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REVISITING THE COLLAPSE OF THE HOSPITALLER PRIORY OF DACIA IN LATE MEDIEVAL SCANDINAVIA (1429–1493)**

KEYWORDS

history; the Middle Ages; military orders; Hospitallers; Kalmar Union; sigillography; administration; diplomatics

ABSTRACT

The Hospitaller priory of Dacia was one of the richest and most influential religious institutions in Medieval Scandinavia. Despite this, scholarship dealing with the Order's Scandinavian history has been sparse, especially with regards to the latter part of the Middle Ages. While the Dacian relationship with the Order at large during the period has been covered in previous research, the institutional developments, power struggles and eventual breakdown of the priory itself have only received a cursory treatment. In this article, I revisit the collapse of relations between the Danish and Swedish branch of the Order, focusing on the violent ousting of prior Olaus Nicolai in the 1460s. By introducing previously overlooked sources, I present both a new understanding about how the breakdown of relations occurred, as well as an unique insight into the Scandinavian Hospitallers and their changing political relationship to both the Kalmar Union and the Grand Master on Rhodes.

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During what would later be labelled the Second Crusade (1145–1149), the idea of crusading was expanded to the conversion of pagans along the shores of the Baltic. With this, the kingdoms of Scandinavia – Denmark, Norway, and Sweden – became embroiled in the nascent Northern crusading movement. In order to meet the increasing complexities of launching and financing campaigns of expansion along the shores of the eastern Baltic, new modes of organising were essential. Consequently, from the latter half of the 12th century an increasing royal interest in crusading ideology and its institutions, especially in Denmark, becomes visible in the sources.¹

With the crusades expanding into the Baltic, it did not take long before military religious orders entered into the political landscape of Scandinavia. The Danish archbishop Eskil, supported by king Valdemar the Great, invited the Hospitallers to found a commandery in Antvorskov around 1160, and the order came to establish themselves in all three Scandinavian kingdoms during the following decades. The Scandinavian Hospitaller houses were later organised into the priory of Dacia, with the leadership of the province being given to the commandery in Antvorskov.² Despite the relatively small number of Hospitaller convents founded

¹ See Ane Bysted, Carsten Selch Jensen, Kurt Villads Jensen, and John H. Lind, *Jerusalem in the North. Denmark and the Baltic Crusades, 1100–1522*, *Outremer* 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 89–138; Tore Nyberg, “Skandinavisches Königum, Papstum und Johanniter: Versuch einer Charakterisierung,” in *Die Ritterorden zwischen gistlicher und weltlicher Macht im Mittelalter*, ed. Zenon Hubert Nowak, *Ordines Militares. Colloquia Torunensia Historica* V (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Mikołaja Kopernika, 1990), 127–142.

² Some notes on terminology. Even though the official organisational rank of most Scandinavian Hospitaller houses were commandery or preceptory they were exclusively referred to as hospitals, convents or cloisters (*kloster*) in contemporary writings, with *conventus* being the verbiage utilised on all preserved communal seals. In the same vein, the leaders of the houses were almost exclusively referred to as priors, with the titles preceptor and commander only appearing sporadically on seals and in documents. Consequently, I have opted to refer to the Hospitaller complexes as houses, convents or commanderies in synonym in addition to always referring to the head of the convent as prior.

Furthermore, the status of the Scandinavian commanderies in relation to the leadership of the order and the nearby priory of Alemannia was everchanging over the medieval period. Consequently, the nomenclature of the province and leadership of the Scandinavian branch – and whether it was a branch – fluctuated considerably. In 1294 the leader of the province was referred to as *le prieur de Danemarche*, in 1330 *prioris de Dacia et Noruegia*, in 1334 *provisor et commendator de Dacia*, in 1415 *prior generalis in partibus dacie suecie et nouergie*, in 1514 *magister et balli de Antvorskov*. Furthermore, during the 15th century, the province was both referred to as a priory and a balliwick. For example, in 1417 *Bailliou Dacie*, in 1429 *balliou de Donnamarche*, in 1447 *prioratus Dacie*, in 1454 *Balliou de Dinmarqui*, in 1459 *prioratibus dacie* (listed separately from the Order’s balliwicks). To avoid unnecessary confusion, I have opted to utilise the

during the Scandinavian Middle Ages – around 10 in Denmark, 4 in Sweden and 1 in Norway – the province came to hold a dignity similar to Portugal and Poland within the Order.³

From the very beginning, the Knights of St John in Scandinavia experienced extensive royal patronage and support – and became integral to both the preaching of the crusade as well as the collection of crusading taxes.⁴ Unlike other parts of the Latin West, the Order never seriously had to contend with other military orders in Scandinavia, whose presence was sporadic at best. The Templars never established themselves in any of the three kingdoms. The Sword Brethren established a house in the city of Visby on the island of Gotland around 1200, but never expanded beyond that. With the dissolution of the brethren, the complex was subsequently assimilated into the Teutonic Order in 1237. The Teutonic Order also founded a house in Årsta – on the Swedish mainland – around 1260, with a commander present from at least 1308 onwards. Perhaps most significantly, to combat piracy after the collapse of Swedish power at the end of the 14th century, they invaded and occupied Gotland for a brief period between 1398 and 1408.⁵

Yet, the presence of the Teutonic Order in Scandinavia was incidental, rather than the result of an active policy. The house in Visby mainly functioned as accommodation for knights travelling to the crusading regions in Livonia. The house in Årsta was founded to administer land inherited from former members, and Gotland was conquered to put an end to the piracy of the Victual brothers. While Gotland was briefly commanded by a *comendatores swecie*, no coherent province of the Order was established.

term priory of Dacia when referring to the Scandinavian Hospitaller province, and prior of Dacia/Antvorskov when referring to the head of the branch. For more details regarding this, see Thomas Hatt Olsen, *Dacia og Rhodos: en studie over forholdet mellem Johannitterstormesteren på Rhodos og prioratet Dacia i de 14. og 15. århundrede med særligt henblik på Juan de Carduna's visitation (-1476)* (København: Dansk Videnskabs Förlag, 1962), 19–36.

