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Florian Wöller • Ueli Zahnd (eds.)

Dominican Culture, Dominican Theology

The Order of Preachers and Its Spheres of Action (1215 – ca. 1600)

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Jan C. Klok
Volker Leppin
Ulli Roth

curator
Jan C. Klok

Annemarie Pilarski
Ulrike Treusch
directorium Societatis

Krijn Pansters
praeses Societatis

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The Dominicans and 'the Others' The Friars Preachers as Vanguard Against Pagans, Orthodox, Jews, Muslims, and Heretics. The Case of the Baltic Sea Region

Johnny Grandjean Gøgsig Jakobsen

The Dominicans were an order of preachers initially focused on convincing heretics about their erroneous belief and bringing them back to a sound religious track.[1] The Friars Preachers, however, soon developed into an order with many other tasks and functions, of which the most important one probably was to preach to people who already were good Catholic Christians, in order to keep them solidly grounded within the Roman Church and its understanding of true Christianity.[2] But one could say that it remained within the Dominican DNA to be vigilant against all those who in words or actions did not fully conform to Roman Christianity—regardless if it was as Christians following a different road than the one leading to Rome or as non-Christians of a different religion. And, one might add, even if such nonbelievers were present in local society or not.

The Dominican role as inquisitors against heretics and as missionaries towards pagans, Muslims and Jews are topics that have already received a significant amount of scholarly attention. Especially famous, or infamous, is the Dominican involvement in the Inquisition against heresy, which is still the unpleasant hallmark of the Dominican Order for many people outside Dominican studies, and already laid out in all its horrors in the late 19th century by Henry Charles Lea.[3] Numerous later studies have significantly added, corrected and nuanced our knowledge of how Dominican friars took part in both the Papal Inquisition and the various local episcopal inquisitions throughout the Middle Ages.[4] In the first decade of the 21st century, the Historical Institute of

1 For a general introduction to the background and beginning of the Dominican Order, see Hinnebusch, William A.: *The History of the Dominican Order (vol. 1): Origins and Growth to 1500*, New York 1966.; Tugwell, Simon, ed.: *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings*, London 1982; and Lawrence, Clifford H.: *The Friars: The Impact of the Early Mendicant Movement on Western Society*, London/New York 1994.

2 Jakobsen, Johnny G.G.: "'What Jesus means is...': The Dominican Order as Theological Authority for Laity and Clergy in Medieval Northern Europe", in eds. S. Kangas/M. Korpiola/T. Ainonen: *Authorities in the Middle Ages. Influence, Legitimacy, and Power in Medieval Society* (Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture 12), Berlin 2013, pp. 123–144.

3 Lea, Henry C.: *A History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages*, vol. 1, New York 1888.

4 In addition to the ones named in the following, I have profited particularly from the works of Lerner, Robert E.: *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1972; Kieckhefer, Richard: "The Office of Inquisition and Medieval Heresy: The Transition from Personal to Institutional Jurisdiction", in *The Journal of Eccle-*

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the Dominican Order itself held a series of conferences on the very topic, from which voluminous proceedings have been published.[5] The topic still attracts attention from great scholarship, of whom—among many others—I would just like to name Christine Caldwell Ames, who has shown how inquisition was virtually in the blood of many Dominican friars, be they officially appointed inquisitors or not, and how this 'righteous persecution' of heresy in all its forms was seen as an important *raison d'être* of Dominican life.[6] At the conference, from which these proceedings derive, we have also heard about the Dominican identity as inquisitors from Marcel Bubert, and in a more artistic and iconographic sense from Elias Füllenbach with the 'Dogs of the Lord—the *Domini canes*'.[7]

Likewise, Dominican involvement in the mission towards non-Christians from the 13th century onwards is not a novel topic. The standard work on the matter is still Berthold Altaner's book from 1924, *Die Dominikanermissionen des 13. Jahrhunderts*, with chapters devoted to the different Dominican missions along the fringes of Latin Europe.[8] As noted by Altaner, it would seem as if there was a close connection between preaching crusades against the enemies of the Latin Church and trying to win the latter over by purely missionary efforts; and the Friars Preachers were highly appreciated as crusade preachers all over Europe throughout the 13th century. The mendicant task as preachers of the Cross has been carefully studied by Christoph Maier,[9] while I myself have looked at Dominican crusade preaching in the Baltic Sea region.[10] Additionally, William

siastical History 46 (1995), pp. 36–61; Kelly, Henry A.: "Trial Procedures against Wyclif and Wycliffites in England and at the Council of Constance", in *Huntington Library Quarterly* 61 (1999), pp. 1–28; Kras, Paweł: "Dominican Inquisitors in Medieval Poland (14th–15th c.)", in ed. W. Hoyer: *Praedicatores, inquisitores (vol. I): The Dominicans and the Medieval Inquisition*, Rome 2004, pp. 249–309; Segl, Peter: "Dominikaner und Inquisition im Heiligen Römischen Reich", in ed. Hoyer 2004, pp. 211–248; Springer, Karl-Bernward: "Dominican Inquisition in the Archdiocese of Mainz (1348–1520)", in ed. Hoyer 2004, pp. 311–393; Forrest, Ian: *The Detection of Heresy*, Oxford 2005; Decker, Rainer: *Witchcraft & the Papacy. An Account Drawing on the Formerly Secret Records of the Roman Inquisition*, Charlottesville/London 2008; Van Engen, John: *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life: The Devotio Moderna and the World of the Later Middle Ages*, Philadelphia 2008; Champion, Matthew: "Scourging the Temple of God – Toward an Understanding of Nicolas Jacquier's *Flagellum haereticorum fascinariorum*", in *Parergon* 28 (2011), pp. 1–24; Moore, Jill: *Inquisition and its Organisation in Italy, 1250–1350* (Heresy and Inquisition in the Middle Ages 8), York 2019.

5 *Praedicatores, inquisitores*, vols. I–III, various editors, Rome 2004–2008.

6 Ames, Christine C.: *Righteous Persecution: Inquisition, Dominicans, and Christianity in the Middle Ages*, Philadelphia 2009.

7 I refer to the contribution to the present volume by Marcel Bubert, "Black Friars as Heresy Experts. Dominican Identities and Inquisitorial Expert Culture in Late Medieval France and Aragon", pp. 43–58, and the conference paper by Elias H. Füllenbach, "'Dogs of the Lord' in early Dominican Iconography", presented on 1 July 2021 respectively.

8 Altaner, Berthold: *Die Dominikanermissionen des 13. Jahrhunderts*, Habelschwerdt 1924.

9 Maier, Christoph T.: *Preaching the Crusades: Mendicant Friars and the Cross in the Thirteenth Century*, Cambridge 1994.

10 Jakobsen, Johnny G.G.: "Preachers of War – Dominican Friars as Promoters of the Crusades in the Baltic Region in the Thirteenth Century", in eds. R. Kotecki/C.S. Jensen/S. Bennett: *Christianity and War in Medieval East Central Europe and Scandinavia*, Leeds 2021, pp. 97–115.

Hinnebusch, the great author of the basic work on Dominican history in the Middle Ages, has stressed the importance of mission to the Dominican Order, especially in its early days.[11] In his own studies of the early Friars Preachers in England, he pointed out how the friars there appear to have been charged with the task of converting Jews.[12]

Recently, however, the whole concept of a Dominican mission in the Middle Ages has been challenged. One of the first challenges came from Robin Vose, who in his studies of Dominican contacts with Muslims and Jews in the Spanish provinces could not find any actual evidence for the customarily claimed efforts of the friars to convert their neighbours to Christianity.[13] If anything, it would appear rather that the Friars Preachers tried to keep the different religious communities as separated as possible in order to avoid the danger of Catholic Christians picking up heretical ideas from Jewish and Muslim literature and practices.[14] Harvey Hames has found evidence that a similar conclusion had been reached by the Mallorcan theologian, Ramon Llull (d. 1315–16), who to Llull's great disappointment realised that the Spanish Dominicans—contrary to his expectations—really could not be bothered with a mission to the Jews and Muslims.[15] Also on the northeastern fringes of medieval Latin Christianity, Olga Kozubska-Andrusiv, based on her thorough studies of sources and historiography concerning the Dominican mission to the Orthodox Ruthenians in Kievan Rus' (in present-day Ukraine), seriously had to question whether any such mission had ever taken place. Rather, the main or even sole focus of the friars appears to have been aimed at the Latin minorities already present.[16] Likewise, further north in Estonia, Tiina Kala from her exhaustive studies of the material from the Dominican convent in Tallinn has found no evidence of any missionary work of the friars among the pagan Estonians.[17]

For comparative reasons, I have recently summed up what can be found for a Dominican mission towards non-Catholics along the borders of Southeastern and Central Eastern Europe.[18] This pointed to some organised Dominican efforts to convert Orthodox Greeks in Constantinople and on the islands of Crete and Chios,[19] along with a general conversion of the Orthodox Gheg people of north-

[11] Hinnebusch 1966, pp. 252–253.

