelological’ model of government applied to papal legates, this paper shows what the political technology of delegation of power looked like in pre-modern Europe.

Keywords: papal legates, Roman Curia, social capital, conversion of capital, Absalon of Lund, Anders Sunesen, William of Modena, Skänninge synod, delegation of power, angels, mystery of ministry

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To Lars Hermanson on his 50th birthday

On December 31st, 1224, Pope Honorius III (r. 1216-1227) appointed Bishop William of Modena (1184-1251) as his legate to journey to Livonia and Prussia, the north-eastern frontiers of Christianity. In his letter of commendation the pope regretted that he could not be everywhere at the same time and some form of mediation was necessary. Honorius admonished also all those who were to receive William to treat his angel-like envoy ('faciat spiritus suos angelos et ministros') with due humility and fully assist him in fulfilling his spiritual as well as worldly tasks ('spiritualia seminanti temporalia ministrando').¹ During the next two years William conducted an impressive itinerary in Livonia and Estonia, where he extensively preached the crusade against the pagans and 'diligently ministered [ministravit] the word of God and gave many indulgences' to the emerging German and Danish elites of the new colony.² William made also a failed attempt to secure considerable parts of the Danish Estonia (Vironia, Jerwia, and Wiek) for the Apostolic See by putting them under the wings of the pope, but an annexation of the region by the order of the Sword Brethren in 1227 brought these plans to an end.³

Papal legates were rare but unusually powerful creatures and comparing them with angels as Honorius III did was not off the mark. Although the early medieval idea of angelic bureaucracy and angelology had to wait for Thomas of Aquino (c. 1225-1274) to receive a proper treatment, the papal letter for William of Modena bears clearly distinguishable traces of this idea. As shown by Giorgio Agamben, in the late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century the theological parallels between the ecclesiastical and political hierarchies on Earth were being modeled on the celestial hierarchies of angelic choirs and the irreducibly mediated economy of salvation. In this view, the majestic and delegated panoply of administrative angels (papal legates or ministers) appeared as a preferable option over the unimpressive

¹ *Liv- Esth- und Curländisches Urkundenbuch nebst Regesten*, ed. by Friedrich Georg von Bunge & Hermann Hildebrand (Reval: Kluge & Ströhm, 1853), vol 1: 1093-1300, doc. LXIX, cols. 73-75, at cols. 74-75: 'Ideoque universitatem vestram rogamus, monemus, ac hortamur, ac per apostolica vobis scripta firmiter praecipiendo mandantes, quatinus eundem apostolicae sedis legatum recipientes humiliter, et devote ipsius salubribus mandatis et monitis efficaciter pareatis, et spiritualia seminanti temporalia ministrando, ita quod exinde divinam et nostrum gratiam possitis uberius promereri.'

² Heinrich von Lettland, *Chronicon Livoniae/Livländische Chronik*, ed and trans. by Albert Bauer (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftl. Buchgesells., 1959), c. XXIX.3, pp. 316-317. 'verbum Dei sedulo ministravit et indulgentias multas cum gaudio donavit'; translation in: Henricus Lettus, *The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia*, trans. by James A. Brundage (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 230.

³ Ane L. Bysted, Carsten Selch Jensen, Kurt Villads Jensen, John H. Lind, *Jerusalem in the North: Denmark and the Baltic Crusades, 1100-1552*, tr. Sarah & Fredrik Pedersen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), p. 221; Mihkel Mäesalu, 'Päpstliche und kaiserliche Machtansprüche im livländischen Kreuzzugsgebiet im 13. Jahrhundert', *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung* 62 (2013), 472-489.

immediacy of divine (papal or royal) government over men, which would ignore the too distant and thus incompatible difference in nature between God (pope or king) and people.⁴ Against this background it is easy to understand why papal legates, appointed as pope's plenipotentiaries on the basis of then emerging idea of *plenitudo potestatis*, represented the top echelon of the ecclesiastical hierarchy which constituted the crucial mediating link between Rome and the rest of the European *Christianitas*.⁵ Given their extensive discretionary power they acted not just as messengers between Rome and the local churches or as pope's assistants. They were members of the executive acting as pope's ministers, best to be comprehended as forerunners to modern ambassadors.⁶ As they journeyed from one place to another they carried with themselves a mini Roman Curia able to decide in a very broad set of issues: regulating clerical discipline, resolving doctrinal disputes, establishing new and abolishing old ecclesiastical bodies, presiding over secular legal disputes etc. What must have been particularly difficult to understand for those who met them was that these men – regardless of their formal position in the ecclesiastical hierarchy – in their legatine capacity were veritable incarnations of pope's authority acting as essential doubles of the Roman pontiff, fully capable to depose bishops or archbishops.⁷ Through their activity they had therefore direct impact on the networks of power spun by the local elites. It was also the reason why the members of the Nordic elites gravitated towards papal legates whenever they appeared in the North.

⁴ Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory. For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa & Matteo Mandarini (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), pp. 144-166; Compare also the letter of Bishop Thomas Beckett to papal legate Otto of Brescia, Cardinal deacon of San Nicola in Carcere Tulliano (r. 1153-75), from September-October 1167: Thomas Becket, *The correspondence of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1162-1170*, ed. and tr. by Anne Duggan (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), vol. I, no. 134, pp. 624-627: 'Audito aduentu magnitudinis uestre, proscriptorum Christi coexulantium nobis exhilarates est cetus, et, quasi ad consolationem ecclesie et cleri liberationem de celo missus sit angelus, exultauit, et gratias egit omnis ecclesia sanctorum.'

⁵ Torben K. Nielsen, 'Vicarius Christi, Plenitudo Potestatis og Causae Maiores. Teologi og jura hos Pave Innocens III (1198-1216) og Ærkebiskop Anders Sunesen (1201-1223)', *Historisk tidsskrift* (D) 94 (1994), pp. 1-29, at pp. 3-5, 10-12.

⁶ *Liv- Esth- und Curlandisches Urkundenbuch*, no. LXIX, cols. 73-75: 'Cum is, qui secundum suae omnipotentiam maiestatis, nec loco potest nec tempore comprehendendi, utpote incircumscribibilis, et immensus et stabilis mauens, dat cuncta moveri, *faciat spiritus suos angelos et ministros, coelorumque altitudine inclinata carnem assumens humanam pro eo*, qui deliciae suae se esse cum filiis hominis, discipulos, quos elegerat, in mundum destinaverit universum, ut omni praedicarent evangelium creaturae, suo nos instruxit exemplo, ut eius sequentes vestigia cum assumpti simus in *plenitudinem potestatis*, nec per nos ipsos possimus singulis negotiis imminere, inter eos, quos in partem sollicitudinis evocavimus, onera, quasi Gethro usi consilio, dividamus unicuique secundum virtutem propriam, quam variis temporibus immitent committendo.' [emphasis mine]; the *arenga* of Honorius III's letter for William of Modena quoting Ps. 104:4 and Heb. 1:7 in regard of the ministry of angels was not unique, but rather seems programmatic of the pope's policies. Before December of 1224 Honorius III used it in similar legatine appointments related to the crusade movement in March of the same year, in 1221, and in 1217: Thomas William Smith, *Pope Honorius III and the Holy Land Crusades, 1216-1227: A Study in Responsive Papal Government* (unpublished PhD Thesis from Royal Holloway, University of London, 2013), pp. 212-215.