³ A clear example of this relative status is that the prior of Antvorskov was allowed to be accompanied by 8 riders during the general chapter in 1294, making Dacia equal to the Polish and Portugese delegations. Hatt Olsen, *Dacia og Rhodos*, 15.

⁴ Some considerable research has been done regarding this. See for example: Nyberg, “Skandinavisk Königtum,” 127–142; Paula Pinta Costa, Luís Adão de Fonseca, Kurt Villads Jensen, Cristina Pimenta, “Military Orders Between Territorialization and Periphery from the 12th to the 16th Century. A Comparative perspective on Portugal and Denmark,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 41 (2016), 141–149.

⁵ A good overview is provided in Birgitta Eimer, *Gotland unter dem Deutschen Orden und die Komturei Schweden zu Årsta* (Innsbruck: Wagner, 1966), 53–118.

Come the 15th century, the Hospitallers were one of the wealthiest religious orders in Scandinavia, with the main house in Antvorskov being the second richest monastic complex in Denmark. Due to the relatively small number of houses in the priory of Dacia, each local prior administered estates spread over a vast area.⁶ Consequently, due to the resulting long travel distances between the houses in each realm as well as the Order's deep entanglement with local royal power, all houses displayed an extensive level of autonomy.⁷

While this organisational structure worked well during the 13th and 14th centuries, there is no doubt it contributed to the crisis and subsequent breakdown of the Dacian priory in the latter half of the 15th century. The crisis had its origins in several developments in both the Order and the Scandinavian political landscape.

There are indications that the European networks and international mobility of the Scandinavian branch declined in the late Middle Ages. Before the 1400s, the majority of the priors in Antvorskov, and a large quantity of the priors in the other major Dacian houses, originated from outside Scandinavia, usually hailing from German- or English-speaking regions.⁸ In contrast, almost all priors appointed in the 15th century seems to have been native to one of the Nordic kingdoms.

This increasing number of local elites entering the Scandinavian Hospitallers coincided with the formation of the Kalmar union. This personal union between Denmark, Norway and Sweden was established in 1397 by Queen Margareta I – strengthening the position of Scandinavian interests against the Hanseatic League. While the new realm – in theory – was one of the largest in Europe, it lacked a long-term solution to succession. With both Sweden and Denmark being elective monarchies with the right to depose their kings, civil wars were frequent. To further undermine the survivability of the union, the 15th century saw an ideological movement towards aristocratic republicanism in Scandinavia, making the centralisation of royal power perilous, and ultimately untenable.⁹

⁶ For example, by the 15th century, the commandery in Eskilstuna owned over 100 estates distributed over the entire western half of medieval Sweden. Ivar Schnell, *Eskilstuna: en gammal stad fyller 300 år* (Nyköping: Södermanlands hembygdsförening, 1959), 38.

⁷ With regards to distances, the overland route between the Hospitaller house in Eskilstuna and the main complex in Antvorskov was around 630 km. This was one of the furthest distances between Hospitaller convents in all of Europe, making communication and control especially difficult.

⁸ Hatt Olsen, *Dacia og Rhodos*, 19.

⁹ Herman Schück, *Rikets råd och män: herredag och råd i Sverige 1280–1480*, Kungliga Vitterhets, Historie och Antikvitets Akademiens handlingar. Historiska serien 23 (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets historie och antikvitets akademien, 2005), 249–250.

From 1436 onwards, the Kalmar Union fell into civil strife, and reoccurring wars between Swedish anti-union regents and pro-union Danish kings – supported by pro-unionists in all three kingdoms – would continue until the dissolution of the union in 1523. This period of unrest instigated an increased delineation between the Danish and Swedish members of the Order. Simultaneously, the priory of Dacia saw its economic obligations to Rhodes increased in the 1460s due to outstanding debts – totalling 700 guilders. This resulted in the Order having to pay 140 guilders per year in addition to the usual responsions, putting further strain on an already weak economy.¹⁰

While both the economic crisis of the Scandinavian Hospitallers and the political conflicts between the houses during the 15th century have been touched on in previous scholarship, the process of how the split between the Scandinavian branches occurred has often been covered in a cursory way.¹¹ Hence, the aim of this paper is to study the developments in the Order during the years around the breakdown of the province of Dacia in the mid-15th century.

PART I: REVISITING THE CONFLICTS IN ESKILSTUNA 1429–1490 THE MEMORANDUM OF 1493

The central Hospitaller commandery in Sweden, founded ca. 1180, was founded around the main church of the former diocese of Tuna, and charged with protecting the relics of the martyred bishop Saint Eskil. In the 15th century, the convent had become one of the wealthiest in Sweden, with estates all throughout the kingdom. In order to understand the circumstances resulting in the split between the Swedish and Danish convents, the events leading to the collapse of Antvorskov's authority over Eskilstuna commandery need to be revisited.

In previous research on the political developments in the province of Dacia during the 15th century, a lot of weight has been placed on the information pro-

¹⁰ Hatt Olsen, *Dacia og Rhodos*, 48.

¹¹ See Hatt Olsen *Dacia og Rhodos*; Erik Reitzel-Neilsen, *Johanniterordenens historie. med særlig återblik på de nordiske lande*, vol. I, *Tiden før Rhodos*, (Köpenhamn: C.A Reitzels förlag, 1984); Kurt Villads Jensen, "Hospitallers in Scandinavia and their connections to the Mediterranean after the fall of the crusader states," in *Entre deus e o rei. O mundo das ordens militares*, vol. 2, ed. Isabel Cristina Ferreira Fernandes, (Palmela: Município de Palmela GEOS, 2018), 755–772.

vided in the proceedings from the general chapter held at Rhodes in 1493.¹² During the chapter, a delegation sent by the prior of Dacia, Petrus Petri (r. 1491–1503), presented the Grand Master of the Hospitaller, Pierre d'Aubusson (r. 1473–1503), with a memorandum. The document detailed the complaints levied by the Dacian prior against the house in Eskilstuna. The original charter has been lost, but – as first discovered by Hatt Olsen – a copy is preserved in the *Liber Bullarum* in the Hospitaller archive on Malta.¹³ As a source it provides a unique insight into the inner workings of the priory of Dacia in the 15th century.