[12] Hinnebusch, William A.: *The Early English Friars Preachers* (Dissertationes historicae 14), Rome 1951, pp. 11 and 315.

[13] Vose, Robin: *Dominicans, Muslims and Jews in the Medieval Crown of Aragon*, Cambridge 2009.

[14] Vose 2009, pp. 7–8.

[15] Hames, Harvey J.: "Through Ramon Llull's Looking Glass: What was the Thirteenth-Century Dominican Mission Really About?", in eds. M.I. Ripoll/M. Tortella: *Ramon Llull i el lul·lisme: pensament i llenguatge* (Col·leccio Blaquerna 10), Barcelona 2012, pp. 51–74: 52 and 71–72.

[16] Kozubska-Andrusiv, Olga: "The Dominicans in Thirteenth-Century Kievan Rus': History and Historiography", in *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU* 9 (2003), pp. 203–223.

[17] Kala, Tiina: *Jutlustajad ja hingede päästjad: Dominiiklaste ordu ja Tallinna püha Katariina konvent*, Tallinn 2013, pp. 53–54.

[18] Jakobsen, Johnny G.G.: "Dominican Mission in the Baltic Sea Region – with Comparative Looks to Mendicant Mission on the Entire East-European Frontier", in *Journal of Medieval Monastic Studies* 7 (2018), pp. 201–235: 206–215.

[19] Tsougarakis, Nickiphoros I.: *The Latin Religious Orders in Medieval Greece 1204–1500* (Me-

ern Albania,[20] and short-lived missionary success among the pagan Cumans in Hungary.[21] But on the whole, the evidence for any large-scale Dominican mission in these regions is admittedly scarce. Thus, it may be worth re-evaluating the extent to which conversion of non-Catholics was an issue on the Dominican agenda in the Middle Ages at all, or whether it was rather an invention by the Order's own historians in the 16th century made to fit with its then new missionary focus in the Americas, Africa and Asia, in close rivalry with the Jesuit Order.

In the following, I will present and discuss what evidence can be found in the extant sources of Dominican involvement with 'the Others'—i.e. pagans, Orthodox, Jews, Muslims and heretics—in the Baltic Sea region: a regional focus, which as it turns out, both differs from and resembles the rest of Dominican Europe.

1. Dominicans and Pagans in the Baltic Sea Region

Saint Dominic himself is said to have had a profound interest in the conversion of pagans, something that he allegedly planned to devote the remainder of his life to, had he not suddenly died in 1221.[22] Regardless whether Saint Dominic really had a special interest in mission or not, later authors of the Order certainly liked to ascribe such a personal urge to him.[23] Scholars have argued about the extent to which Dominic's own missionary plans were aimed at the Cumans in Hungary or the Prussians, Livonians and Estonians along the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea.[24] The focus in the following, however, is devoted to the missionary performance of Saint Dominic's later brethren.[25]

In the Dominican context, the Baltic Sea region was divided between the provinces of Teutonia (from 1303 Saxonia), Polonia and Dacia (fig. 22.1). From a missionary point of view, pagan peoples could still be found in large numbers along the southeastern, eastern and northeastern shores of the Baltic Sea throughout the 13th century, some even way into the 15th century. Beyond this increasingly thinner pagan frontier zone were the Russian Orthodox principalities, with whom both the Teutonic Order and the Scandinavian kings were recurrently at war.

dieval Church Studies 18), Turnhout 2012.

20 Altaner 1924, p. 158; Stavrianos, Leften S.: *The Balkans since 1453*, London 2000, pp. 497–498.

21 Altaner 1924, pp. 142–148; Berend, Nora: *At the Gate of Christendom: Jews, Muslims and 'Pagans' in Medieval Hungary, c. 1000–c. 1300*, Cambridge 2001, pp. 213–219.

22 Tugwell 1998, p. 83; Halvorsen 2002, pp. 154–157.

23 Altaner 1924, pp. 5–6; Berend 2001, p. 216.

24 See for instance Altaner 1924, pp. 3–4; Tugwell, Simon: "Notes on the Life of St Dominic", in *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 68 (1998), pp. 5–116: 74–75 and 81–82; Halvorsen, Per B.: *Dominikus – En europeers liv på 1200-tallet*, Oslo 2002, pp. 154–157; Tamm, Marek: "When did the Dominicans arrive in Tallinn?", in *Past: Ajalookultuuri ajakiri* 4 (2009), pp. 35–45: 35–37.

25 This subchapter is largely based on observations and conclusions presented in Jakobsen 2018.

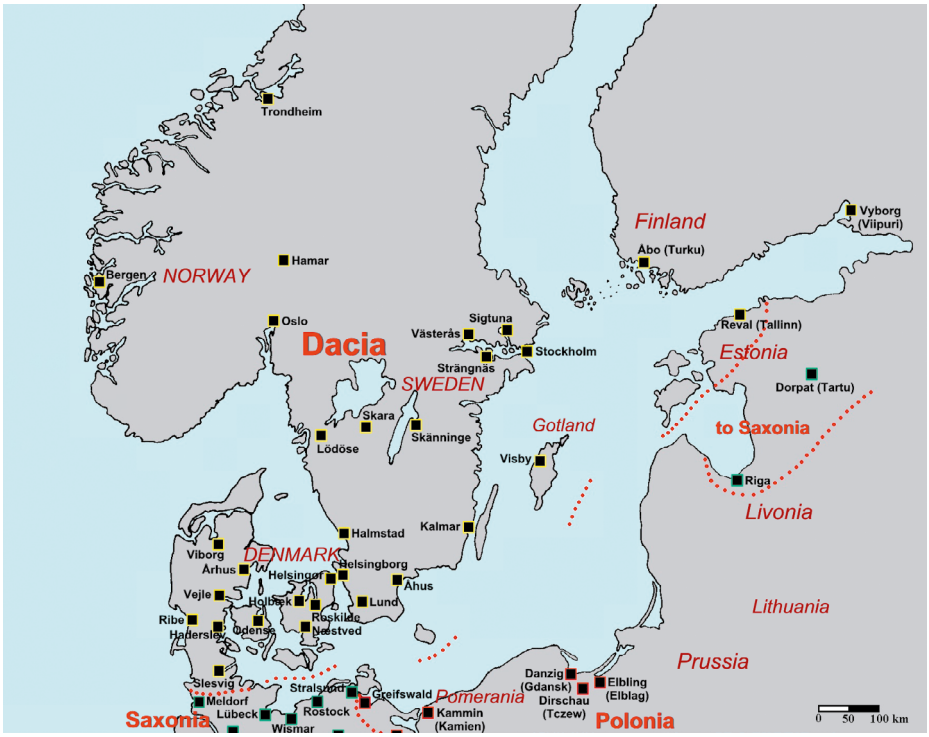


Fig. 22.1: Map of Dominican convents and provinces in the Baltic Sea region around 1500. While the convent in Tallinn was affiliated to the province of Dacia, the convents in Riga and Tartu constituted an enclave ('natio Livonie') belonging to the province of Teutonia/Saxonia. Map by the author.

2. The Dominican Mission to the Pagans in Pomerania, Prussia, and Lithuania

In the northernmost part of the Dominican province of Polonia, the Order's convents in Sandomierz, Płock and Gdańsk in present-day Poland were all founded in the 1220–30s, and they may very well have formed a string of bases for missionary activity in these regions;[26] the latter was explicitly founded around 1227 by Duke Świętopełk II of Pomerania "for the conversion of pagans".[27] The region had in fact already been Christianised in the preceding centuries, but pagan practices still appear to have prevailed in the city and its hinterland at this

[26] Altaner 1924, pp. 162–163; Kłoczowski, Jerzy: "Dominicans of the Polish Province in the Middle Ages", in ed. J. Kłoczowski: *The Christian Community of Medieval Poland* (Polish Historical Library 2), Warsaw 1981, 73–118: 85.