⁷ Harald Müller, 'The Omnipresent Pope: Legates and Judges Delegate', in *A companion to the medieval papacy: growth of an ideology and institution*, ed. by Keith Sisson, Atria A. Larson (Boston: Brill, 2016), pp. 199-221, at pp. 207-208; Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's two bodies: a study in mediaeval political theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997[1957]), pp. 90-92, 282-283; Pierre Bourdieu., *Language and symbolic power*, ed. John B. Thompson, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 203-219.

This article takes a closer look at the activities and itineraries of several papal legates in order to demonstrate how the Nordic aristocratic elites were able to transform their own networks and power bases through contact with deputies from Rome. Through a handful of close-ups I would also like to show how in the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the transformation of clerical and educational networks in which the Scandinavia ecclesiastical elites participated made the members of the Nordic elites eligible as papal legates. In other words, the purpose of this article is to explore the activity of papal legates as nodes enabling interaction of an array of networks and conversion between different types of capital: social, dynastic, educational, and symbolic which the Nordic elites had at their disposal.

The "Romans" in the North

William of Modena was far from the first papal emissary pulling the Scandinavian elites into contacts with the Roman Curia. Already in 1152-54 the papal legate Nicholas Brekespear visited Scandinavia. During his itinerary Nicholas established the archiepiscopal see at Trondheim and paved way for a similar arrangement at Uppsala as the archbishopric see for Sweden, although it was not in place before 1164 and for a long period subjected to the primacy of the archbishops of Lund.⁸ Nicholas, who was soon elected pope as Hadrian IV (r. 1154-1159), was an Englishman, educated at St Albans and can be seen as yet another link in the extended English connection which dominated the educational and ecclesiastical development of Scandinavia, particularly Denmark, from the turn of the millennium.⁹

One of the persons in Nicholas's retinue on his journey through the North was an English cleric by the name Henry (d. 1156). He was to become responsible for the Swedish Christianization of Finland Proper in the so-called First Finnish Crusade which he allegedly led together with the Swedish King Eric the Saint (r. 1155-60) in the mid-1150s. Henry was also the supposed first bishop of Turku/Åbo and subsequently called saint after his martyrdom in 1156. Even if the historicity of events surrounding both Eric's and Henry's actions have been seriously put into question, neither the important influence of the missionary and papal networks they partook in nor the strong ideational impact of Eric's and Henry's remembrance on the Swedish missionary activity in Finland can be denied.¹⁰

⁸ *Diplomatarium Danicum*, ed. Niels Skyum-Nielsen et al. (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 1938-) [hereafter abbreviated as *DD*, references are given by series, volume, document number, and page range], s. 1, vol. 2, no. 115, pp. 208-215; Nils Blomkvist, Stefan Brink, Thomas Lindkvist, 'The kingdom of Sweden', in Nora Berend (ed.), *Christianization and the rise of Christian monarchy: Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus' c. 900-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 167-213, at p. 200.

⁹ Mia Münster-Swendsen, 'Educating the Danes: Anglo-Danish Connections in the Formative Period of the Danish Church, c. 1000-1150', in Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, Thomas Småberg (eds.) *Friendship and social networks in Scandinavia c.1000-1800* (Brepols: Turnhout, 2013), pp. 153-173; Marie Bønløkke Spejlberg, 'Anglo-Danish connections and the organisation of the early Danish Church: contribution to a debate', *Networks and Neighbours* 2 (2014), 71-86.

¹⁰ Tuomas Heikkilä, *Sankt Henrikslegenden*, tr. Rainer Knapas (Helsinki: SLF, 2009), pp. 48-52, 140; Tuomas Heikkilä, in Wojtek Jezierski, Lars Hermanson (eds), 'An Imaginary Saint for an Imagined Community: St. Henry and the Creation of Christian Identity in Finland, Thirteenth - Fifteenth Centuries', in *Imagined Communities on the Baltic Rim, from the Eleventh to Fifteenth Centuries* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), pp. 223-252; Philip Line, 'Sweden's Conquest of Finland: A Clash of Cultures?', in Alan V. Murray (ed.), *The North-Eastern frontiers of medieval Europe: the expansion of Latin Christendom in the Baltic*

After Brekespear, Rome kept on sending its plenipotentiaries to the North, even if the information about the nature of their errands and activities, especially if they did not concern Denmark, is often fragmentary.¹¹ For instance, from *King Sverre's Saga* we know of an anonymous papal legate, whom King Sverre of Norway (1184-1202) wanted to employ to crown him at Konghelle/Kungahälla (just north of the island of Hisingen in today's Sweden) at Easter of 1194. Apparently unaware of the fact that at that point the king was under the papally approved ban issued by Archbishop Eirik Ivarsson (r. 1188-1205, at that time in exile at Archbishop Absalon's cathedral in Lund), the legate was stopped almost in the last moment before consecrating the king. The king, reluctant to submit to the legate's appeal to make peace with Eirik and the estranged Norwegian episcopate, found the legate's meddling useless and sent him back to Rome.¹²

Even during times when Danish prelates were eligible as papal legates (see below), the Roman Curia continued to send pope's direct plenipotentiaries to Denmark. One of them was Gregorius de Crescentio (d. 1227), whom his Nordic recipients were to honor like Honorius III's very avatar by the pope's own unequivocal command.¹³ Anthony Perron, who traced Gregorius mission of 1222 suggested that his visit might have been prompted by an internal Danish request for help in enforcing clerical celibacy or by the dynastical struggles in Sweden at the time. Yet another explanation for the dispatch regards the ecclesiastical competition in Estonia between the Danish Church on the one side, and the Sword Brethren as well Bishop of Riga, Albert of Buxhoeveden (r. 1199-1229) on the other side, in which Gregorius was supposed to act as an arbitrator. After the Estonian relapse and revolt in 1222/3 the entire missionary effort in Estonia was put into question, which does not mean Gregorius turned back home or remained idle. Quite the contrary, during his visit to Denmark the legate had a chance to dust off his friendship with a study companion from Paris, Abbot Gunner of Æm Abbey (r. 1216-1222).¹⁴ In a clear case of a personal bond and educational capital being converted by a papal intermediary into an institutionalized recognition, Gregorius took the opportunity that the episcopal see of Viborg was vacant to persuade the canons there to appoint his competent and eloquent friend Gunner as bishop there (r. 1222-1251). The canons

lands (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 57-99; Jens E. Olesen, 'The Swedish Expeditions ('Crusades') Towards Finland Reconsidered', in Kirsi Salonen, Sari Katajala-Peltomaa (eds), *Church and belief in the Middle Ages: popes, saints, and crusaders* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), pp. 251-267, at pp. 255-259.

¹¹ Michael Gelting, 'The Kingdom of Denmark', in Nora Berend (ed.), *Christianization and the rise of Christian monarchy: Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus' c. 900-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 73-120, at pp. 95-96.