In the memorandum, a clear outline of the conflict is provided by the Danish prior.¹⁴ The document starts with recounting how the house Eskilstuna since its founding had been subordinate to the prior of Dacia. Continuing, it emphasises that the prior in Antvorskov had the right to both administer the commandery when the post of prior was vacant, and appoint a new prior when required.¹⁵ With a tone of despair, the memorandum notes that after the tenure of the prior *dominus Jacobus*, appointed in 1429, the brethren in Eskilstuna had cast of their obedience and refused to obey their responsibilities to the province. Additionally, the delegation accuses Eskilstuna of not having paid their responsions to the priory of Dacia. This in turn allowed the delegation to provide the Grand Master with an explanation why the prior in Dacia had not been paying the responsions owed to Rhodes. To support these accusations, the text chronologically details the 12 most pressing instances of insubordination committed by Eskilstuna against the prior of Dacia up until the late 1480s.

While most of the points reiterate the charges of disobedience and refusal to pay responsions, number 2–4 purport to cover the origins of the conflict. The section recounts how the brothers in Eskilstuna began to refuse the right of Antvorskov to appoint new priors, asserting that this split between the Danish and Swedish branch occurred during the years 1457–1462.

¹² See Christer Carlsson, *Johanniterordens kloster i Skandinavien 1291–1536, En studie av deras ekonomiska förhållanden utifrån historiskt och arkeologiskt material* (Odense: Syddansk Universitet, 2009), 115; Bror-Erik Ohlsson, Christer Ericsson, and David Damell, *Eskilstuna historia*, vol. 1, *Fortiden och medeltiden* (Eskilstuna: Stadsarkivet, 1999), 260–261; Reitzel-Nielsen, *Johanniterordenens historie*, 310–312; Villads Jensen, "Hospitallers," 766–767.

¹³ Thomas Hatt Olsen, "The Priorate of Dacia of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem," in *Recueil du V Congrès international des Sciences Généalogique et Héraldique à Stockholm 1960* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1961), 301–331.

¹⁴ Memorandum sent to the general chapter at Rhodes in 1493 from the priory of Dacia. Copied in Valletta, Royal Library of Malta (hereafter as: RLM), AOM 391, fols. 230v–233r.

¹⁵ RLM, AOM 391, fol. 230v.

The articles in the memorandum state that, after the death of prior Jacobus, two subsequent priors were appointed to Eskilstuna by the prior of Dacia. In both instances, they were ousted after arriving in Eskilstuna. The first was Johannes Nielsen, who was deposed in 1457, and second was Olaus – appointed prior sometime after Johannes – who was deposed in 1460.¹⁶ While the memorandum is largely silent on the circumstances surrounding the ousting of Johannes Nielsen, it provides some details regarding the rebellion against Olaus.

Item anno domini millesimo quadringentesimo sexagesimo, vel quam citra vel supra, quidem dominus olaus, illius nominis secundus, quia eis fortassis adverso priori de dacia profectus fuit eum ad tempore in domo conventus insidiati sunt, quousque fugam capere compulsus domumque quandam molinarium extra conventus ingressus est. Tandem affluentibus armatis obsidetur, capitur, verberatur et uulneratur. ac puella quedam seu iuuenis quidem interficitur. // Propter vero dominus olaus in exilium enim compulsus, ibidem moritur quidem sic fuit et est vestrum notariorum, et manifestum de quo esset garrula vox et fama publica, tam apud fratres prioratui semper apud exteros circa incolas terrum videlicet dacie Suoecie et Norwegie.¹⁷

While the account expresses some uncertainty regarding the exact year and some details, it provides a clear account of the series of events. When arriving in Eskilstuna, Olaus was ambushed by the local brothers, who were averse to the prior of Dacia. During the coup, Olaus was forced to flee to a nearby mill or millers house, *domum molinarium*, where he was besieged. In the following struggle, he was wounded and captured, and one of his servants was killed. After this, he was forced into exile until his death. In his place, the brethren elected a new prior among themselves, Laurentius Mitzener, whose reign Hatt Olsens summary of the memorandum describes as:

“About 1462 the brethren in Sweden completely cast of their obedience towards the prior of Dacia, and one of their own number, Laurentz Mitzener, who for his part in the expulsion of master Johannes Nielsen had been for ever deprived of the habit of the Order, went to Rome with

¹⁶ This is summarised by Hatt Olsen as: “[...] 2. In 1457 master Johannes Nielsen was sent from Dacia to Eskilstuna to be its head, but how the brethren there expelled him together with his servants is a fact which is well known in the three kingdoms. [...]”, *cf.* Hatt Olsen, “The priorate of Dacia,” 325.

¹⁷ RLM, AOM 391, fols. 230v–231r.

a large sum of money that the house owned the treasury in Rhodes, and there he managed to obtain administration of the house, which he ruled for several years during which time he showed himself as a bad ruler and the very worst as regards payment of responsions and annates. Finally, he was deposed and imprisoned by the brethren themselves".¹⁸

Overall, the memorandum characterises the period from 1457 until 1493 as one of open hostility between Antvorskov and Eskilstuna, with the priors appointed by Antvorskov being ousted immediately after arriving in Sweden. This is the view of events that have been generally accepted in the precious scholarship of the Hospitallers in late medieval Scandinavia. However, when studying the archival material produced in the province, this understanding of events has to be reevaluated.

CHARTERS

While a lot was lost during the Reformation, a surprisingly large portion of the archives of the Hospitallers in Sweden have survived. As pertaining to the conflict regarding prior appointments, the preserved charters issued by the house in Eskilstuna diverges from the account given in the memorandum. The prior Jacobus Henrici who mentioned in the memorandum appears on a charter as early as 1403 and remained in power until 1433, contradicting the memorandum placing his appointment in 1429.¹⁹ He was later succeeded by prior Laurentius between 1433–1441, who in turn was succeeded by Andreas Johannis between 1440–1447.²⁰ Yet another prior, Magnus, appears in 1447, and he is later succeeded by prior Petrus Johannis in 1448. While this series of priors is more extensive than the list in the memorandum, it is important to note that the account given at Rhodes aspired to ascertain that Eskilstuna had remained obedient to Antvorskov during this period rather than providing a detailed list of appointees.