[27] *Preußisches Urkundenbuch – Politische Abteilung* [*PUB*], Königsberg 1882ff., vol. 1.1, no. 58 / *Ex Diplomatarium Ordinis Predicatorum* [*ExDOP*], ed. J.G.G. Jakobsen, Centre for Dominican Studies of Dacia 2017ff., at http://www.jggj.dk/ExDOP.htm (accessed on 31 July 2024), 1227 5/5: "per dilectos filios fratres ordinis predicatorum, locum in terra sua pro paganorum conversione dederunt fratribus supradictis."

time.[28] Likewise, the foundations in the Prussian towns of Chełmno and Elbląg in the 1230–40s coincided with conquests of the Teutonic Order.[29] The Dominican convent foundation in Elbląg was papally approved by Cardinal Legate William of Modena in 1242, who stated that the Friars Preachers from here were to assist or replace the Cistercian Order in administering the *cura animarum* of the newly converted souls.[30] The Friars Preachers apparently complied quite well with the given missionary tasks, because when the Teutonic grandmaster Anno von Sangershausen gave the Order land and privileges for a convent foundation in Toruń in 1263, this explicitly happened in gratitude for the diligence and application with which the friars had cultivated the fields of the Lord to bear rich fruit in Prussia and Livonia.[31]

When Pope Innocent IV in 1246 made Albert Suerbeer archbishop of Prussia, he also allowed the new archbishop to bring along with him a Fr. Nicolaus of the Order of Preachers for the mission in Prussia, since the friar spoke the Prussian language.[32] Fr. Nicolaus was probably affiliated with the convent in Lübeck, as this was the place where the archbishop had long resided. He may be identical with the Fr. Nicolaus of the same convent, who later that same year was involved with the baptism of captives from Samland brought to Lübeck.[33]

From the province of Polonia, perhaps along with the convent in Riga, Dominican missionaries went into pagan Lithuania, but only little is known of their activities. At least some Friars Preachers did engage in the task of converting Lithuanians. It was a Dominican bishop, Henricus of Chełmno, who on behalf of the pope crowned the grand duke of Lithuania, Mindaugas, as a Christian king in 1253. It would appear, however, that the Lithuanian conversion was more politically motivated than religiously, and Mindaugas and his entire grand duchy reverted to paganism in 1261. Also after the apostasy and murder of King Mindaugas, Dominican friars from Polonia continued to work in the pagan kingdom, but the Lithuanian mission was henceforth dominated by Friars Minor, who far outnumbered the Friars Preachers in the country. The last

[28] Pac, Teresa: "Dominican Order in the Christianization Process in Gdańsk – An Art Historical Prospective", in eds. D.A. Dekański/A. Gołembnik/M. Grubka: *Dominikanie Gdańsk – Polska – Europa*, Gdańsk 2003, pp. 221–229: 221–223.

[29] Altaner 1924, p. 177; Carstenn, Edward: *Geschichte der Hansestadt Elbing*, Elbląg 1937, p. 10; Sarnowsky, Jürgen: "Dominikaner und Franziskaner im Ordensland Preußen", in eds. M. Robson/J. Röhrkasten: *Franciscan Organisation in the Mendicant Context* (Vita regularis 44), Münster 2010, pp. 43–64: 45 and 47.

[30] *Codex Diplomaticus Warmiensis* [*CDW*], eds. C.P. Woelky et al., 8 vols., Mainz 1860–1935, vol. 1, no. 4 / *ExDOP* 1242 17/3.

[31] *PUB*, vol. 1.2, no. 197 / *ExDOP* 1263 2/4. Altaner 1924, pp. 177–179: "Quoniam inconfusibiles operarii sunt in agro Dominico fratres de ordine predicatorum, de quorum laboribus germinare fructus uberes cepit Pruscia et rigata Lyvonia luxuriante messis habundantia jocundari."

[32] *Die Gründung des Erzbistums Preußen 1245/1246* [*GEP*], ed. K. Forstreuter, in *Jahrbuch der Albertus-Universität zu Königsberg/Pr.* 10 (1960), pp. 9–31: 4 / *ExDOP* 1246 10/1.

[33] *PUB*, vol. 1.1, no. 189 / *ExDOP* 1246 14/10.

Lithuanian district was officially Christianised in 1413, but paganism allegedly remained strong for a long time among the peasantry.[34]

3. The Dominican Mission to the Pagans in Livonia

In Livonia, the conversion of pagans was mainly a matter for the German bishops of Riga and Tartu, who nominally functioned as both ecclesiastical and lay rulers of large parts of the country. The submission also here happened by military force, and it was left to the secular and religious clergy moving in afterwards to convince the surviving Livonians of the grace of Christianity. The Bishop of Riga had a Dominican convent founded in the city in 1234, with the explicit hope that the friars would continue to help establish Christianity in and around Livonia through their studies and labour.[35] The Dominican house in Riga was manned with German friars as a maritime enclave of the province of Teutonia, and in the late 13th century another convent was founded in Tartu.[36] It has been suggested that Friars Preachers from the convent in Riga took part in the mission to Lithuania in the mid-13th century, since many of the friars working there had German names.[37]

If not before, then at least by the beginning of the 14th century, the Friars Preachers in Riga had taken a positive and protective position towards apostatised neophytes. When the Archbishop of Riga was collecting material for a juridical attack on the Teutonic Order in 1312, the Friars Preachers in Riga and Tartu could add to the list the claim that Christianity had made no progress in Livonian districts governed by the military order, and it was commonly said that "due to the rigor of the knightly brothers, faith dies among the neophytes." As contemporary proof of this, the friars explained how the recently converted tribe of the Semigallians in southern Livonia had begun to revert to paganism due to the harsh suppression enacted by the Teutonic administrators.[38] This does not necessarily prove that Friars Preachers had taken part in the initial conversion of the Semigallians, but at least now they claimed responsibility for keeping them in the Church—and for securing the continued Christianisation

[34] Altaner 1924, p. 185; Kłoczowski 1981, pp. 87 and 95; Baronas, Darius/Rowell, S.C.: *The Conversion of Lithuania – From Pagan Barbarians to Late Medieval Christians*, Vilnius 2015.

[35] *Mitteilungen aus dem Gebiet der Geschichte Liv-, Est- und Kurlands* [*MGLEK*], Riga/Leipzig 1837–1939, vol. 12, no. 4, p. 372 / *ExDOP* 1234 8/9: "quod ibidem mansionem fratres faciant memorati sperantes, quod per eorum studium et labores in Lyvonia et terris adjacentibus fides crescere debeat Cristiana."

[36] Walther-Wittenheim, Gertrud von: *Die Dominikaner in Livland – Die natio Livoniae* (Dissertationes historicae 9), Rome 1938, pp. 6–8 and 12–13; Nazarova, Evgenija L.: "The Dominicans' Contribution to Spreading of Christianity along the Southern Shore of the Gulf of Finland. The 13th Century", in eds. Dekański/Gołembnik/Grubka 2003, pp. 129–137: 130.

[37] Baronas/Rowell 2015, p. 90.

[38] *Das Zeugenverhör des Franciscus de Moliano (1312)* [*ZFM*], ed. A. Seraphim, Königsberg 1912, no. 13, art. 17; no. 17, art. 17; and no. 19, art. 32. Walther-Wittenheim 1938, p. 102.

in Livonia.[39] In 1336, Bishop Engelbert of Tartu threatened those responsible within the Teutonic Order with excommunication if they continued to prevent Dominican and Franciscan friars, together with other secular and religious clergy, from "preaching God's word among pagans and infidels, as they have been sent out to do by their superiors."[40]

4. The Dominican Mission to the Pagans in Estonia

In early-13th-century Estonia, the pagan tribes were pressured from two sides. In addition to the campaign launched by the Bishop of Riga, a similar Danish endeavour was implemented from the seaside by King Valdemar II of Denmark and the Archbishop of Lund against the island of Saaremaa in 1206 and the northern mainland in 1219—both campaigns having papal blessings. Attempts to Christianise the Estonians were made by both the Danish and German side, and although temporarily interrupted by pagan uprisings, Christianity appears to have been gradually established in Estonia from the 1220s onwards.[41] A Dominican bishop, Heinrich, was installed in the bishopric of Ösel-Wiek in northwestern Estonia in 1234, with additional missionary obligations for the northeastern part of the country at the innermost part of the Gulf of Finland. To what extent Bishop Heinrich may have used his own Dominican brethren based in Riga to comply with these missionary tasks is unknown, but he must have been inclined to do so, partly due to his own orderly affiliation, partly since alternative options were extremely scarce.[42]

On the central northern coast of Estonia, the castle and eventual city of Tallinn, along with the adjacent counties, had since the conquest in 1219 formed a diocese of its own under Danish supremacy, both in terms of royal lordship and ecclesiastically as a part of the Danish church province. Thus, when a Dominican convent was founded at some point in the second quarter of the 13th century, it was a matter for the Order's Scandinavian province of Dacia. Whether the convent was founded in 1229, as claimed by a local Dominican chronicle, or not until 1246, is up for debate,[43] but at least by the mid-13th century a Dominican convent of friars was present in the new and emerging city.

Just as it would seem obvious to suggest a missionary aim for the German-

[39] *Liv-, Est- und Kurländisches Urkundenbuch* [*LEKUB*], ed. F.G. von Bunge, Tallinn 1853–1867, 1. ser., vol. 6, no. 2769 / *ExDOP* 1311 17/2.