¹² Karl Jónsson, *Sverris saga etter AM 327,4to*, ed. Gustav Storm (Oslo, 1981 [orig. 1920]), c. 122, p. 130; David Brégaint, *Vox regis: royal communication in high medieval Norway* (Leiden, Brill, 2016), pp. 124-125.

¹³ *DD* s. 1, vol. 5, no. 177, pp. 230-231: 'Ipsum [Gregorium] sicut personam nostrum curabis cum honorificentia te et ipso digna recipere. et in eo deuotionem quam ad Romanam habes ecclesiam exhibere.'

¹⁴ *Vita Gunneri episcopi vibergensis*, in *Scriptores minores historiae Danicae: Medii aevi. 2:1*, ed. M. Cl. Gertz, (Copenhagen: GAD, 1918-1920), pp. 265-278, c. I, p. 266: 'Verum quia ipse cardinalis et abbas memoratus collegerat fuerunt aliquando Parisius et socij, eum per omnia nouit, quod de septem liberalibus aliquam partem haberet et noticiam atque competentem ad hec prudentiam et discrecionem.' [emphasis mine]; Anthony Perron, 'Metropolitan Might and Papal Power on the Latin-Christian Frontier: Transforming the Danish Church around the Time of the Fourth Lateran Council', *The Catholic Historical Review* 89 (2003), 182-212, at pp. 204-205, see esp. fn 101.

unanimously agreed.¹⁵ Gregorius mediated and buttressed also the connection between the envoys of Dominic de Guzmán (St Dominic) and Archbishop Anders Sunesen, which led to introducing the Dominican friars first to Lund (1222/3), then across Denmark, and employing them for missioning and converting Estonia.¹⁶

Outliers I: Absalon of Lund

A papal legate's task rested always on a delicate balance. On the one hand he represented the universal Church as pope's direct plenipotentiary. It is important to remember that papal legates and the idea of the papal *plenitudo potestatis* emerged in the wake of the Gregorian Reform as a response to the development of the Papal States which effectively became what Maureen C. Miller dubbed, a 'disarticulate composite state'.¹⁷ This archipelago of isolated possessions scattered all over the Apennine Peninsula could only hold together thanks to networks and constant movement of people invested with full power of their original lord. Also the new definition of papal authority initiated by Gregory VII, developed by Alexander III, and radically advanced by Innocent III necessitated reaching deeply into the local members of the universal Church, so that ever-growing scope of papal regulations could be executed exhaustively.¹⁸ This universal and unifying force had to be counterbalanced by a bottom-up movement in the European peripheries, on the other hand. Popes' centrally appointed emissaries did not always dispose with enough local knowledge and connections. In order to remain effective in solving the problems on the ground, the popes sometimes had to appoint high-ranking locals with enough social and political clout. It took also less time to send a *plenitudo potestatis* to a powerful local bishop who would act without delay than wait for a dispatch from Rome. For instance, it took six months before William of Modena's appointment on New Year's Eve and his arrival in Livonia in the summer of 1225. Finally, the legatine tasks in the Nordic periphery were not always considered as important as to demand a costly journey all the way from Italy.

In order for a local appointment even to be deemed viable, however, the high-ranking local clerics needed to be competent enough and not unknown to the Roman Curia. It seems that by the late twelfth century the time was ripe to appoint members of the Nordic ecclesiastical elites – at least those in Denmark – as papal legates.¹⁹ Fortunately, we have at our disposal the opinion about members of these elites which circulated in North European ecclesiastical

¹⁵ *Vita Gunneri*, c. I, p. 266: 'Cardinalis vero ad sedem Wibergensem veniens, cum de eligendo aliquo in episcopum canonici ipsius sedis non sane [de aliquo] potuerunt conuenire, dixit se cardinalis scire quemlibet virum tante sedi et honori competentem et vtilem, si vellent sibi consentire. Quod se facturos vnanimiter sponponderunt.'; see also: *DD* s. 1, vol. 5, no. 201, pp. 256-257.

¹⁶ Perron, 'Metropolitan Might', pp. 205-206; Johnny Grandjean Gøgsig Jakobsen, 'Friars Preachers in frontier provinces of medieval Europe', in *Medieval East Central Europe in a Comparative Perspective: From frontier zones to lands in focus*, ed. by Gerhard Jaritz; Katalin Szende (London & New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 123-136.

¹⁷ In her keynote lecture at IMC Leeds, on July 6th, 2015.

¹⁸ Sandro Carocci, 'Popes as Princes? The Papal States (1000-1300)', in *A companion to the medieval papacy: growth of an ideology and institution*, ed. by Keith Sisson, Atria A. Larson, (Boston: Brill, 2016), pp. 66-84; Müller, 'The Omnipresent Pope', pp. 199-221.

¹⁹ Perron, 'Metropolitan Might', pp. 190-192.

circles at that time. As the well-informed Abbot Arnold (r. 1177-1211/1214) of the Benedictine monastery of St John in Lübeck wrote:

The Danes have made no insignificant progress also in science and education. The magnates in the country send their sons to Paris not only to an ecclesiastical career, but also to acquire secular knowledge. They learn literature and the language of the country, and they have become advanced not only in the liberal arts, but also in theology. Because of the natural speediness of the Danish language, they are subtle not only in dialectics, but also in all matters pertaining to church affairs, and they become good ecclesiastical or secular lawyers and judges.²⁰

It is clear that Arnold saw with appreciation on the investment the ruling Danish elites put into their sons who acquired educational capital, which turned them into reliable men of the Church. Furthermore, as we shall see below on the examples of two locally appointed papal legates, Absalon of Lund and his successor Anders Sunesen, their educational and symbolic capital was directly proportional to their social connections both at home and abroad.

Although Archbishop Absalon of Lund (r. 1178-1201) was not the first Danish Church official to be appointed as papal legate (his predecessor and direct sponsor to the archiepiscopal see, Eskil of Lund, enjoyed this privilege before),²¹ he can serve as a good example of how during this period the Nordic elites used their economic and social positions in contacts with European elites and the papacy, in order to strengthen and transform their local recognition and power base. Absalon's well-researched singular importance for the development of the ecclesiastical organization in Scandinavia, his crucial role in Danish politics, and territorial expansion of the Lund archbishopric in the second half of the twelfth century can hardly be overstated,²² so there is no need to reiterate this again either. Here I would like to point to just a handful of social networks of which Absalon was a member that either made him eligible as papal legate in the eyes of the Roman Curia or which directly benefited from his legatine appointment.