Prior Petrus is last mentioned on a charter from 1456, which would support the need for the appointment of prior Johannes Neilsen in 1457. Unfortunately, no records of his appointment survive. At the same time, nothing speaks against the narrative presented in the memorandum being correct in this case.

¹⁸ Hatt Olsen, "The priorate of Dacia," 325.

¹⁹ Collmar, *Strängnäs stifts*, 591; charter issued 12 November 1403, *Svenska diplomatariets huvudkartotek*, no. 16193, accessed 30 August 2024, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sdhk>.

²⁰ Collmar, *Strängnäs stifts*, 591–592.

However, the ousting of Johannes Neilsen should not be viewed as the final breakaway of the Eskilstuna house from the province. The violent ousting of a prior was not unprecedented in the Swedish commandery, with the former prior Andreas Wolff having been imprisoned and deposed by the brothers in 1379 without them breaking from the priory of Dacia.²¹ Rather, the main conflict described in the memorandum instead centres around the ousting prior Olaus. It was after that coup which the brothers in Eskilstuna elected a new prior among themselves, plunging the convent into open rebellion.

The Olaus from the memorandum does – by all accounts – correspond to the prior Olaus Nicolai mentioned in charters during the 1460s. He is first mentioned as prior on a charter giving the knight Åke Jönsson (Svarte Skåning) and his wife Mechild Clausdotter a part in the Order's privileges.²² The document is undated, but contextual information makes it possible to narrow down the date when it was issued. Åke Jönsson was knighted at King Karl Knutsson's (Bonde) coronation in 1448, providing the earliest possible date of issuing, and his wife Mechild Clausdotter does not appear in charters after 1460. Furthermore, if the information about prior Johannes Neilsen being ousted in 1457 is considered to be true, the charter can be dated to between 1457 and 1460. It is not unlikely that the charter was issued towards the end of Mechtild's life in order to safeguard her soul, which makes the year 1460 the most likely date.

This dating would coincide with the beginning of Olaus' time in office as espoused by the memorandum, pointing towards the veracity of the provided narrative. Yet, at the same time, the very existence of the charter contradicts the information from the Dacian prior, where Olaus is stated to have been ousted as soon as he arrived at the commandery. On the other hand, an argument can be made that he might have been installed as prior for a short while and the uncertainty expressed in the memorandum is related to the length of his tenure. In that case – as was common during the first years of tenure for priors – the charter would have been issued during his building of a local patronage network.

After this point, the sequence of events presented in the memorandum fully ceases to be supported by the diplomatic material. Olaus Nicolai's name appears again as prior on charters issued in 1463 and 1466. The former is a charter of sale issued by the squire Peter Johansson on 22 July at Husby Byringe, an estate very

²¹ Reitzel-Neilsen, *Johanniterordenens historie*, 307.

²² Undated charter, *Svenska diplomatariets huvudkartotek*, no. 25253, accessed 30 August 2024, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sdhk>.

close to Eskilstuna.²³ In the document, Olaus Nicolai appears as one of the witnesses of the transaction. The latter of the two is badly damaged by mould and the text seems to have been deliberately removed at a later stage.²⁴ Nevertheless, it is still legible and gives a man named Henrik a part in the privileges of the Order. Since this later charter lacks place of issue, it could be argued that these were issued by Olaus after his ousting from Eskilstuna, but, as will be covered below, this is unlikely.

The fourth and final preserved charter mentioning Olaus Nicolai was issued on 20 May 1469. Unlike the earlier charters, several indications in the text points towards the prior being in exile at this point. The document was issued in Borgholm castle on Öland, which was in the hands of King Kristian I's pro-union forces at the time. As with the previous charters, it grants part of the Order's privileges to local elites. However, the recipients of the charter, Magnus Gren and his wife Gertrud Narvesdotter, are notable for several reasons.

Due to the rapid changes in allegiances exhibited by elites in 15th century Scandinavia, it would usually be hard to attribute the extension of privileges to local elites to the prior taking a specific political stance. However, Magnus Gren is an exception. He had been a part of the faction supporting the attempt by the Swedish King Karl Knutsson to take control of the Kalmar Union in 1448. But in 1450 he had switched sides to support King Kristian I of Denmark in his invasion of Öland.²⁵ During the 1450s Kristian I had appointed him castellan of Öland, as well as member of the Swedish council of the realm, positions he still retained in 1469. When considering this, together with the renewed state of war between Sweden and Denmark in 1467, the fact that Olaus Nicolai issued privileges to Magnus Gren at Bornholm indicate that the prior was in exile from Eskilstuna and no longer represented the Swedish, anti-unionist, part of the Hospitallers.

Further evidence of Olaus Nicolai going into exile in 1469 can be found in the shape of a royal charter issued by King Kristian I just one month before the Borgholm charter, on the 18th of April 1469.²⁶ Through the charter the king gives

²³ Charter issued 22 July 1463, *Svenska diplomatiariets huvudkartotek*, no. 28161, accessed 30 August 2024, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sdhk>.

²⁴ Charter issued on unknown day 1466, *Svenska diplomatiariets huvudkartotek*, no. 28503, accessed 30 August 2024, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sdhk>.

²⁵ Hans Gillingstam, "Magnus Gren." in *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon (SBL)* (Stockholm: Svenskt biografiskt lexikon, 2012–), database, accessed 1 November 2023, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/Presentation.aspx?id=13180>.

²⁶ Charter issued 18 April 1469, *Svenska diplomatiariets huvudkartotek*, no. 28939, accessed 30 August 2024, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sdhk>.

the Hospitallers permission to establish a new commandery on Öland and donates the parish church in Köping for this purpose. This was most likely an attempt from the king – and the Danish branch of the Order – to reclaim the income from the Hospitaller estates in southern Sweden. However, it ultimately proved unsuccessful. The reason the Öland commandery failed to materialise was undoubtedly Kristian I's defeat at the battle of Brunkeberg in 1471, leading to Sweden's effective independence from the Kalmar Union until 1497.²⁷ The battle also ended Magnus Gren's tenure as castellan of Borgholm, which led to the prospective Hospitaller house losing its powerful local patron.