[40] *LEKUB*, 1. ser., vol. 2, no. 778 / *ExDOP* 1336 15/11: "Vobis etiam districte precipimus et mandamus, ut fratres predicatorum et minorum ordinum, nec non religiosos alios et clericos seculares per ipsorum superiores ad predicandum paganis et infidelibus verbum Dei missos."

[41] Kala, Tiina: "The Incorporation of the Northern Baltic Lands into the Western Christian World", in ed. A.V. Murray: *Crusade and Conversion on the Baltic Frontier 1150–1500*, Aldershot 2001, pp. 3–20; Selart, Anti: *Livonia, Rus' and the Baltic Crusades in the Thirteenth Century* (East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450–1450, 29), Leiden 2015, pp. 85–88.

[42] Walther-Wittenheim 1938, pp. 16–17; Nazarova 2003; Selart 2015, pp. 155–156.

[43] For the discussion of the year of foundation for the first Dominican convent in Tallinn, see Tamm 2009, pp. 40–44; and Kala 2013, pp. 70–79.

Dominican foundations in Riga and Tartu, it is tempting to see similar plans for the overseas Dacian-Dominican convent foundation in Tallinn, directed at the conversion of the pagan Estonians. That such a use of Friars Preachers within the Kingdom of Denmark was advocated by the Order itself, at least initially, is seen from a letter of recommendation that the first friars arriving to Denmark in 1221 brought along with them from Pope Honorius III to King Valdemar II, in which it was stated that the friars partly came to "evangelise the name of our lord Jesus Christ to the pagans".[44] The text seems to be based on a general bull, *Cum qui recipit*, widely issued in the period 4 February to 25 May 1221, but the wording is exceptional in the sense that the Danish letter remains the only text from the time of Saint Dominic that explicitly states an evangelical obligation of the friars towards the pagans.[45]

In addition, it has been suggested that certain elements in the *Rotulus pugillaris*, a manual for the study of theology produced by Fr. Augustinus de Dacia in the third quarter of the 13th century,[46] may in fact also reflect the ongoing missionary work in Estonia, which might be expressed in the description of the Friars Preachers as *fidei pugiles* ("the forehead of Faith") and in a slight variation in the focus of the two extant versions on moral theology in the one and apologetics in the other.[47]

Apart from the abovementioned mandate to Bishop Heinrich of Ösel-Wiek to establish Christianity among the pagan tribes of northeastern Estonia beyond "the already converted Estonians" in the diocese of Tallinn, however, there is no concrete evidence of any missionary effort of the Friars Preachers among the pagans in Estonia. On the contrary, Dominican relations with the rural population in the diocese of Tallinn are not recorded until the beginning of the 15th century, when conversion had long since taken place.[48] Indeed, the sole extant reference to Dominican-pagan contact in or around Tallinn is of the most negative kind, since a chronicle of the early Dacian province states that it was hostile Estonian pagans who drove out the first Dominican convent from Tallinn sometime between 1229 and 1246.[49] Although scholars have questioned the veracity

[44] *Diplomatarium Danicum* [*DD*], Copenhagen 1938ff., 1. ser., vol. 5, no. 194 / *Diplomatarium Ordinis Predicatorum Dacie* [*DOPD*], ed. J.G.G. Jakobsen, Centre for Dominican Studies of Dacia 2005ff., at http://www.jggj.dk/DOPD.htm (accessed on 31 July 2024), 1221 6/5: "ut nomen evangelizent Domini nostri Jhesu Christi gentibus". The term *gentibus*, a plural form of *gens*, strictly speaking just means "peoples, tribes, nations", but in high medieval religious texts it is the common term for "pagans".

[45] Tugwell 1998, pp. 74–75 and 81–82.

[46] The *Rotulus* is further presented later in this article, as well as in the article in this volume by Christian Troelsgård, "Mnemonic Verse, Theology, and Pedagogy in Augustinus de Dacia's (d. 1285) *Rotulus pugillaris*", pp. 93–108.

[47] Senner, Walter: "Die Studienorganisation des Dominikanerordens im Mittelalter mit Berücksichtigung Estlands", in ed. R. Altnurme: *Estnische Kirchengeschichte im vorigen Jahrtausend*, Kiel 2001, pp. 26–43: 36: "Ob wir darin einen Niederschlag entsprechender Missionserfahrungen in Estland sehen dürfen?"

[48] Kala 2013, pp. 323–330; along with personal email correspondence between Tiina Kala and myself on the topic.

[49] *Historia ordinis predicatorum im Dacia* [*HOPD*], ed. J.G.G. Jakobsen, Centre for Dominican Studies of Dacia 2007, at http://www.jggj.dk/HOPD.htm (accessed on 31 July 2024):

of this accusation against the pagans and have preferred to regard the expulsion as being caused by the German Sword Brothers,[50] the mere claim by the chronicler clearly shows that the Tallinn-Dominican attitude towards pagan Estonians was not very amicable—at least not at the time around 1260 when the chronicle was written.

5. The Dominican Mission to the Pagans in Finland, Tavastia, and Karelia

On the opposite and northern side of the Gulf of Finland, Christianisation was already well underway at the time of Dominican arrival. This had happened on Swedish initiative, long led by the Bishop of Linköping. Finland proper (in the southwest of the present-day country) was almost fully Christianised and Tavastia in the central inland was in the process, while paganism still prevailed in the eastern district of Karelia, bordering Orthodox Russia. A military campaign led by Earl Birger of Sweden in the 1230–40s was at least partly aimed at strengthening and promoting Christianity among the Tavastians, who were said to have rebelled against the Church.[51]

In Finland, there exists positive evidence that Friars Preachers from the province of Dacia preached in the mid-13th century among people who had been recently converted. Probably in the mid-1240s, Pope Innocent IV informed an anonymous prior of the Friars Preachers that all neophytes in '*Philandia*' should be allowed to remain in marriages entered (by pagan custom) before their conversion, and the prior was authorised to grant similar dispensations to thirty persons, who after their conversion had entered pagan marriages to spouses within the third or fourth degree of consanguinity. This dispensation could either be granted by the prior himself "or by friars who were appointed for preaching among these people", probably referring either to actual Finns or Tavastians.[52] The preserved copies of the two letters for the missionary Friars Preachers in Finland can only be dated approximately to the period 1244–1251,[53] but they are exactly similar to dispensations and absolutions granted by Innocent IV in 1245 to Franciscan missionaries working among the Cumans in Hungary.[54] If

"Sed quia Estones in operibus fidei rudes et inculti, ad miserabiles ritus infidelitatis proni et procliui, crudeles erant contra personas ecclesiasticas atque seui, nam primum episcopum cum suis clericis occiderunt, inde redire fratres ad conuentes de quibus assumpti fuerant, paucis remanentibus, sunt compulsi."

50 Walther-Wittenheim 1938, pp. 8–9; Gallén, Jarl: *La province de Dacie de l'ordre des Frères Prêcheurs: Histoire générale jusqu'au Grand Schisme*, Helsinki/Rome 1946, pp. 46–47.

51 Lind, John H.: "Consequences of the Baltic Crusades in Target Areas – The Case of Karelia", in ed. Alan V. Murray: *Crusade and Conversion on the Baltic Frontier 1150–1500*, Aldershot 2001, pp. 133–150: 143–148; Lindkvist, Thomas: "Crusades and Crusading Ideology in the Political History of Sweden, 1140–1500', in ed. Murray 2001, pp. 119–130: 121–124.

52 Gallén 1946, p. 246 / *DOPD* 1244-51: "ut cum predictis neophitis [...] per te vel fratrem idoneum, quem predicationis negotio circa huius [terre] gentem duxeris deputandum dispensare valeas, tibi auctoritate presentium concedimus facultatem."