Absalon was a scion of Skjalm collective, arguably one of the two most powerful aristocratic families in Denmark at the time. During Absalon's career the family's power base was centered at Fjenneslev in Western Sjælland and the nearby Sorø Abbey, which Absalon's father, Asser Rig (c. 1080-1151) founded together with his brother Ebbe Skjalmsen Hvide (c.1085-1150/1) in the 1140s. With Absalon's ascension to the see of Lund in 1177/8 after Eskil, a substantial shift occurred in Denmark's landscape of power. The hegemony of the

²⁰ Arnold von Lübeck, *Chronica Slavorum*, ed. by Johann M. Lappenberg, MGH *Scriptores in folio*, 38 (Hannover: Hahn, 1868), lib. III, c. 5, p. 77: 'Scientia quoque litterali non parum profecerunt, quia nobiliores terre filios suos non solum ad clerum promovendum, verum etiam secularibus rebus instituendos Parisius mittunt. Ubi litteratura simul et idiomate lingue terre illius imbuti, non solum in artibus, sed etiam in theologia multum invaluerunt. Siquidem propter naturalem lingue celeritatem non solum in argumentis dialecticis subtiles inveniuntur, sed etiam in negotiis ecclesiasticis tractandis boni decretiste sive legiste comprobantur.', English translation from: Kurt Villads Jensen, 'Martyrs, Total War, and Heavenly Horses: Scandinavia as Centre and Periphery in the Expansion of Medieval Christendom', in Kirsi Salonen, Kurt Villads Jensen, Torstein Jørgensen (eds.), *Medieval Christianity in the North: New Studies* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), pp. 89-120, at p. 113.

²¹ Anthony Perron, 'Metropolitan Might and Papal Power on the Latin-Christian Frontier: Transforming the Danish Church around the Time of the Fourth Lateran Council', *The Catholic Historical Review* 89 (2003), 182-212, at pp. 185-187.

²² Tom Christensen, Inge Skovgaard-Petersen, Frank A. Birkebæk (eds.), *Absalon: fædrelandets fader* (Roskilde: Roskilde Museums Forl., 1996).

aristocratic clan of Trund – Eskil’s kin – and its conflict-ridden relation with King Valdemar the Great (r. 1157-1182), was replaced by the king’s close alliance with the Skjalm clan. Absalon was Valdemar’s foster-brother and their life-long friendship – a relationship later successfully transferred to Valdemar’s heir, Canute VI (r. 1182-1202) – benefitted both the *regnum* and the *sacerdotium*.²³

Importantly, Absalon’s career attests of a growing tendency among Nordic aristocratic elites to seek novel forms of symbolic and cultural capital which would recognize and confirm their social and political standing. In the late 1140s and early 1150s – thus avoiding involvement in yet another bloodstained period of the so-called civic wars in Denmark – Absalon was one of the first Danes ever to be sent to study abroad (Archbishop Eskil was trained at Hildesheim), in his case at Ste Geneviève Abbey in Paris. During his stay, Absalon befriended a certain Canon Regular by the name Guillaume (c. 1127-1203). Guillaume served as sub-prior at Ste Geneviève and was in close contacts with Pope Eugene III (r. 1145-1153), who in his turn was former pupil of Bernard of Clairvaux (Archbishop Eskil’s close friend too) and the first Cistercian to be elected pope. William of Æbelholt, as Guillaume is now commonly known, was invited to Denmark by Absalon in 1165 to introduce Canons Regular to the monastery of Eskilsø, which he subsequently transferred to Æbelholt in 1176. The subsequent impact of the educational and ecclesiastical connections which William offered to Denmark’s clerical elites was decisive for pulling them into the wider European and papal gravitational sphere in both Absalon’s and his successors’ generation (see below). Little wonder that the elites of the Danish Church wanted to capitalize on William even after his death – by converting this former node of social and cultural resources into an officially recognized symbolic asset and object of veneration.²⁴ Responding to the Lund archbishop’s requests, in 1218 the pope set up a Danish committee to prove William’s sanctity. Honorius III’s final approval was tardy until the above-mentioned papal legate, Gregorius de Crescentio, returned to Rome in 1223 providing the ultimate confirmation and certitude of the miracles presented in the suitably produced *Sancti Willelmi Abbatis vita et miracula*. William was canonized and enshrined in 1224.²⁵

Also the Cistercian connection mediated through both Eskil and the Parisian contacts proved to be a lasting trace in Absalon’s activity. His family’s *Hausklöster*, Sorø Abbey in Sjælland, was reformed from a Benedictine to a Cistercian foundation in 1161/2 by translating monks from Esrum (a daughter house of Clairvaux). Also the monastic establishments following Absalon’s and Valdemar’s conquest of Rügen in 1168/9 were almost exclusively Cistercian.²⁶

²³ Lars Hermanson, *Släkt, vänner och makt: en studie av elitens politiska kultur i 1100-talets Danmark* (Gothenburg: Univ., Diss. Göteborg, 2000), pp. 149-154, 191-201, 229-236; Lars Hermanson, ‘How to Legitimate a Rebellion and Condemn Usurpation of the Crown: Discourses of Fidelity and Treason in the *Gesta Danorum* of Saxo Grammaticus’, in Kim Esmark et al. (ed.), *Disputing strategies in medieval Scandinavia* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 107-140, at. pp. 108-110.

²⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, ‘Symbolic Power’, in Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and symbolic power*, ed. John B. Thompson (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 163-170; Philippe Buc, ‘Conversion of objects’, *Viator* 28 (1997), 99-143.

²⁵ Perron, ‘Metropolitan Might’, p. 207, fn. 114.

²⁶ Lars Hermanson, ‘Discourses of Communion: Abbot William of Æbelholt and Saxo Grammaticus: Imagining the Christian Danish Community, Early Thirteenth Century’, in Wojtek Jezierski, Lars Hermanson (eds),

In the 1180s and 1190s Absalon seemed to use his legatine authority and attention mainly for temporal rather than spiritual objectives. The diplomas he issued then regulated mainly the internal and administrative matters of the Danish church, issuing protection to various monasteries' possessions or confirming donations and wills of both church officials and secular persons. It is significant that in the diplomas Absalon's legatine capacity is enumerated in the same breath as his archiepiscopal or episcopal functions. It suggests he did not make a special distinction in regard to this function, but rather added this *officialized* symbolic resource and Roman connection behind it to his previous ones to boost his aggregated authority, with his titles running typically like this: 'Absalon, dei gratia Lundensis archiepiscopus, apostolice sedis legatus, primas Danie atque Suethie'.²⁷ Particularly conspicuous in his issuing of diplomas and letters at that time, although not at all surprising, are his efforts to assure best possible protection and a virtual legal asylum for Sorø Abbey.²⁸ Absalon also used his connection to the Roman Curia to assure Sorø's protection and to privilege the Cistercian monks as well as their patrons and donators: Absalon himself, Esbern Snare, and Sune Ebbesen – by exempting the monks from paying the tithe.²⁹ Sorø, as a node in Skjalm clan's web of possession, remembrance, and power, was now enjoying papal sanction, friendship, and defense. For his friend's abbey in Æbelholt, Absalon achieved nothing less.³⁰

The final clauses of a vast bulk of Absalon's diplomas issued in his legatine capacity for both Sorø and on other occasions are equipped with divine and saintly maledictions as well as threats of excommunication.³¹ This discourse largely imitates the papal diplomas that Absalon

Imagined communities on the Baltic rim: from the eleventh to fifteenth centuries (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), pp. 59-87, Brian Patrick McGuire, 'Absalon's Spirituality: A Man Attached to Holy Men', in Karsten Friis-Jensen, Inge Skovgaard-Petersen (eds), *Archbishop Absalon of Lund and his world* (Roskilde: Roskilde museums forlag, 2000), pp. 71-87, at pp. 81-83; Sverre Bagge, 'Nordic students at foreign universities until 1660', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 9:1 (1984), pp. 1-29; Anti Selart, *Livonia, Rus' and the Baltic Crusades in the Thirteenth Century*, trans. by Fiona Robb (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 47-50; Tore Nyberg, *Monasticism in north-western Europe, 800-1200* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 194-196, 221-222, 238-241.