After the ousting of prior Olaus Nicolai, the succession follows the one provided in the memorandum. The next prior appearing on charters after Olaus Nicolai is the prior Laurentius who, according to the memorandum, usurped the Eskilstuna commandery sometime between 1460 and 1462. However, as shown above, his election could not have taken place during those years. In fact, Laurentius spent the year 1460 in the Hospitaller house in Ribe, only returning to Eskilstuna in 1461 at the earliest.²⁸ It is only in the spring 1469 a person other than Olaus Nicolai is mentioned as the head of Eskilstuna, with the name Laurentius Johannis rather than Mitzener. The first charter issued in the name of this prior is dated to the 7 Mars 1469, and grants the abbess and sisters at Vreta monastery a part in the privileges of the house.²⁹ This is important for the purposes of reconstructing the series of events, since it means the document was issued almost two months before Olaus Nicolai's Bornholm charter, lending further weight to the argument that the prior was in exile in 1469.

Two further charters were issued by prior Laurentius in 1469, and a further four were issued the following year.³⁰ In most charters, the new prior is called either prior Laurentius or Laurentius Johannes. However, there are some exceptions. On 2 June 1470, a charter detailing a property transfer from the convent to Margareth Olofsdotter states that the prior of Eskilstuna was called *Laurencius Micener*.³¹

²⁷ Collmar *Strängnäs stifts*, 585.

²⁸ Reitzel-Neilsen, *Johanniterordenens historie*, 311.

²⁹ Charter issued 7 Mars 1469, *Svenska diplomatariets huvudkartotek*, no. 28930, accessed 30 August 2024, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sdhk>.

³⁰ Two charters issued on unknown days in 1469, *Svenska diplomatariets huvudkartotek*, nos. 39407, 39406, accessed 30 August 2024, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sdhk>; charter issued 2 June 1470, *ibid.*, no. 29119; charter issued 23 June 1470, *ibid.*, no. 29127; two charters issued on unknown days in 1470, *ibid.*, nos. 29031, 29047.

³¹ Charter issued 2 June 1470, *Svenska diplomatariets huvudkartotek*, no. 29119, accessed 30 August 2024, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sdhk>.

This shows, as has been argued by Magnus Collmar, that Laurentius Johannes and Laurentius Mitzener was the same person, who both utilised his patronym and a Germanic last name interchangeably in writing.³²

This was not unprecedented. For example, the prior of Eskilstuna in the late 14th century is referred to as *Iohannes Hinzason alias de lund dictus* in a charter from 1397.³³ Another explanation can be one of language. The charter where the prior is called *Laurencius Miciner* was written in vernacular, and was evidently not produced by the scribes in Eskilstuna, while the others, where he was called Laurentius Johannis, were written in Latin and follows the general form of charters produced in the commandery itself.

After 1469, Olaus Nicolai disappears from the material, and prior Laurentius is last mentioned as prior in 1485, which once again contradicts the memorandum which states that he was replaced by the prior magister Olaus in 1472.³⁴ Prior Olaus himself only appears from 1482 onwards, which indicate that this discrepancy could be a simple clerical error on the part of the scribe of the *Liber Bullarum*.

However, returning to the analysis of the deposition of Olaus Nicolai, the textual material itself does not directly preclude the fact that he might have been forced into exile at an earlier point. That is, it is not impossible that some of the older charters from the 1460s that lacks an exact date and location, were issued in exile. But, when considering the diplomatic and sigillographic details of the charters, further signs of the exile beginning in 1469 emerge.

SEALS AND DIPLOMATIC DETAILS

When surveying the diplomatic material produced by the commandery in Eskilstuna during the 1460s and 1470s, especially charters pertaining to including people in the privileges of the Order, several points need to be considered. The house does not seem to have been employing a single scribe producing the charters, with most, or all, of them having been written by disparate hands. Yet, apart from a few more significant privileges, the text detailing the inclusion in privileges follows the same formula. For example, the first charter issued by Olaus Nicolai has identical

³² Collmar, *Strängnäs stifts*, 592–593.

³³ Charter issued 3 August 1397, *Svenska diplomatariets huvudkartotek*, no. 14845, accessed 30 August 2024, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sdhk>.

³⁴ Collmar, *Strängnäs stifts*, 593.

wording to most of the charters issued in the name of prior Laurentius Metzner in 1469 and 1470.

More importantly, when considering the state of leadership in the commandery, the privilege charters also followed a rigid structure concerning the usage of seals. With only a few exceptions, charters of privilege issued by the Swedish Hospitallers during the middle of the 15th century had two seals attached. The first was the personal seal of the prior and the second the seal of the convent itself. Of course, the imprints themselves have been lost on many of the charters, but usually two slits at the bottom through which the parchment-strips of the seals were fastened can still be seen. In addition, as far as the imprints are preserved, the wax utilised by the house was exclusively green.

When considering the material from this framework, the answer of who was in control of the house becomes clearer. On the charter issued in 1460, Olaus Nicolai's original seal is attached first, followed by the seal of the convent of Eskilstuna.³⁵ The charter from 1466 is similar, but with Olaus Nicolai utilising a new seal, with notably lower quality than the one present on previous charters.³⁶ This could be interpreted to be a sign that the prior, as recounted in the memorandum, had been driven from the commandery, maybe losing his seal in the confrontation.

Though, this is unlikely to be the case, due to several reasons. Firstly, the document is still following the general formula of the charters issued in Eskilstuna. Furthermore, the attached seals are still utilising the same hue of green wax as utilised in the earlier seals. And finally, the seal of the prior is still attached with the seal of the convent next to it. That is, Olaus Nicolai where still in a position where he had access to the seal of the convent of Eskilstuna.

It is once again the charters from 1469 that provide conclusive evidence that Olaus Nicolai had been forced into exile. On the charter issued 20 May in Borgholm castle, the prior once again utilises a new, even simpler, seal, hinting at him losing yet another matrix.³⁷ More importantly, the charter differs from established practice in several ways. The wax utilised is red rather than green, and the charter deviates from the textual formula of the other privilege charters issued by the

³⁵ Undated charter, *Svenska diplomatariets huvudkartotek*, no. 25253, accessed 30 August 2024, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sdhk>.