53 Gallén 1946, pp. 56–57.

54 Berend 2001, p. 217, note 139.

the undated Finnish letters are also from around 1245, they precede the foundation of the Dominican convent in Turku in 1249 and must therefore have been addressed to the prior of some other Swedish convent.[55]

There are other indications to support possible Dominican involvement in the Swedish mission in Finland before the first Finnish convent foundation in 1249. When the first Bishop of Finland, Thomas, was installed around 1220, his main challenges were to establish a cathedral chapter, to Christianise the pagan Tavastians, and to keep the Orthodox Russians in check. These were all tasks that the Friars Preachers potentially could have helped him with. During the 1230s and until his resignation in 1245, Bishop Thomas may indeed have received such Dominican assistance from the convents in Sigtuna and/or in Visby on Gotland. He certainly must have had some contact with the Order in general and these two convents in particular, because when he applied to the pope for his episcopal resignation in 1245, it was the Dominican prior provincial, who was instructed by Innocent IV to handle the resignation along with the Swedish archbishop.[56] Immediately afterwards, Thomas joined the Order of Preachers himself, residing at the convent in Visby until his death in 1248, and shortly before that, he left some books to the Friars Preachers in Sigtuna.[57] Jarl Gallén felt that it was difficult to explain these close ties between Thomas and the Friars Preachers in Sigtuna and Visby between 1245 and 1248 without a preceding Dominican contact during Thomas's Finnish episcopacy. Gallén therefore concluded that most likely, Friars Preachers from the two convents were involved in Bishop Thomas's missionary work among the Tavastians and his crusade against the Russians, eventually leading to a Dominican convent foundation in Finland in 1249.[58]

Indications of a Dominican mission in the central and eastern districts of medieval Finland also occur for the following centuries. A Dominican presence among the pagan Tavastians living in Central Finland is documented for the beginning of the 14th century, as the Bishop of Turku in 1331 drew upon Friars Preachers based in Turku when he needed local knowledge of juridical validity on the payment of fur taxes in Tavastia.[59] East of Tavastia, pagan Karelia was tributary to the Orthodox princes of Novgorod, but Dominican missionaries from Turku may have had access to southwestern Karelia from 1323, when a political treaty placed this district under Swedish supremacy. In 1392, a Dominican convent was established in Karelia in Vyborg (Russia), and from this time onwards, missionary campaigns to the Karelians were eagerly promoted from both the Catholic (Swedish) and the Orthodox (Russian) side, as the Dominican foundation in Vyborg was soon supplemented with a Franciscan convent estab-

55 Gallén 1946, p. 57, suggests the prior of the convent in Visby.

56 *Finlands Medeltidsurkunder* [*FMU*], ed. R. Hausen, Helsinki 1910–1935, no. 88 / *DOPD* 1245 21/2.

57 *FMU*, no. 92 and 95/ *DOPD* 1248 18/2 and 1248.

58 Gallén 1946, p. 55.

59 *FMU*, no. 393 / *DOPD* 1331. Gallén, Jarl: "Några bidrag till Åbo dominikankonvents äldsta historia", in *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland* 16 (1931), pp. 101–112: 108.

lished in the city around 1400, while two Orthodox monasteries were founded at Valamo and Konevitsa on islands in Lake Ladoga in the early 1390s.[60]

The establishment of Dominican convents in Finland did not necessarily mean that the convent in Sigtuna was no longer involved in missionary endeavours. Within the convent's own archdiocese, Archbishop Olof Björnsson of Uppsala (r. 1315–1332) put a lot of effort into the colonisation and taxation of the northernmost districts of his bishopric, which also included an increased campaign to Christianise the Sámi people.[61] It is unknown if the Dominicans assisted in this work, but Björnsson appears to have been on quite amicable terms with the convents in Västerås and Sigtuna, and with Fr. Israel Erlandi of Sigtuna in particular.[62]

6. A Dominican Inquisition Against the Pagans in Scandinavia?

I am occasionally asked if the Friars Preachers in Dacia were at any point involved in an inquisition against Nordic pagans. Obviously, an inquisition against pagans as such would make little sense, since one had to be baptised in order to deviate from true Christianity and thereby be considered a heretic—and thus subjected to the inquisition. But paganism could theoretically become an inquisitorial issue in the case of neophytes reverting to paganism—or, even worse, if people born into Christianity decided to indulge in neo-paganism. While both phenomena are known to have taken place, no inquisition appears to have been set up to deal with them. Along with the ongoing Christianisation in Prussia, Livonia, Estonia and Finland, sources certainly document occasional setbacks in the process, where baptised pagans fell back into their old customs and beliefs. But there are no indications that this ever triggered an inquisitorial response—only increased military and pastoral efforts.

Actual neo-paganism in the form of a re-introduction of *forn siðr* ("the old customs") with the veneration of gods like Thor and Odin, long after these had otherwise been abandoned in Scandinavia proper in the 11th–12th centuries, does not appear to have ever existed in medieval Scandinavia, at least not in any organised, communal form. Stephen Mitchell has identified two possible cases from Stockholm in 1484 and 1492, where two men were sentenced to death for a combination of theft and apostasy from Christianity in favour of the old Nordic god Odin; at least one of them was burned at the stake.[63] In spite of both the geographical and temporal coincidence of the two cases, they hardly indicate the existence of any neo-pagan community in Stockholm at this time; moreover, the alleged worshipping of Odin appears rather to reflect an individual wish to enrich themselves quickly through sorcery rather than any deeper heretical spec-

60 *FMU*, no. 1005 / *DOPD* 1392 23/2. Gallén 1946, pp. 122–123; Hiekkanen, Markus: "De finska klostren under medeltiden – Arkeologiskt och byggnadshistoriskt perspektiv", in *Hikuin* 20 (1993), pp. 123–154: 148–149; Lind 2001, pp. 148–149.

61 Pernler, Sven-Erik: "Olaus Beronis", in *Svenskt biografiskt lexicon* 28, Stockholm 1992–1994, p. 131.

62 On Fr. Israel Erlandi, see *DOPD* 1281 2/10.

63 Mitchell, Stephen: "Odin, Magic, and a Swedish Trial from 1484", in *Scandinavian Studies* 81 (2009), pp. 263–286.

ulations. Both cases were settled as completely civil ones before the city court of Stockholm without any stated inquisitorial or even ecclesiastical involvement whatsoever.[64] If the city council had wanted some—unrecorded—theological assistance on the matter, the two local mendicant convents in Stockholm would have certainly offered some of the best authorities around: the Dominican prior Fr. Laurentius Magni was professor of sacred theology and vicar provincial for the Swedish convents;[65] and the guardian of the neighbouring Franciscan convent, Fr. Canutus Johannis, was in fact a papal inquisitor, appointed for all of Dacia in 1479.[66]

7. Dominicans and Orthodox Christians in the Baltic Sea Region

Indications of a Dominican mission to the Orthodox Rus' peoples—or 'Ruthenians', as they were commonly termed in Latin—in the Baltic Sea region are extremely scarce. While some proselytising efforts may have been planned in the 13th century from the Dominican province of Polonia towards the Kievan Rus' in present-day Ukraine, it could appear as if the main outcome of the Dominican bases established around and beyond the borders of Latin Christianity was to focus on the pastoral care of the Latin minorities (mainly German and Poles) living there.[67]

There is even less evidence to suggest a Dominican mission to the Rus' further north around the Baltic Sea. The closest thing we have to an instance of any such endeavours performed by Friars Preachers from Dacia is a papal authorisation from 1479 by Pope Sixtus IV to the Dominican Fr. Henningus Gwitzaw, who had allegedly preached the word of God with great results in the countries of King Christian I of Denmark-Norway-Sweden, especially along the borders of the Ruthenians and thereby produced several conversions. Since Gwitzaw had now reached the age of sixty, he was allowed to select two associates, with whom he could henceforth preach not only within King Christian's realm (i.e., the province of Dacia), but also in the provinces of Saxonia and Polonia.[68] Similar plans appear to have existed for the Scandinavian Franciscans at an earlier point, as the Bishop of Linköping in 1391 bequeathed all his money to Fr. Magnus Tuvonis of the Friars Minor in Linköping, a particularly gifted theologian and preacher, who was to go to Russia "to preach the Christian faith to the pagans", which here is a term used for the 'schismatic' Russians. This eastbound

64 *Stockholms stads tänkeböcker* [*SST*], eds. E. Hildebrand et al., Stockholm 1917ff., vol. 2, pp. 66–67; vol. 3, p. 18.

65 For his biography, see *DOPD* 1472 21/11.

66 Rasmussen, Jørgen N.: *Die Franziskaner in den nordischen Ländern im Mittelalter* (Franziskanische Forschungen 43), Kevelaer 2002, p. 255; Bandlien, Bjørn/Knutsen, Gunnar W.: "Kjetterinkvisitorer i Norge", in *(Norsk) Historisk Tidsskrift* 2008, pp. 433–450: pp. 438–439.