²⁷ *DD* s.1, vol. 3, no. 96, pp. 150-151; no. 103, pp. 165-167.

²⁸ E.g. *DD* s.1, vol. 3, no 96, pp. 150-151; no. 140, pp. 219-221, no. 141, pp. 221-222; no. 223, pp. 352-353, no. 225, pp. 354-355; no. 246, pp. 393-394; no. 253, pp. 399-400; See also Absalon's testament in: *DD* s. 1, vol. 4, no. 32, pp. 55-63; Erik Ulsig, 'The Estates of Absalon and the Hvide Family', in Karsten Friis-Jensen, Inge Skovgaard-Petersen (eds), *Archbishop Absalon of Lund and his world* (Roskilde: Roskilde museums forlag, 2000), pp. 89-101; McGuire, 'Absalon's Spirituality', pp. 74-81; Perron, 'Metropolitan Might', pp. 188-189; Hermanson, *Släkt, vänner och makt*, pp. 5-8, 11, 89-92; more generally: Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Negotiating space: power, restraint, and privileges of immunity in early medieval Europe* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1999).

²⁹ *DD* s. 1, vol. 3, no. 100, pp. 156-160; no. 138, pp. 213-218, no. 218, pp. 347-348; no. 241, pp. 382-387; The Papal Herluf Nielsen, 'Confirmations for Archbishop Absalon, especially Concerning the Castle of Havn (Copenhagen)', in Karsten Friis-Jensen, Inge Skovgaard-Petersen (eds), *Archbishop Absalon of Lund and his world* (Roskilde: Roskilde museums forlag, 2000), pp. 103-111.

³⁰ *DD* s.1, vol. 3, no. 78, pp. 116-118; no. 79, pp. 118-121; no. 95, pp. 146-150; no. 203, pp. 317-319.

³¹ E.g. *DD* s.1, vol. 3, no. 103, pp. 165-167; no. 114, pp. 178-179; no. 115, pp. 179-183: 'Hanc nostre confirmationis cathulam quecunque ecclesiastica secularisue persona attemptare instinctu nefario presumpserit. indissolubili anathematis uinculo innodata. a communione corporis sanguinisque dominici ni condigna penitudine respuerit sequestretur. post obitum gehenne suppliciiis eternaliter condempnanda.'; no.140, pp. 219-221: 'Si quis autem huic nostre confirmationi scienter contraire presumpserit maledictionem et iram dei omnipotentis se nouerit incursum nisi reatum suum condigna satisfactione correxerit.'; no. 164, pp. 264-266.

was receiving from Rome at the time and which included very similar threats.³² In a sense, the archbishop was thus not only using Roman Curia to sanction the protection for his own and his friends' and family's foundations, but he was effectively appropriating the papal symbolic capital and converting it to economic and symbolic exemptions at home. Even though threats of excommunication, anathema, and saintly wrath are a commonplace in the final clauses of episcopal diplomas at that time, and those included in Absalon's and papal bulls listed here for the most part sound repetitive and formulaic, these threats were not always empty.³³ After all, at its core the episcopal ban was cutting off all social attachments of the perpetrators and excluding them not only from the glory of partaking in the life of the *ecclesia*, but above all from receiving its protection. On at least one occasion, Pope Celestine III (r. 1191-1198) had to remind Absalon what his legatine responsibilities were in this regard.

It was in 1193 when Celestine III asked his legate in Denmark to seriously consider using his excommunicating authority in order to intervene in the well-known case of Bishop Valdemar of Schleswig's (r. 1188-1208) thirteen-years-long (1193-1206) captivity by King Canute VI, after the bishop attempted to take over the Danish throne. In the initial stage of the conflict, the pope – taking the side of Bishop Valdemar – sent a letter to his legate harshly reproving him for inaction in regard of the conflict, for ignoring his previous letters, and for not setting stop to the violence and outrageous infringements on ecclesiastical freedom. Absalon was to promptly investigate the case and verify the pope's information. If the perpetrators – particularly Duke Valdemar (future King Valdemar Sejr) and Bishops Omer of Ribe, Peder of Sjælland, and Asser of Viborg – did not reprove and release the bishop, Absalon was to put entire Denmark under interdict, excommunicate the duke and his helpers, and immediately suspend the bishops. In the following letters to all Danish bishops, abbots, provosts, and priests, the pope mobilized the entire ecclesiastical organization to aid Absalon in fulfilling this task.³⁴ Even if Celestine III soon turned sides and began supporting the king and the archbishop against Valdemar, these three letters from December 23rd, 1193 bear witness to how great a potential the legatine capacity (especially if combined with archiepiscopal) had when it comes to mustering ecclesiastical networks to threaten and disturb associations of secular elites.

Outliers II: Anders Sunesen

Anders Sunesen (r. 1202-1224), successor of Archbishop Absalon in the see of Lund, was also appointed as papal legate and enjoyed trust and delegated authority of two subsequent

³² *DD* s.1, vol. 3, no. 100, pp. 156-160; no. 118, no 122, pp. 192-194; no. 138, pp. 213-217; no. 137, pp. 211-213: 'Si quis autem [attemperare presumpserit indignationem omnipotentis] dei et beatorum Petri et Pauli apostolorum eius se noverit incursum'; no. 142, p. 222.

³³ Brigitte Bedos Rezak, *When Ego Was Imago: Signs of Identity in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 18-19, 98-99.

³⁴ *DD* s. 1, vol. 3, no. 175: 'Prefatum uero ducem. et quoslibet alios quos in episcopum impsum temerarias manus iniecisse constiterit. tamdiu sine appellationis obstaculo singulis diebus sollempnibus per totum regnum nunciari facias sicut excommunicatos ab omnibus artibus euitandos. donec ecclesie dei [...] Ceterum quod Wrm Ripensis. Petrus Selandiensis. Azcer Wibergiensis [...] et si eos super tanto f[acin]ore culpabiles esse cognoueris. ab episcopali officio. cessante appellatione suspendas.' see also the letters: no. 176, pp. 279-282; no. 177, pp. 282-284; Hermanson, *Släkt, vänner och makt*, p. 240.

