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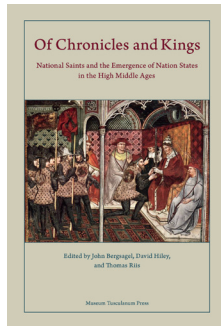
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John Bergsagel, David Hiley and Thomas Riis (eds.)
*Of Chronicles and Kings. National Saints and the Emergence of
 Nation States in the High Middle Ages*
 Danish Humanist Texts and Studies, 52
 Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2016
 336 pp., illus., music exx.
 ISBN 978-87-635-4260-9
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This is a collection of papers read during a symposium at The Royal Library in Copenhagen in October 2012, which has been turned into print by a highly competent group of editors and beautifully presented as a book by the publishers. I participated as a passive and silent member who was fascinated by the story collectively drawn up by the papers, but somewhat overwhelmed by the amount of details presented in oral form. With the book at hand, I am able to argue why its theme has such great importance to musicology, even if the majority of its articles do not concern music at all.

The occasion of the symposium was the recent publication of the manuscript in the Kiel University Library, MS S.H. 8 A.8°, in facsimile as well as in an edition of the music by John Bergsagel.¹ The manuscript contains the complete offices and masses for the liturgy of St *Kanutus dux et martyr* along with the earliest text of the Roskilde Chronicle.

The Danish duke Knud Lavard was killed in Haraldsted Woods near Ringsted on 7 January, 1131. According to contemporary chronicles representing the winning side in the ensuing civil war, his death was a treacherous murder instigated by his cousin Magnus, son of the ruling king, Niels. The star of Knud Lavard was in ascendance at the time, and he was son of Erik I the Good, the predecessor as king and brother of the ageing Niels, and therefore a dangerous competitor for the Danish throne. The son of Knud Lavard, Valdemar I the Great (king 1157–1182), campaigned to get his father canonized as a Christian martyr, and succeeded in 1170, when a great church festival in Ringsted celebrated his *translatio* on 25 June.

The main question of the symposium was how to view the creation of a royal saint. Was it primarily a question of politics, where the papal endorsement, the creation of a liturgy with its texts and music and its institution of feast days in dependent areas all participated in a process of bolstering a family's or clan's grasp on the power? Was it a demonstration of how important it was to have a saint of royal blood in your lineage, or even better a succession of saints? And among saints a martyr seems to trump the lesser ranks. Or did the church have deeper motives for its involvement in the recently

¹ See my review in *Danish Yearbook of Musicology*, 38 (2010/11), 89–92.

Christianized Scandinavia? The process of creating saints with all their paraphernalia could be a medium of state building, of organizing public discussions and of domination of the spirituality of an extended area, of a kingdom.

Reading the book cover to cover is as exiting as following the unfolding of evidence in a court case. The questions concerning the precise circumstances of the killing itself are of course not possible to answer as the sources transmit the views of the victorious side only. The sources and their different interpretations are carefully and clearly presented in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the interplay between religion, politics, liturgy, poetry and music.

Eric Christiansen opens with a discussion of the idea of a *patria*, a mother country, in the writing of history in chronicles of the 12th century. He finds that the idea had a weaker position than it had in the Roman history writing of Antiquity. The interest in describing regions, dynasties, rulers and heroes competed strongly with the *patria*, and so did the wish to write general history in support of the Christian faith. However, through the century we can trace a tendency to describe a homeland in order to legitimize the ruling power, and the history of the *patria* could be held up as moral mirror for future rulers. Also the church had an interest in creating national saints in support of a Christian nation. Saxo's *Gesta danorum* (written during the decades around 1200) became a paradigm of this type of writing, which much later evolved into nationalistic history.

The writing of history concerning the life and death of Knud Lavard in connection with the process of his canonization is examined by John Bergsagel. Much has disappeared, but the many readings incorporated in his Offices may constitute excerpts of a legend, which insists on his death being martyrdom, not just an accidental murder of a powerful man. Arguments in this vein must in the end have swayed the pope. The 12th century was dominated by the idea of crusading. A long row of kings was canonized as crusader saints, some of them living before the first crusade, but showing the desired crusading spirit, and older saints were re-interpreted as protectors of crusading. Kurt Villads Jensen demonstrates how the life and deeds of Knud Lavard during the period after his death was interpreted in the light of the crusading spirit to fit into this pattern, completely in accord with the expansionist political agenda of his son, King Valdemar I.