67 Kozubska-Andrusiv 2003; Selart 2015, pp. 173–174; Jakobsen 2018, pp. 212–214.

68 *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* [*DN*], Oslo 1849–1976, vol. 17, no. 714 / *DOPD* 1479 12/8.

missionary campaign, however, was never implemented, as Fr. Magnus himself happened to die soon afterwards.[69]

On a more indirect and subtler level, there are indications of friendly, if not proselytising, Dominican-Russian relations in some of the Dominican convents closest to the border. When the Friars Preachers in Tallinn decided to leave their first location on Cathedral Hill (Toompea) in the 1260s, they moved to the eastern part of the downtown area, which happened to be where the city's Russian inhabitants were also concentrated. Several Novgorod merchants were living in the Dominican *Monkestrate*, and the Russian Orthodox church was situated where the friary street met the city wall.[70] So, even if the friars in Tallinn did not try to actively convert their neighbours, the two groups lived among each other peacefully on a daily basis. In Riga, at least some of the Friars Preachers knew the Russian language well enough to certify a translation of two letters from Russian into Latin, in which King Andrei of Polotsk surrendered his kingdom to the Teutonic Order.[71] Still, neighbourly relationships are rarely perfect. When an esteemed delegation of 40 men went from Novgorod to Stockholm to confirm a new Swedish-Russian peace treaty in 1513, the Russian delegates apparently found themselves in acute need of horses when they were crossing the border, which they partly solved by stealing 27 horses and other items from the Dominican convent in Vyborg before continuing on to Stockholm.[72]

8. Dominicans and Jews in the Baltic Sea Region

The ambivalent attitude of the Friars Preachers to the Jews in the Middle Ages has been dealt with by numerous scholars.[73] The overall conclusion seems to be that the relations were generally negative. At least in the 13th century, however, a Dominican mission to the Jews appears to have been a central element in some provinces, such as in England, where the first Dominican friary was established in the middle of the Jewish district in Oxford, and occasionally, leading Friars Preachers stood up to defend English Jews from persecution.[74] Likewise, the nu-

[69] Gallén, Jarl: "Den heliga Birgitta och Karelen", in *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland* 51 (1966), pp. 1–27: 17–18.

[70] Brüggemann, Karsten / Ralph Tuchtenhagen: *Tallinn – Kleine Geschichte der Stadt*, Cologne / Weimar / Vienna 2011, p. 41

[71] *LEKUB*, 1. ser., vol. 3, reg. no. 1455 / *ExDOP* 1386 13/3.

[72] *FMU*, no. 5682; *FMU* no. 5689 / *DOPD* 1513 Sep.

[73] See, for instance, Cohen, Jeremy: *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism*, Ithaca / London 1982; Vose 2009; Füllenbach, Elias H. / Miletto, Gianfranco, eds.: *Dominikaner und Juden / Dominicans and Jews: Personen, Konflikte und Perspektiven vom 13. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert* (Quellen und Forschungen zum Dominikanerorden. N.F. 14), Berlin / Munich / Boston 2015; Füllenbach, Elias H.: "Hunting Dogs? Dominican Mission to the Jews in the Thirteenth and the Fourteenth Centuries", in *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 2. ser., 2 (2017), pp. 157–168.

[74] Hinnebusch 1951, pp. 29 and 315; Cohen 1982, pp. 43 and 82–83; Röhrkasten, Jens: "Die englischen Dominikaner und ihre Beziehungen zur Krone im 13. Jahrhundert", in eds. F.J. Felten / N. Jaspert: *Vita Religiosa im Mittelalter – Festschrift für Kaspar Elm zum 70. Geburtstag* (Berliner Historische Studien 31), Berlin 1999, pp. 483–502: 486–487.

merous local persecutions of Jewish communities around Germany often seems to have been mainly based on lay initiative, with only limited ecclesiastical involvement.[75]

Within this debate, hardly any attention has been devoted to Dominican-Jewish relations in the Baltic Sea region. This is partly for the obvious reason that Jews were apparently very few in number in the region before the 17th century. It would seem, though, that most of the cities along the southern and eastern shores of the Baltic Sea in the Late Middle Ages did hold small Jewish communities—often just a few families. As far as I have been able to sort out, there are no indications of any Dominican efforts in the region towards the conversion of Jews, or, for that matter, towards their persecution or protection in the several cases raised against the Jewry in the 14th and 15th centuries. This eventually led to the complete expulsion of Jews from Mecklenburg and Pomerania in 1492 after an inquisition-like trial in Sternberg—again, it seems, without any Dominican involvement.

One particular Baltic Dominican friar is worth noting in a Jewish context, though: Fr. Simon Grunau, who originated from Elbląg and later was affiliated with the convent in Gdańsk, where he wrote the *Prussian Chronicle* around 1525. The chronicle stands out for including numerous references to both biblical and contemporary Jews, to whom the author appears quite neutral and in some instances even positive. Among Grunau's more curious entries is a tale said to have occurred in Świecie, just north of Chełmno, in the 1340s, when a local Jew tricked an ill-fated fisherman into using a sacramental host as fishing bait. The blasphemous advice—which in terms of the catch was very successful—was admitted by the Jew under torture during a trial on something else; but again, the Dominican chronicler does not suggest any involvement in this trial by his fellow brethren.[76]

While apparently no Jews are recorded in medieval Scandinavia at all, this is not to say that Jews did not exist in the mindset or 'virtual reality' of medieval Scandinavian society. Although the region may have lacked actual Jews, an idea of Jewish people, culture, and belief nevertheless flourished in Scandinavian art, literature and sermons since the 12th century—often characterised by rather negative stereotypes. In extant late-medieval Danish prayer books, presumably used by female nobility, upper bourgeoisie, and nuns, there are scattered references to Jews, but almost always connected to their deeds in the Bible.[77] The local Friars Preachers seem to have followed this pattern. In one of the few extant

[75] Ocker, Christopher: "German Theologians and the Jews in the Fifteenth Century", in eds. D.P. Bell/S.G. Burnett: *Jews, Judaism, and the Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (Studies in Central European Histories 37), Leiden/Boston 2006, pp. 33–65: 37.

[76] Hess, Cordelia: *The Absent Jews. Kurt Forstreuter and the Historiography of Medieval Prussia*, New York 2017, pp. 212–223.

[77] Lausten, Martin Schwarz: *Jøder og kristne i Danmark – fra middelalderen til nyere tid*, Copenhagen 2012, p. 9 and 13–16; Adams, Jonathan/Hess, Cordelia: "Encounters and Fantasies: Muslims, Jews and Christians in the North", in eds. *iid.*: *Fear and Loathing in the North: Jews and Muslims in Medieval Scandinavia and the Baltic Region*, Berlin 2015, pp. 3–28: 11–14; Friedman, Yvonne: "Christian Hatred of the Other: Theological Rhetoric vs. Political Reality", in eds. Adams/Hess Berlin 2015, pp. 187–202: 193–195.

Dacian Dominican sermon collections by the Danish Fr. Mathias Ripensis, Jews are also occasionally mentioned, either in a neutral or negative form, but hardly any of the references are made to contemporary Jews, and if so, only in very general terms, as when Mathias states that one should pray for the 'perfidious Jews', although without kneeling.[78] In another sermon, Jews are grouped with pagans, heretics and false Christians as a fourfold persecution against the Church.[79]

9. Dominicans and Muslims in the Baltic Sea Region

The 'Muslim Others' were probably even more remote in a medieval Baltic Sea regional context. Hardly anyone in the region would have ever met a Muslim, unless going to the Holy Land either on a pilgrimage or a crusade. Indeed, the primary context for people in the Baltic Sea region to hear about Muslims would have been in sermons calling for the crusades, where all the latest cruelties enacted by these 'enemies of Christendom' would be laid out in gruesome detail. As some of the most prominent and papally preferred crusade preachers of the 13th century, the Dominican Friars Preachers were enlisted with this task throughout Western, Central and Southern Europe since 1234, and remained so for the rest of the century.[80] But even though the Cross to the Holy Land was also promoted in Northern and Northeastern Europe all along, the local Dominicans here appear to have been engaged in a different crusade preaching task. The friars here were to focus on preaching the crusade against the pagan Prussians, Lithuanians and Livonians on behalf of the Teutonic Order, a papally enjoined task that began in 1230, and thus even preceding Dominican involvement in preaching the Cross to the Holy Land.[81] Several subsequent popes, and perhaps not least Urban IV, were quite clear about the necessity of keeping the promotion of the two interlinked campaigns separated, and at one point, in 1263, it was even explicitly stated to the Norwegian archbishop that the Friars Preachers were exempted from preaching the Holy Land crusade in Norway.[82] Two years later, however, conditions in the Holy Land had worsened to a degree where this allowance had to be put aside, and from 1265 the Dominicans in the Baltic Sea region were enlisted for the Holy Land crusade as well.[83]

Of course, the Friars Preachers of the northern provinces would have been free to study, discuss and even preach about Muslims regardless of whether they had a mandate to preach the crusade against them or not, but I still think it important to include this element when considering the view on Muslims among

78 Mathias Ripensis: *Sermones de tempore*, f. 66r, ed. Johannes Schütz, Centre for Dominican Studies of Dacia 2013, at https://www.jggj.dk/Mathias.htm (accessed on 31 July 2024): "Ideo in parasceve cum oratur pro perfidis Judeis genua non flectimus."

79 Mathias Ripensis *Sermones de tempore*, f. 60r: "Item alio modo potest intelligi quadruplex persecutio contra ecclesiam scilicet judeorum, paganorum, hereticorum et falsorum christianorum."