popes. Again, it is important to briefly sketch Anders's background indicative of his kin's reproduction strategies in order to better understand how his connections and networks made him eligible for the office. Anders Sunesen was a nephew of Absalon and was thus also a scion of Skjalm clan. His brother, Peder Sunesen – a pupil of William at Æbelholt – was Absalon's successor as bishop of Roskilde (r. 1191-1214), where Anders served as provost in the 1190s. From the point of view of the Roman Curia, however, it must have been his family's international and Anders's personal connections preceding his ascend to the archiepiscopal honors that made his name renowned in the ecclesiastical circles of wider Europe. Just like Absalon, Anders began his carrier by being dispatched together with his brother to study in Paris in the early 1180s. Such an investment craved nurturing along the way, however. When Peder fell seriously sick during his studies at Ste Geneviève monastery, Archbishop Absalon used his connections and wrote directly to Abbot Steven presiding over his *alma mater*, to take good care of Peder's physical and spiritual condition.³⁵ After Paris, Peder returned to Denmark, whereas Anders continued his education at the universities of Bologna and possibly Oxford, travelling widely in Europe acting as a teacher and preacher until the early 1190s.³⁶ In 1194, as chancellor of King Canute VI, Anders toured from Denmark to Rome, together with none other but William of Æbelholt, to plead to Pope Celestine III to support Ingeborg of Denmark (1175-1236) in her marital dispute against King Philip Augustus of France (r. 1180-1223). It was either during his time as a student in Paris or amidst the Rome negotiations in 1194, that Anders encountered Lotario dei Conti di Segni, that is, future pope Innocent III (r. 1198-1216). Lotario, who at the time was papal chancellor, proved to be decisive for Anders's stellar career in general and his future legatine appointments in particular.³⁷ Anders's theological training, preaching abilities, and devotion to the missionary case did not go unnoticed, as we know from Arnold of Lübeck's testimony penned in the 1200s.

It is clear from this brief survey that during his star-spangled trajectory Anders constantly converted different forms of capital into new ones, reaping profits at every turn. His family connections and economic basis were converted into his personal educational capital, which in turn yielded social connections in the Western educational centers as well as in the European ecclesiastical circles. Anders converted his educational capital into its symbolic and cultural forms through his preaching activity – recognized particularly through the invitation by Bishop Albert of Buxhöveden to educate the clerics in the Rigan cathedral chapter which he visited in 1206/7³⁸ – and his theological poetry such as *Hexaëmeron* or sponsorship of historiographical works.³⁹ Recognition in these fields could be converted into more

³⁵ *DD* s.1, vol. 3, no. 131, pp. 202-203.

³⁶ Nielsen, 'Vicarius Christi', pp. 24-27; Birger Munk Olsen, 'Anders Sunesen og Paris', in Sten Ebbesen (ed.), *Anders Sunesen: stormand, teolog, administrator, digter: femten studier* (Copenhagen: GAD, 1985), pp. 75-97.

³⁷ Iben Fønnesberg-Schmidt, *The Popes and the Baltic Crusades, 1147-1254* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 86-89; Torben K. Nielsen, 'The Missionary Man: Archbishop Anders Sunesen and the Baltic Crusade, 1206-1221', in Alan V. Murray (ed.), *The Clash of Cultures on the Medieval Baltic Border* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 95-117.

³⁸ Fønnesberg-Schmidt, *The Popes*, p. 86 fn.30.

³⁹ Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum/Danmarkshistorien*, ed. by Karsten Friis-Jensen, trans. By Peter Zeeberg (Copenhagen: Det Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab, 2000). Praefatio 1.1, pp. 72-73: '[Anders] cuius fertilissimum scientiæ pectus ac uenerabilium doctrinarum abundantia instructum ueluti quoddam cęlestium

objectified forms of capital like institutional appointments such as the chancellorship and episcopal titles, which in turn broadened his network on even higher level.⁴⁰ After his appointment to the archbishopric of Lund and after he had ensured direct access to the pope, Anders's uptake into the angelic bureaucracy in form of the legatine honors was a natural next step. 'For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance', as the Evangelist put it (Matt 13:12).

Anders's legatine appointments seemed to have a sharper focus and were more short-lasting than Absalon's, whose legatine capacity appeared somewhat panoramic and underdefined. For the first time Anders was appointed as papal legate to Denmark and Sweden in 1204, a title he held until 1206. As mentioned earlier, in this new, legatine role the archbishop acquired immense powers in re-drawing the diocesan map in Scandinavia as he saw fit.⁴¹ Among his other, rather extraordinary prerogatives as legate was giving or refusing dispensation in the not so uncommon instances of *defectus natalium*, that is, appointing to episcopal offices candidates who were born out of the Christian wedlock. It means that Anders Sunesen effectively controlled the ecclesiastical elites' access to the episcopal nominations in Denmark, Sweden, and Finland, which in a new, papally sanctioned manner reproduced the brokerage position his predecessors in Lund enjoyed. The issue of episcopal appointments was particularly burning in Finland's case, to which few bishops were prepared to go in the early thirteenth century and so even such canonically defective candidates had to be considered.⁴²

The second time Innocent III appointed Anders as his legate was in 1212, which was a task we unfortunately know even less about. Nonetheless, in the wording of the bull the traces of Anders's symbolic and cultural capital in form of his personal reputation reaching the Roman Curia are detectable, particularly his devotion to preaching and crusading.⁴³ The focus on missioning and evangelization is hardly surprising given Anders's dedication to these tasks ever since he first launched a crusade against the Öselians in 1206 and the broader involvement of the Danish kingdom in crusading on the Baltic Rim at the time.⁴⁴ Admittedly, as argued by Iben Fonnesberg-Schmidt, the appointment of Anders as papal legate to take care of the mission in 1212 can be a sign that the pope did not yet attach great importance to

opum sacrarium exisitmandum est. Tu Galliam Italianque cum Britannia percipiendę literarum discipline colligendęque earum copię scholę regimen apprehendisti'; Ingve Skovsgaard-Petersen, 'Saxo og Anders Sunesen', in Sten Ebbesen (ed.), *Anders Sunesen: stormand, teolog, administrator, digter: femten studier* (Copenhagen: GAD, 1985), pp. 55-74; Jørgen Raasted, 'Dogmatik och bibelfortolkning i Anders Sunesens Hexaameron', in Sten Ebbesen, (ed.), *Anders Sunesen: stormand, teolog, administrator, digter: femten studier* (Copenhagen: GAD, 1985), pp. 151-169.

⁴⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', in *Handbook of Theory of Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J.E. Richardson (Westport, Conn: Greenword Press, 1986), trans. by Richard Nice, pp. 241-258.

⁴¹ *DD* s.1, vol. 4, no. 96, p. 194: 'concedimus, ut in Lundensi et Upsallensi archiepiscopatibus, vice nostra evellas, et destruas, disperdas, et dissipes, edifices et plantes sicut ad honorum dei, exaltationem ecclesie ac salutem populi tibi commissi videris expedire', with a clear hint at Jeremiah 1:10.

⁴² Nielsen, 'Vicarius Christi', pp. 17-23; Perron, 'Metropolitan Might', p. 198.

⁴³ *DD* s. 1, vol. 5, no. 13, p. 22: 'de probitate ac honestate tuam fiduciam obtintemus [...] Cum igitur christiane fidei zelo succensus ad convertendum circostante paganos [...] et adhuc laborare disponas ut hoc plenius et efficacius exequaris nos tibi vices nostras'.