³⁶ Charter issued unknown date 1466, *Svenska diplomatariets huvudkartotek*, no. 28503, accessed 30 August 2024, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sdhk>.

³⁷ Charter issued 20 May 1469, *Svenska diplomatariets huvudkartotek*, no. 28955, accessed 30 August 2024, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sdhk>.

Swedish Hospitallers in the 1460s and 1470s. Furthermore, and perhaps most significant, the seal of the convent of Eskilstuna is not present.

A further note of interest concerning the length of Olaus Nicolais' tenure is the iconographic programme of his seals.³⁸ The prior clearly follows the iconographic pattern of previous priors of Eskilstuna rather than Antvorskov. In Antvorskov in the 15th century, seals usually only depicted the coat of arms of the Hospitallers. Conversely, all three seals belonging to Olaus Nicolai depict saint Olof with axe and orb in a gothic building standing atop the coat of arms of the Order. This programme of a saint standing on the Order's heraldry can be found on the seals of the two preceding priors Andreas and Jacobus, while no similar imagery exists on any other Scandinavian Hospitaller seals outside Sweden. Olaus did not represent a break in this, with the practice continuing during Laurentius Metzner, who's seal depicted saint Laurentius above the Maltese cross.

When looking at the material pertaining to prior Laurentius Metzner, the seal of the convent is present, in green wax, on the charter issued to the sisters in Vreta monastery on 7 March 1469.³⁹ However, notably, Laurentius own seal is not present, and it only starts appearing together with the convent seal on charters issued from 1470 onwards. This might be due to the charter being issued to a monastic order rather than an individual, or that Laurentius had not managed to procure a matrix yet. Due to prior Laurentius seal being present on one of the undated privilege charters from 1469, the former is more likely.⁴⁰

With this, it becomes clear that Olaus Nicolai had access to the seal of the convent, and consequently was present in Eskilstuna, until 1466 at the least, rather than 1462. It is also highly probable that he was ousted even later, with prior Laurentius only becoming active in 1469. Further credence to that theory would be that it is the same year as the earliest date where Olaus Nicolai can be conclusively confirmed to be in exile. In either case, the diplomatic and sigillographic material clearly show that the timeline of events provided in the memorandum simplifies

³⁸ For an overview of the sigillographic iconography of the Hospitallers in Scandinavia, see Svande, Hallberg, Rune Nordberg and Oloph Odenius. "Johannitersigill från det medeltida Sverige," *Kyrkohistorisk årsskrift*, vol. 66 (1966): 1–24; Wilhelm Ljungar, "Korsbröder mellan himmel och rike: identitetsuttryck och självbild i den svenska johanniterordens sigill, 1285–1527," *Forvännen* 116, no. 4 (2021): 305–321.

³⁹ Charter issued 7 March 1469, *Svenska diplomatariets huvudkartotek*, no. 28930, accessed 30 August 2024, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sdhk>.

⁴⁰ Charter issued unknown day 1469, *Svenska diplomatariets huvudkartotek*, no. 39407, accessed 30 August 2024, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sdhk>.

the dynamics of the conflict between the commanderies during the tumultuous decades in the mid-15th century.

THE PETITIONS TO THE PAPAL PENITENTIARY

With the reassessment of the ousting of Olaus Nicolai, placing his deposition around 1467–1469, one further piece of material become of interest. Two petitions issued by bishop Philippus of Albano in Rome to the bishop of Strängnäs, Johannes Magni, in 1468 and 1470.⁴¹ Both bulls, the older of which was issued on 15 December 1468, commands the bishop of Strängnäs to proclaim prior Laurentius Metzner and the Hospitaller brothers Johannes Dalkarl, Karolus Stok and Laurentius Esbjörnsson innocent of murder if the account given by the brothers is true.⁴² It also recounts the incident in question as it had been related by the brothers of the commandery to the office of the papal penitentiary.

Fratres Iohannes Dalakarl, Karolus Stok, Laurentius Esberni presbyteri professi domus in Eskiltwna ordinis sancti Iohannis Ierosolomitani diocesis Strenginensis exponunt, quod, cum ad eorum notitiam devenisset, quod quidam frater Olavus Pistoris presbyter eiusdem domus ac eandem ordinem professus, qui sue salutis inmemor ac Dei timore postposito plurima bona, argentum et alia iocalia preciosa ipsius conventus furtim secum subripiens tunc extra conventum auffugisset et in domo cuiusdam laici ipsius conventus familiaris latitaret, ipsi oratores de prioris dicte domus consensu non intentione quemquam ledendi sed animo «reducendi» ipsum Olavum cum nonnullis suis complicibus, ut secum ad conventum rediret, amicablem amonuerunt. Quorum amonitionibus idem Olavus minime consentiens suorum complicum adiutorio in dictos fratres irruit sagittisque et lapidibus quosdam de astantibus vulneravit. Invalescente animi huiusmodi rumore quidam tam de familia dicte domus quam etiam alii clerici et laici propria voluntate sine aliqua reclamazione ad predictorum fratrum succursum supervenerunt, quorum quidam missis sagittis duos de complicibus prefati fratris Olavi letaliter vulneraverunt, qui postmodum ambo ex

⁴¹ *Auctoritate papae: the church province of Uppsala and the apostolic penitentiary 1410–1526*, ed. Sara Risberg and Kirsi Salonen, *Diplomatarium Suecanum 2* (Stockholm: Riksarkivet, 2008), nos. 150, 164.

⁴² In an additional bull issued 30 November 1468, the pope confirms the election of Laurentius Metzner as prior. See Collmar, *Strängnäs stifts*, 592.

*huiusmodi vulneratione vitam finiti sunt. Ac deinde captum predictum fratrem Olavum furtoque cum eo reperto ad conventum reduxerunt [...].*⁴³

According to the account given in petition, one of the brothers in Eskilstuna, Olaus Pistoris, had stolen from the convent and fled into hiding together with some accomplices. When prior Laurentius sent some brothers to try and urge Olaus to return to the convent, they had been attacked with stones and arrows, injuring some bystanders. Soon several locals and further brothers from the commandery arrived, and together they managed to capture Olaus and bring him back to the house. In the struggle two of Olaus accomplices were injured and they later died of their injuries, hence the need for the petition.