80 On Dominican crusade preaching in general, see Maier 1994.

81 On Dominican crusade preaching in the Baltic Sea region, see Jakobsen 2021.

82 *DN*, vol. 1, no. 57 / *DOPD* 1263 23/10. Jakobsen 2021, p. 105.

83 *Bullarium Danicum* [*BD*], ed. A. Krarup, Copenhagen 1932, no. 648 / *DOPD* 1265 summer.

Dominicans in the Baltic Sea region, because the overall observation on the matter is that the Muslims appear as an almost non-existing issue to the northern Dominicans. Whether the first two papal calls to the Friars Preachers in the province of Dacia to preach the Cross against the Saracens in the Holy Land from 1265 and 1274 were ever really complied with at all cannot be evinced from the extant sources, but when a new and almost desperate call came in the summer of 1291, after the Fall of Acre, we do have sources that confirm an actual Dominican response.[84] At the provincial chapter of Dacia held in Lund in 1292, the most prominent Dominican theologian and preacher of the province at the time, Fr. Israel Erlandi of the convent in Sigtuna, was put in charge of the task by the prior provincial, with a copy of both the authorising bull and of another bull in which the horrors wrought by the Saracens in Acre were described.[85] And from a different source, a local Swedish chronicle, it would seem that the enjoined task was in fact carried out in earnest. Here it is stated that "in these years the Friars Preachers preached that Antichrist had been born in Jerusalem, the Holy Land was being ravaged by the Saracens, Acre had been captured and destroyed, and other places as well"—wording quite similar to the explanatory bull given to Fr. Israel.[86]

However, after a short Dominican engagement, the crusade to the Holy Land may have seemed like a lost cause to the Friars Preachers of the North, who henceforth mainly helped with collecting the recurring papal taxes for a future reconquest. After 1300, Muslims do not appear to have had much practical or theological weight in the minds of the northern friars. When the Danish Dominican Mathias Ripensis lists the four persecutions of Christianity in the early 14th century, as mentioned earlier, it is noteworthy that he does not include Muslims, but only Jews, pagans, heretics and "false Christians".[87]

10. Dominicans and Heretics in the Baltic Sea Region

The remaining part of this article will be devoted to the Dominican involvement with heresy and heretics in the Baltic Sea region. Heresy and inquisition in this region has never been such to attract much scholarly attention, and once again for fair reasons, as no heretical movement ever appears to have gained ground along the shores of the Baltic Sea—at least not until the arrival of Lutheranism.

10.1 Dominican Inquisition Against Heretics in Saxonia and Polonia

High-ranking Friars Preachers were appointed as papal inquisitors from the 14th century onwards for the provinces of Saxonia and Polonia, but they only rarely

[84] *BD*, no. 848 / *DOPD* 1291 1/8. Jakobsen 2021, p. 106.

[85] *DD*, 2. ser., vol. 4, no. 85–86 / *DOPD* 1292 August–September.

[86] Ericus Olai: *Chronica regum Gothorum*, eds. E. Heuman/J. Öberg, Stockholm 1993, p. 94 / *DOPD* 1291: "Anno Domini MCCXCI [...] predicaverunt predicatores natum esse Antichristum in Jherusalem. Terra enim sancta tunc gravissime affligebantur a Saracenis, capta et destructa civitate Achon et sic de aliis."

[87] Mathias Ripensis *Sermones de tempore*, f. 60r.

had to attend cases on the northern shores of their jurisdictions—and even then, it would seem, almost always only to deal with heresy espoused by individuals rather than by whole heretical communities. One example is when the papal inquisitor of Saxonia, Fr. Eylardus Schoenveld, went on a tour along the northern coast of his province in the first years of the 15th century, where he managed to prosecute a half-crazed lay preacher called Willem in Lübeck, a secular priest in Stralsund, and the mother of a Cistercian monk in Rostock; the exact nature of their heretical crimes is not known.[88]

Classification of the type of heresy detected tends to be rather loose, often depending more on what the inquisitor expected to find than what was necessarily going on—if indeed anything was going on at all. A growing concern in the first half of the 14th century with heresy among communities of Beghards and Beguines around Germany eventually led to trials in the 1360s led by Fr. Walterus Kerlinger in, among other places, Lüneburg and Rostock, whereas two Beguine houses in Bremen were spared, as they were closely connected to the local Friars Preachers.[89] Indeed, an apparent consequence of this inquisitorial vigilance against Beguine communities is that the term 'Beguine' tends to disappear from the Northern sources for more neutral terms, and virtually all communities of religious lay women henceforth followed the example of the sisters in Bremen and attached themselves closely to one of the mendicant orders, preferably the Dominicans, and often chose a residence right next to a friary.[90]

In 1451, the *Devotio Moderna* movement of the 'Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life' spread as far north as Lübeck and other places in Holstein, and even if this movement had been labelled nothing but Beguines and Beghards of the worst heretical kind in a new fancy disguise by several Dominican inquisitors,[91] the local Friars Preachers in Lübeck would have had little hope of taking any inquisitorial measures against them, since the Duke of Schleswig-Holstein, the Bishop of Lübeck and the city council of Lübeck were all themselves numbered among the community's founders.[92]

A different kind of heresy gained Dominican attention in the northernmost part of the province of Polonia, but also with a similar lack of success. Here, the parish town churches in both Elbląg and Toruń had famous paintings of the pope with cardinals and bishops on the one side and of the emperor with kings, princes and noblemen on the other, and the name of Christ written above them

88 Korner, Hermann: *Chronica novella*, ed. J. Schwalm, Göttingen 1895, pp. 99–100, 364–365, and 546.

89 Kieckhefer, Richard: *Repression of Heresy in Medieval Germany*, Liverpool 1979, pp. 24–25; Peters, Günter: "Die Bremer Beginen im Mittelalter – Enstehung und Struktur einer städtischen Frauengemeinschaft", in *Niedersächsisches Jahrbuch für Landesgeschichte* 64 (1998), pp. 131–181: 172–173.

90 Kieckhefer 1979, p. 27; Johansen, Marianne: "Beginer i Danmark", in eds. E. Waaben et al., *Fromhed og verdslighed i middelalder og renaissance – Festskrift til Thelma Jexlev*, Odense 1985, pp. 18–23: 20.

91 Kieckhefer 1979; Van Engen 2008.

92 Van Engen 2008; Ahler, Jens/Auge, Oliver/Hillebrand, Katja, eds.: *Glauben – Wissen – Leben. Klöster in Schleswig-Holstein*, Kiel 2011, pp. 275, 285, and 289.

in gold letters. These paintings were venerated like saintly pictures and statues with lay prayers and offerings, and whereas this 'Cult of the Name of Christ' was endorsed by the Franciscan theologians in Wrocław, it was condemned as heretical by the Dominican inquisitor Fr. Petrus Wichman. When he came to Toruń in 1430 and accused both the parish priest and several local members of the Teutonic Order of heresy, the Teutonic Knights simply responded by expelling the friar from town.[93] Thus, fighting heresy along the southern and eastern shores of the Baltic could be a thankless task.

10.2 Dominican Inquisition Against the Heretics in Dacia

Just like the British Isles, Scandinavia has traditionally been seen as a region without any medieval heresy or inquisition at all.[94] This view has been challenged in recent years by scholars like Ian Forrest and Bjørn Bandlien, who suggest that both heresy and inquisition were about as prominent features in late medieval England and Scandinavia as they were on the Continent.[95] Like the medieval inquisitors, we present-day scholars may tend to find what we are looking for, but I nevertheless increasingly agree with Bandlien in the case of Scandinavia, where we may only have records of a couple of concrete cases of heresy, but the whole concept of a vigilance against possible heresy in its various forms can be perceived in numerous other instances; and then surprisingly often with a Dominican presence.

Firstly, it needs to be pointed out that a series of papal inquisitors of heresy (*inquisitori hereticae pravitatis*) were in fact appointed for the province of Dacia throughout the entire 15th century.[96] However, they were all Franciscans and none of them are known to have conducted a single trial. It is not even clear why they were actually appointed at all, since no heretical movement was ever reported in the Scandinavian kingdoms. At the first appointment in 1403, Pope Boniface IX stated that "some heretical and suspicious errors" had allegedly begun to sprout in the province;[97] the most likely candidates for this heresy are probably the Devout Sisters and Brethren, Beghards and Beguines, or perhaps Lollards. At the time of the two following appointments, in 1421 and 1479, the most obvious heretical threat to Scandinavia were the Hussites.[98]

The two best known cases of actual heresy in medieval Scandinavia, however, had little to do with these movements, and they were not dealt with by the Papal Inquisition or the Franciscans, but by local episcopal inquisitions—and the Dominicans. The first one concerns a Swedish farmer, Botolf in Gottröra parish, who on two occasions expressed heretical thoughts by denying the presence of

93 Carstenn 1937, pp. 215–216; Kras 2004, p. 279.

94 Lea 1888, 352: "The papal inquisition cannot be said to have had an existence in the British Islands, Denmark or Scandinavia."