⁴⁴ Bysted, Jensen, Lind, *Jerusalem in the North*, pp. 195-204; Nielsen, 'The Missionary Man', pp. 103-110; Jonathan Lindström, *Biskopen och korståget 1206: om krig, kolonisation och Guds man i Norden* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 2015).

the crusading on this edge of the world, but rather depended on the local initiatives than diverted Roman Curia's attention from the crusades to the Holy Land and Constantinople.⁴⁵ It is telling nevertheless, that the web of connections intersecting in Anders Sunesen's persona was in Rome considered to be reliable enough to leave the North to his devices.

Finally, a good example of how attractive the connectedness and symbolic clout of the legatine office could appear to the local ecclesiastical elites can be offered if we consider the curious case of a counterfeit legate that appeared during the Danish crusade to Prussia in the 1200s and 1210s. The crusade was a partially competitive, partially cooperative effort of the archbishoprics of Lund and Gniezno, represented in the region by the Cistercian monasteries in Colbatz (Polish: Kołbacz) and Łęčno, respectively. It seems that the initiative for the crusade in the region originated in the mind of Abbot Godefrid of Łęčno. However, his enterprise was soon overtaken by Christian (future bishop of Prussia, r. 1215/16-1245), a monk from Colbatz, which was a Danish foundation from Esrum. Christian not only bypassed Godefrid in receiving support for the crusade from Rome but also from Gniezno and its Archbishop Henryk Kietlicz (r. 1199-1219). Thanks to a crusading bull from 1210, the Danish King Valdemar Sejr's troops entered Prussia and the king vowed to fight against the pagans and assist in their conversion. What was originally a local crusade in Pomerelia directed mainly from Greater Poland was becoming an international affair dominated by the Danish elites.⁴⁶

In the midst of the crusade, in March of 1213, Anders Sunesen received a bull from the pope regarding an imposter who passed as bishop and papal legate and who, after his capture, remained in Anders's custody.⁴⁷ According to the scholars who studied this unusual case, the exchange between Anders, the actual papal legate at the time, and Innocent III concerning the spurious emissary, most likely regarded the above-mentioned Godefrid from the monastery of Łęčno acting in the missionary region.⁴⁸ As a result of the pope's intervention, the false legatine and episcopal decisions were to be annulled, and the archbishop of Lund received permission to imprison the impersonator for life. Setting aside the fact that the papal bull of 1213 in all probability meant a decisive blow for Gniezno archbishopric's crusading efforts, the document witnesses of how much symbolic clout and institutional influence the legatine title offered so far as one was tempted to feign it.

Meeting in Skänninge in 1248

William of Modena returned to the North again in the 1230s, and for the last time in the 1240s, this time as Cardinal of Sabina. During his visit to Sweden, on March 1st, 1248 William together with Birger Magnusson (r. 1248-1266 as Birger Jarl) issued a document at the synod in Skänninge which was a clear echo of the Gregorian reform as well as the First (1123), Second (1139), and Fourth Lateran Councils (1215) and thus had a crucial importance

⁴⁵ Fønnesberg-Schmidt, *The Popes*, pp. 126-127.

⁴⁶ Bysted, Jensen, Jensen, Lind, *Jerusalem in the North*, pp. 232-234.

⁴⁷ *DD* s.1, vol. 5, no. 28, p 37: 'quendam falsarium in vinculis detinere qui sedis apostolice mentiens se legatum nomine ac officio episcopi usurpatis in multis pontificale presumpsit officium exercere'.

⁴⁸ Bysted, Jensen, Jensen, Lind, *Jerusalem in the North*, p. 234, and fn. 414.

for defining of the status of priests and bishops in Sweden. As he stated, upon his visit William found the Swedish priesthood in absolute disarray, something he attributed to the raging civil war in which King Erik the Lisp and Lame (r. 1222-1229, 1234-1250) fought against a part of the aristocracy. As a result of this chaos, many clergymen enjoyed wives or concubines which led to endemic nepotism when priestly sons inherited their fathers' offices. In effect, Church's property in Sweden was being alienated and William's intervention was to put an end to these practices.⁴⁹ The decrees of Skänninge had thus a direct impact on the relationship between the elite families and their members entering the Church's service. From that point, these groups were to be more clearly separated and the uncircumscribed flow of property between the secular and ecclesiastical elites was to be frozen or slowed down at the very least. In the light of new regulations introduced by the pope's legates at the time also the episcopal appointments could not consider men born out of properly sanctioned wedlock as used to happen earlier, at least not without a dispensation.⁵⁰ In other words, Scandinavian priests and bishops should be more angel-like, William insisted.

It is also important to take a closer look at the power position from which William was issuing his decree and the occasional node which made this position possible. Skänninge, where the meeting took place, lies just six kilometers from Birger Magnusson's and his family's power base in Bjälbo in Östergötland, meaning William of Modena was his guest during this visit. The alignment with Birger Jarl, the most serious contender to the position of acting ruler of Sweden at that point, and receiving his backing for the new regulations was for William a way to see papal provisions become implemented. Most likely William have also heard and approved of the so-called Second Swedish Crusade conquering south-western Finland, which Birger organized a decade earlier, in 1236/7.⁵¹ The political attraction between these two men must have been mutual since the powerful magnate benefitted from a papal plenipotentiary's recognition just as much. The document obviously secured also the ecclesiastical support of William's normative transformation. The current Archbishop of Uppsala, Jarler (r. 1236-1255) and his suffragan bishops were made responsible for reining in their subjects' morale and giving back to the pope what was duly his. The absence of the current king of Sweden from the document is conspicuous to say the least.

If we view the synodic decree of 1248 as a nodal point in which different networks interacted and from which others were excluded, we should conclude that the Skänninge provision was as much documenting the papal recognition of the alignment between Birger Jarl's and Swedish Church's vis-à-vis both the king and other groups of aristocracy, as it was putting this new coalition into existence. It is little wonder that in the very same year, King Erik

⁴⁹ *Svenskt Diplomatarium huvudkartotek över medeltidsbrev*, https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sdhk?SDHK=613&postid=sdhk_613 (accessed 2017-01-20), SDHK-nr: 613: 'in sueciam inuenimus regnum illud temporaliter & spiritualiter fere per totum mirabiliter & miserabiliter conturbatum. Erat siquidem guerra satis dura inter regem & quosdam nobiles, ex qua homicidia & incendia multa contigerant & rapine. spiritualiter autem eo quod fere omnes sacerdotes erant presbiterorum filii patrum uestigiis inherentes contrahendo sollempniter matrimonia uel publice concubinas habendo in sacris ordinibus constituti.'

⁵⁰ Nielsen, 'Vicarius Christi', pp. 15-18; Blomkvist, Brink, Lindkvist, 'The kingdom of Sweden', p. 201.