The petition provides a further dimension to the analysis. Firstly, it makes clear that Laurentius already was prior in 1468, which further constricts the possible timeline of the coup against Olaus Nicolai to the years 1467–1468. It is also striking how similar the incident described in the petition is to account of the overthrow of prior Olaus Nicolai given in the memorandum of 1493. Both accounts follow the same general outline, with the priest/prior Olaus taking refuge with his servants in a building outside the commandery, followed by an armed confrontation culminating in the brethren capturing Olaus and killing one or two of his servants. Hence, it is not unreasonable to assume that they do, in fact, describe the same incident.

The main discrepancy is the fact that the Olaus in the petition is referred to with the last name Pistoris, which can be translated as Baker or Miller. However, as have been shown with the case of prior Laurentius Johannis/Mezner and prior Johannes Hinzason/de Lund, utilising both a last name and patronym was hardly unprecedented. There could also be some obfuscation on the part of the brothers from Eskilstuna where they avoid mentioning the real name of the overthrown prior and simply name him after what they associated him with, the mill in which he took refuge. It could also be a case of communication error, where the description of him taking refuge in the mill was misconstrued as him being called Pistoris. Nevertheless, I would argue that the Olaus Pistoris mentioned in the petition almost certainly is the same person as prior Olaus Nicolai. This would place the coup against him in 1467 or early 1468, which would fit with the diplomatic and sigillographic sources as well.

⁴³ *Auctoritate papae*, ed. Risberg and Salonen, no. 150.

PART II

THE COLLAPSE OF THE PROVINCE OF DACIA IN THE MID-15TH CENTURY

Before moving to the second part of the analysis, I will summarise the revised order of events. The Hospitaller house in Eskilstuna remained under the control of priors appointed, or at least approved, by Antvorskov until the death of prior Petrus in 1456. A new prior, Johannes Neilsen, was appointed by the prior Hans Brun in 1456 or 1457, but when he arrived in Eskilstuna he was driven away by the brethren. This was followed by an interregnum until 1460, when Olaus Nicolai was appointed the new prior of Eskilstuna. He would remain in control of the house, and – probably – paying the responsions, until 1467. After that he was violently overthrown and driven into exile by the brothers, who elected Laurentius Metzner in his stead. While Antvorskov never confirmed this appointment, the Eskilstuna house managed to preserve relations with the papal curia and the priest brothers directly involved in the violence were reinstated. After his overthrow, Olaus Nicolai set up as prior in exile on Öland, being given the resources to create a new Hospitaller house in Köping parish by King Kristian I. However, this project ended with the loss of Öland to anti-union forces in 1472.

In 1482 Laurentius was replaced by magister Olaus as prior, according to the memorandum in yet another coup. Nevertheless, the new prior was still unrecognised by the prior in Antvorskov, and stated that he, as a knight, would only swear fealty to the Swedish council of the realm, *dicens se militem velle sub obediencia liacorum gubernaiorum Serice*.⁴⁴ After his death in 1486, he was himself replaced by Andreas Benedicti, who had previously been prior in the newly founded Swedish Hospitaller house in Kronobäck. This provides the revised list of priors during the conflict covered in the memorandum:

- Priors in Eskilstuna 1448–1490
 1448–1456 Petrus
 1457–1457 Johannes Neilsen (ousted)
 1457–1460 vacant*
 1460–1467 Olaus Nicolai (ousted)
 1468–1483 Laurentius Meitzner* (ousted?)
 1469–1472 Olaus Nicolai (in exile)
 1482–1486 magister Olaus*

⁴⁴ RLM, AOM 391, fol. 231r.

1486–1490 Andreas Benedicti*⁴⁵
 (*priors not confirmed by Antvorskov)

REASSESSING THE CONFLICT IN LATE MEDIEVAL DACIA

The results of this analysis paint a new picture of the development of the crisis of the Hospitallers in late medieval Scandinavia. Rather than a period of permanent disobedience beginning in 1457, it becomes clear that the final point of rupture between Antvorskov and Eskilstuna occurred a decade later than previously believed. With the two last priors appointed by Antvorskov, Johannes Neilsen and Olaus Nicolai deposed in 1457 and 1467 respectively, it places both coup d'états well within contemporary shifts in the political landscape.

In the late 1440s, the Swedish marshal Karl Knutsson (Bonde) managed to exploit the death of the Kalmar Union King Kristoffer of Bavaria to take power in Sweden. This first reign would last between 1448–1457, during which anti-union sentiment increased in the Swedish realm. Since the anti-union regime of Karl Knutsson was still in power in 1457, it stands to argue that the Swedish-born brothers in Eskilstuna decided to refuse the new prior being appointed by Antvorskov knowing they were safe from reprisals. Alternatively, the refusal could have occurred later in the year as Sweden descended into a civil war between Karl Knutsson and the archbishop of Uppsala Jöns Bengtsson. The war would ultimately end with King Kristian I temporarily regaining control of the realm and re-establishing the Kalmar Union. The brothers in Eskilstuna could then have used the civil unrest as an excuse to refuse their appointed prior. In any case, the refusal does not seem to have been premeditated, due to the brothers not electing a new prior from among their own numbers. Whatever the reason, it is clear that the refusal of the new prior occurred during a period of conflict where the local networks of many brothers would have been opposed to pro-union interests in the region.

Continuing the line of reasoning that the Swedish branch of the Order was aligned with local interests, this interpretation would also explain why Olaus Nicolai could stay in power during most of the 1460s. With the defeat of Karl Knutsson

⁴⁵ According to the memorandum called Branderi, probably the former prior of the house in Kronobäck of the same name mentioned between 1482 and 1484. See charter issued 12 August 1482, *Svenska diplomatiariets huvudkartotek*, no. 31150, accessed 30 August 2024, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sdhk>; charter issued unknown date 1484, *ibid.*, no. 31377.

in 1457, the Kalmar Union would be restored under Kristian I until 1465, making it possible for Antvorskov to exude pressure on the Swedish houses. Given that Olaus Nicolai was overthrown in 1467 or early 1468, the coup would coincide with the reignited conflict between Kristian I and Karl Knutsson, ending with the latter on the Swedish throne. Once again, it seems that the brothers in Eskilstuna took the opportunity to oust their Danish prior and break with Antvorskov when Sweden broke away from the union.