95 Forrest 2005; Bandlien/Knutsen 2008.

96 *FMU*, no. 1166; *Acta Pontifica Danica* [*APD*], eds. A. Krarup/J. Lindbaek, Copenhagen 1904–43, vol. 2, no. 1367; *DN* vol. 17, no. 1111. Rasmussen 2002, pp. 179 and 253–256; Bandlien/Knutsen 2008, pp. 438–439.

97 *FMU*, no. 1166.

98 Kieckhefer 1979, passim.

Christ in the bread and wine of Holy Communion. The first incident took place around 1303, when the said Botolf had publicly denied the Sacrament of the Eucharist one Sunday with a loud voice in the parish church just after it had been celebrated. He was subsequently made to recant his claim, and a suitable penance was imposed by the archbishop. But then the real problem emerged when Botolf repeated his act in 1310, when he boldly claimed to his parish priest that "if the bread had truly been the body of Christ, you would have eaten it all long ago yourself!" The Archbishop of Uppsala then decided to set up an inquisition to try the whole case, which was to be led by two appointed examiners: a canon secular of Uppsala and Fr. Israel Erlandi of the Dominican convent in Sigtuna. In addition to Botolf himself, the parish priest and twelve parishioners of Gottröra were summoned before the inquisitors as witnesses, and based on all the given statements, examiners' report concluded that since the accused had stubbornly persisted in his errors, he was indeed to be considered as having fallen back into heresy.[99]

From an ecclesiastical and Dominican point of view, it was probably a far more serious matter when a parish priest in Visby on Gotland in 1393 was accused of having publicly expressed heretical thoughts. Three esteemed Visby citizens testified that they had heard their parish priest, Father Heyno, declare from the pulpit of his church that it was a mortal sin to attend Mass celebrated by a priest who himself lived in mortal sin, and that such a priest could not give absolution. Some of the priest's astonished parishioners decided to report this to the Dominicans in the neighbouring priory, who must have been even less amused by Father Heyno's additional claim that "ever since Friars Preachers and Friars Minor have had a general license to hear confession, there has been no true shepherd in God's church", because "the men of the orders are seducers of the people" and altogether unsuited to this important task. Such anti-mendicant claims had been papally proclaimed as erroneous since 1321 and explicitly marked as heresy in 1409. Thus, Father Heyno in Visby had expressed two heretical views from his pulpit. The Dominican convent therefore summoned the provost council of Gotland to an official hearing of numerous witnesses, which all took place in the refectory hall of the Dominican friary. The provosts then suspended Father Heyno from office, made their report and sent it to the Bishop of Linköping and his cathedral chapter, for whom it was left to pass sentence in the case—the outcome of which is unknown.[100]

In addition to these rather clear cases of episcopal inquisitions against heresy with Dominican involvement, I could add a handful of almost equally clear but less known cases, along with cases that are even less obvious, where bishops around Scandinavia appointed tribunal commissions, and virtually always with one Dominican prior or lector as a member, to investigate crimes committed by lay persons against the Church; and even if the word 'heresy' is not explicitly stated, the gravity of these crimes is of a kind that was labelled as heresy else-

[99] *Diplomatarium Suecanum* [*DS*], Stockholm 1829ff., vol. 3, no. 1789 / *DOPD* 1311 8/4. On the back of the extant original announcement is written: "Littera de apostasia Botulphi heretici" ("Letter about the apostasy of Botolf the heretic").

[100] *Visby stifts herdaminne* [*VSH*], ed. O.W. Lemke, Örebro 1868, encl. 9 / *DOPD* 1393 16/7.

where in Europe.[101] From finding these cases, I have come to believe that the Dominican role as a vanguard against heresy was not just part of the Order's self-image, but rather that it also existed very strongly outside the Order, where virtually every bishop who wanted to play the 'heresy' card against his opponents made sure to include a Dominican friar in the inquisition-like commission that was set up to overhear the case.

Finally, a Dominican vigilance against heresy as manifested in Dominican theology in general is also to be found in Scandinavia. The most famous Dominican literary work to come out of the province of Dacia is the already mentioned *Rotulus pugillaris* written by Fr. Augustinus de Dacia in the 1260s.[102] Despite being a brief introduction to basic Dominican theology for the Order's future preachers, the short text is in fact loaded with anti-heretical considerations for the Dacian Friars Preachers to be aware of. Augustinus elaborates the topic in its various forms, including schismatics, sorcerers, mathematicians (!), and necromancers, the latter apparently being considered a widespread phenomenon especially in the Nordic countries. The *Rotulus* also deals with 'unorganized heresy', that is, individual questioning and misunderstanding of the articles of faith. An example of this is found in Fr. Augustinus's explanation of original sin, where he explains how a newborn child, conceived by baptised parents and itself baptised, still can—and will—fall victim to original sin; just as baptism does not remove hunger or thirst from the flesh, so too will it not remove concupiscence. This argument, it would seem, was specifically directed against a commonly asked question by heretics.[103]

Likewise, one encounters the topic of heresy in the Dominican sermon collection by Fr. Mathias Ripensis from the early 14th century. In one sermon, where he addresses the omnipotence of God and the creation of the universe, Mathias felt it necessary to correct the errors of Aristotle, who claimed that the universe was infinite; since God created the universe, preached Mathias, it cannot be infinite. In accordance with 13th-century Dominican tradition, Mathias ascribed the transmission of such erroneous Aristotelian interpretations to the heresy of Averroes. These ideas about 'the eternity of the world' had not least been developed by another Dane, Boethius de Dacia, at the University of Paris in the 1270s in his work *De aeternitate mundi*, but it is unknown to what extent his learning had gained any popularity in his home region and, thus, if Fr. Mathias aimed at countering an existing Averroist heresy in Scandinavia by including this issue, or if he just wanted to prevent its coming.[104]

[101] These cases will be presented in the near future, either in an article on the Dominican inquisition in Dacia or as part of my forthcoming book, entitled at present *Dominicans in Dacia: The Role of the Friars Preachers in Medieval Scandinavian Society.*

[102] Augustinus de Dacia: *Rotulus pugillaris*, ed. C. Troelsgård, Centre for Dominican Studies of Dacia 2021, at http://www.jggj.dk/Augustinus.htm (accessed on 31 July 2024).

[103] Jensen, Kurt V.: "Augustinus de Dacia", in eds. S. Borgehammar/K. Friis-Jensen/L.B. Mortensen/Å. Ommundsen: *Medieval Nordic Literature in Latin – A Website of Authors and Anonymous Works c. 1100–1530*, Bergen 2012, at https://medieval.wiki.uib.no/Augustinus_de_Dacia (accessed on 3 July 2025)

[104] Schütz, Johannes: *Hüter der Wirklichkeit – Der Dominikanerorden in der mittelalterlichen Gesellschaft Skandinaviens*, Göttingen 2014.

11. Conclusion

The friars of the Dominican Order were trained to deal with 'religious Others', be they pagans, Jews, Orthodox, Muslims or heretics. Their main reason to do so was 1) to convert them to true Roman Catholic Christianity, if possible; or 2) prevent their false beliefs from spreading to Christians within the Latin Church. Among the main Dominican means of encountering such Others were mission and inquisition, with crusade preaching as a last resort. This Dominican role as a religious vanguard was also performed in the Baltic Sea region, but perhaps with a different emphasis on the various parameters than elsewhere in Europe.

Whereas a medieval Dominican mission to other religions in general has been justifiably questioned by recent scholarship, such a mission does indeed appear to have been both intended and implemented in this region, perhaps especially in the 13th century, but still active way into the 15th century. But rather than seeing a missionary policy as being at the top of the Dominican agenda for the entire provinces involved, the observations from Polonia, Saxonia and Dacia rather point to a specific missionary orientation for those particular convents within the provinces that were situated in borderland districts with nearby pagan communities. These proselytising efforts appear to have been restricted to pagans, whereas the conversion of Jews and Orthodox Christians seems to have had little Dominican devotion in the region. In fact, Jews, Muslims and Orthodox generally appear to have been of little interest to the Friars Preachers around the Baltic Sea.

Moreover, evidence for the 'inquisitorial DNA' against heresy identified among Dominican friars elsewhere in Europe can also be found in the northernmost provinces, even if actual heretical movements hardly ever reached the region and only very few Dominican friars acted here as official inquisitors. In sum, one may see the various inquisitorial instances in the Baltic Sea region as a clear Dominican line back to Thomas Aquinas, who not only instructed his brethren to speak the truth, but also to speak up against all that was false.