Thomas Riis and John H. Lind further explore the political scene around the canonization of St Kanutus. Lind concentrates on the role of Knud Lavard as *knes* (or king) of the Abodrites, a Slavic people inhabiting the shores of the Baltic Sea between Schleswig and Poland. He even ventures upon a piece of contrafactual history in order to show that if he had survived, and Magnus had followed his father as king, Knud Lavard would still have a strong political base as a Danish duke and a vassal of the German empire. The civil war resulting from his death forced the Danish kingdom to acknowledge the sovereignty of the emperor.

The strong political impetus for his canonization is obvious in the liturgical texts of his office. Nils Holger Petersen's reading of them maintains this aspect of the image of

the saint as a Christian hero, which survived into later centuries. But he underscores that Knud Lavard is depicted as in possession of the qualities of humility as a leader that made him a saint acceptable for all fractions of the Danish society. A different reading of the liturgy by Sigbjørn Olsen Sønnesyn argues that it was not that easy to harness the church to political agendas. The facts and legends surrounding Knud Lavard was used by the universal church to include all participating in the liturgy in the search for salvation in complete accordance with 12th century theology, and it created a saint with whom it was easy for the people of the newly Christianized northern region to identify.

The creation of a liturgy to celebrate a new saint demanded a high level of expertise and probably put the transnational machinery of the church at work. Local talent wrote the proses and poems necessitating knowledge of the stories and legends surrounding the saint and probably collaborated with foreign experts. The rich repertory of liturgies for similar saints in other regions were mined for fitting songs, which could be adapted and transformed to serve new purposes – and, of course, new songs were composed in the style of the period.

In his introduction to and comments on the edition of the complete Knud Lavard liturgy John Bergsagel has already discussed the strong (Northern) English influence on its texts and music. The second half of the present book charts its contexts by presenting other royal liturgies, some of them influencing the Knud Lavard songs.

Roman Hankeln examines the liturgy of St *Kanutus rex et martyr*, the uncle of Knud Lavard. This saint, King Knud IV, was killed by his enemies before the altar in St Alban in Odense in 1086, and he was canonized in 1100 after pressure from his brother, King Erik I, the father of Knud Lavard. A group of monks from Evesham Abbey was fetched to Odense to make the creation of the liturgy possible. Hankeln proposes a reconstruction of the original monastic service by sifting through the repertories of printed breviaries and missals from around 1500; in this project he builds on and augments a study by Bergsagel published in 1980.² Until recently the little music known for this liturgy could be found only by relating its texts with known songs from the standard repertory. A newly discovered fragment of a noted antiphoner from the 15th century gives a welcome first-hand glimpse of its music. Hankeln analyses the most extensive preserved song, the Magnificat antiphon ‘Ossibus egregiis’ and finds that it is typical for antiphons of the late 12th century – he includes very useful complete colour facsimiles of the fragments.

The offices of other saints are carefully treated including discussions of generous music examples by Ann-Marie Nilsson (St Erik), David Hiley (St Oswin) and John Caldwell (St Mildred). John Toy surveys the fast dissemination of the celebration of St Thomas of Canterbury in Scandinavia during the last decades of the 12th century. Finally, Owain Tudor Edwards describes the strange fate of St David ending up as the national saint of Wales, as a secular symbol of Welsh patriotism.

2 John Bergsagel, ‘Songs for St. Knud the King’, *Musik & Forskning*, 6 (1980), 152–66.

I can detect a single shortfall of this book only. It misses an index of its wealth of names, sources, titles of songs and texts mentioned, literature etc. The high level of learning and attention to details, which characterize the book, would be very much easier to put in use with the help of an index. But, as I started by saying, reading straight through can be recommended. This imparts lots of new information on a crucial period in Danish history and insights into a process of incorporation of the region into an early European community.

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