⁵¹ Blomkvist, Brink, Lindkvist, 'The kingdom of Sweden', p. 201; Olesen, 'The Swedish Expeditions', pp. 260-262.

recognized Birger's position and gave him the title of *jarl*, which made him a *de facto* ruler of Sweden. The far-reaching consequences behind this coalition materialized in William's document soon became tangible. Within three years from Skänninge synod Birger Jarl managed to marry off his daughter Rikissa to the future heir of Norway, decisively defeated the magnates opposing his hegemony at the Battle of Herrevadsbro (1251), and put his son Valdemar on the throne of Sweden (r. 1250-1275).

William of Modena's decree of 1248 introduced also new formalizations of the episcopal power and the influence they could exert on the Swedish elites' social capital. William's decree regulated the provisions of hospitality that visiting bishops could expect of their subjects. For instance, episcopal visitations in a diocese were to become more formalized, limited only to bishop's closest retinue, their length was limited to a maximum of four days, and payment for this sustenance became clearly defined.⁵² Previous ambiguities as to how many guests and by whom they could be invited were being cleared out. In other words, means or character of reception were no longer susceptible to negotiation, nor were they understood as a form of voluntary gift or an expression of friendship. From now on hospitality towards bishops constituted a forthright service and obligation, from which their subjects could simply buy themselves out.⁵³ In other words, the legate was durably transforming the material and formal means for the reproduction of the elite networks in Sweden.

In the same sway, William delineated also the power of bishops to destroy social networks of perpetrators of Church's regulations and its outright enemies. The above-mentioned separation between priests and their unlawful families was enforced under the ban of excommunication, if with some tolerance for the elderly priests who were permitted to keep their wives though obliged to keep chastity. Also bishops demanding undue hospitality from their clerical subjects risked being excommunicated. Besides these general regulations, the potential violators of the Dominican monasteries in Sigtuna and Skänninge run an exceptional risk of excommunication, even though the king and the jarl were explicitly excluded from this threat.⁵⁴

Such specific protection provided for the Dominicans in Sweden was not a coincidence. The preaching friars were indeed very close to William of Modena's heart. He considered them as an important element in a wider network aimed at full conversion of the Scandinavian and Baltic periphery. Already in the 1220s William installed Dominican priests throughout Livonia explicitly for missionary purposes, which was a process initiated by Anders Sunesen. Moreover, the Dominicans from Sigtuna supported by so many letters of indulgency by William of Modena during winter of 1247/48⁵⁵ became subsequently engaged in the promotion of the cult of the Swedish missionary martyrs such as Sts Eric and Henry, in whose footsteps Birger Jarl organized the above-mentioned crusade to Finland. Just two weeks before the meeting in Skänninge, William of Modena confirmed a pious book donation from

⁵² SDHK-nr: 613.

⁵³ SDHK-nr: 613.

⁵⁴ SDHK-nr: 613: 'seu in sacerdotes uel domesticos eorum manus iniciendo uiolentas, exceptis personis domini Regis & ducis, sententiam excommunicationis incurrant.'

⁵⁵ In the preceding 3 months Wilhelm issued at least six letters of indulgence to support the Dominican monasteries in Sigtuna and Skänninge (SDHK-nr: 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598).

Bishop Thomas of Åbo (124?-1245) to Sigtuna monastery.⁵⁶ Sigtuna Dominicans' special connection to the bishopric of Åbo continued to develop and flourish afterwards and eventually their prior, Johannes, ascended to the episcopal office there in 1286.⁵⁷

Conclusions

Although the examples discussed above do not exhaust the range of papal interventions in Nordic ecclesiastical politics or cover the full scope of legatine appointments during the period at hand, it is important to appreciate how through such momentary and momentous visits papal legates knotted many different types of networks which pulled together elites from the entire region and wider Europe. During legatine visits matters of ecclesiastical discipline or granting access (or required dispensation) to church offices were interwoven and interlaid with more topical issues of missioning and crusading in the region, reforming of monastic houses, establishing entirely new monastic orders and episcopal sees, or tying and untying dynastic alliances. The *spiritualia* flowed seamlessly into the *temporaila*.

The papal concerns of clerical purity, indulgences, and bringing salvation to the pagans represented in the cases discussed here – especially during the period leading up to the Fourth Lateran Council and directly afterwards – may have been universal and stated in sophisticated theological language. But in their practical application by the papal emissaries these issues often hinged on factors that turned out to be very person-related and often quite mundane. In the legatine appointments, rather than sending its plenipotentiaries into the unknown, the Roman Curia relied on pre-established contacts. It was through friendships, common acquaintances, and intercessions – especially these forged in the European educational centers – that the popes and their advisors could gather enough confidence that their emissaries' policies would not fall on barren ground. Through these channels the Roman Curia could also learn to know the members of the local Nordic elites either through intermediaries, or personally when they arrived over the Tiber on particularly pressing ecclesiastical and dynastical errands. Similarly, from the local elites' point of view, papal legates dispatched from Rome could be considered as an asset only if there was some pre-established notion about these figures embedded in the already locally anchored connections. As a result, the members of the local elites were prone to use the legates as leverage in their own politics by making them choose to side with some factions against others.

As we saw on Absalon's and Anders Sunesen's examples, the locally appointed papal legates functioned as virtual exchange bureaus converting and transubstantiating the papal authority and protection, recognition in international educational circles, or crusading appeals into local currencies and forms of social and political capital tying together powerful families, their local monastic foundations, and political ambitions both home and abroad. In other words, the local legates aligned the concerns of the universal Church with their own interests and

⁵⁶ SDHK-nr: 612; more on Bishop Thomas in: Olesen, 'The Swedish Expeditions', pp. 260-262.

⁵⁷ Heikkilä, *Sankt Henrikslegenden*, p. 62; Blomkvist, Brink, Lindkvist, 'The kingdom of Sweden', pp. 188-189, 201; Thomas Lindkvist, 'Crusades and Crusading Ideology in the Political History of Sweden, 1140-1500', in *Crusade and conversion on the Baltic frontier 1150-1400* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 119-113, at pp. 122-123; Bysted, Jensen, Jensen, Lind, *Jerusalem in the North*, pp. 260-262.

agendas. By appropriating the symbolic power and discourse of malediction from the Roman pontiffs in form of a holy, inseparable fusion of priestly *mysterium* and governmental *ministerium* invested in legatine office, they made the generals' ideas appear in the local context as general ideas. Finally, for the Nordic elites the papal legates – both Roman and local – constituted very appealing, incarnated annunciations of what a sacralized 'political technology of delegation' looked like. In this sense the legates transformed these elites' ideas of what the efficiency and representative majesty of their fully institutionalized governance and bureaucratic hierarchy could be like in the future.⁵⁸ No wonder that at that time popes began to consider them their angels.

⁵⁸ Franz Blatt, 'Minsterium – Mysterium', *Archivum latinitatis medii aevii* 4 (1928), pp. 80-81; Kantorowicz, *The King's two bodies*, p. 101; Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, pp. 158-159; Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and symbolic power*, ed. John B. Thompson, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1991), p. 248; Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Mystery of the Ministry: From Particular Wills to the General Will', in *Pierre Bourdieu and democratic politics: the mystery of ministry*, ed. by Loïc Wacquant (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), pp. 55-63, at pp. 58-61.