While there is little direct evidence of anti-union connections among the Eskilstuna brethren in between 1450 and 1470, there are some signs. For example, in a charter issued 12 June 1455, the castellan of Nyborg castle, future Swedish regent and – at the time – close ally to King Karl Knutsson, Erik Axelsson (Thott), mentions that he and his wife will be celebrating Saint John's Eve at Eskilstuna.⁴⁶ There is also a later mention of King Karl Knutsson's father, Knut Tordsson (Bonde), having donated a mill to the convent, creating a link between Eskilstuna and the king.⁴⁷

Yet, the foremost evidence of an anti-union alignment among the rebellious brethren is the support enjoyed from and given to anti-union elites following the ousting of Olaus Nicolai. During the 1470s and early 1480s, Eskilstuna started receiving several beneficial rulings regarding land disputes. All of these were rendered by important anti-unionist members of the Swedish laity, most prominently Greger Bengtsson, Åke Jönsson (Svarte Skåning), and – perhaps most notably – the brother-in-law of the late King Karl Knutsson and step-father of the Swedish regent Sten Sture, Gustav Karlsson (Gumsehuvud).⁴⁸

Furthermore, after his victory at Brunkeberg in 1471, Sten Sture d.e. emerged as a great patron of the Order. In 1479 the regent and the council of the realm oversaw the transfer of Kronobäck hospital to the Order, providing Eskilstuna with a subordinate commandery.⁴⁹ Shortly thereafter, the first prior of Kronobäck, Andreas Branderi, gave one of Erik Axelsson Thott's foremost supporters, Knut Posse, a part in the Order's privileges.⁵⁰ This patronage between the laity and the Order

⁴⁶ Charter issued 12 June 1455, *ibid.*, no. 26710, accessed 30 August 2024, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sdhk>.

⁴⁷ Charter issued 24 August 1482, *ibid.*, no. 31171, accessed 30 August 2024, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sdhk>.

⁴⁸ Charters issued on unknown date 1473, 29 November 1474, and 24 August 1482, *ibid.*, nos. 29524, 29848, 31171, accessed 30 August 2024, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sdhk>.

⁴⁹ Charter issued 26 July 1480, *ibid.*, no. 30763, accessed 30 August 2024, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sdhk>.

⁵⁰ Charter issued 12 August 1482, *ibid.*, no. 31150, accessed 30 August 2024, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sdhk>.

did not go unnoticed. During a later conflict between Eskilstuna and bishop Kort Rogge of Strängnäs, the bishop complained that prior Laurentius in the past had bragged about how “[...] Sten Sture had promised him and his brothers that he wanted to live and die together with them [in Eskilstuna].”⁵¹

Still, there is little evidence that the main driver behind Eskilstuna’s alignment with the anti-unionists was proto-nationalist rivalries or ethnic divisions. In fact, the brethren’s anti-unionist support does not explain why Olaus Nicolai was ousted from Eskilstuna in 1467 rather than 1465. If the brethren in Eskilstuna were committed to breaking away from the priory of Dacia since the late 1450s due to a national resentment of Danish overlordship, Olaus should have been overthrown as soon as the rekindled civil war began in 1465. However, as argued above, it is unlikely that the ousting of Jacobus was part of premeditated rebellion due to the lack of an election of domestic prior afterwards. Instead, a better explanation of the timing of the secession can be found in several changes to the obligations and organisation of the priory during the 1460s.

In 1463, the annual payments of responsions owed to Rhodes were continued, totalling around 300 guilders annually.⁵² Furthermore, in 1467 the repayments of Dacia’s debts from not paying responsions to Rhodes were to begin.⁵³ Totalling 140 guilders annually in addition to the regular responsions, the repayment would have greatly increased the economic burden on all houses in the province, especially given the reoccurring wars ravaging the Scandinavian countryside.⁵⁴

1467 also saw changes regarding the relationship between Dacia and the rest of the Order. In previous years, Dacia had alternated between being considered either a priory or a bailiwick under the German tongue. This changed in 1467, when the Grand Master of the Order, Piero Raimondo Zacosta (r. 1461–1467), gave the brothers in Antvorskov the right to elect their own prior among themselves.⁵⁵ This meant that the province officially became independent from the German rule, and

⁵¹ Charter issued 12 September 1493, *ibid.*, no. 32999, accessed 30 August 2024, <https://sok.rikssarkivet.se/sdhk>.

⁵² Hatt Olsen, *Dacia og Rhodos*, 54.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁵⁴ This increase in economic burdens during the 1450s and 1460s was not unique to the Scandinavian priory, rather it was an effect of the increased deficits in the Order’s budget following the fall of Constantinople in 1453. See Theresa M. Vann, “The Exchange of Information and Money between the Hospitallers of Rhodes and Their European Priors in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries,” in *International Mobility in the Military Orders (Twelfth to Fifteenth Centuries): Travelling on Christ’s Business*, ed. Jochen Burgdorf and Helen Nicholson (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006), 34–47.

⁵⁵ Hatt Olsen, *Dacia og Rhodos*, 55–59.

that the prior of Dacia was elected by the brothers in Antvorskov and the Danish king, who retained the right to confirm the elevation.⁵⁶ The same year, Hans Brun, who had been prior of Antvorskov since 1454, passed away, which meant that a new prior was elected according to the new rule.

The Grand Master had also, in an attempt to limit the increasing influence from the lay elites living within the walls, two years previously, in 1465, decided that only *fratres capellini et servientes* were allowed to live in and utilise the province's commanderies.⁵⁷ Since the networks of the Scandinavian houses were dependent on the ability to give *confrates* and *consorores* not only a part in the Order's privileges but also retirement and lodging in the commandery, the reform would have been devastating for the already strained economy if implemented. Furthermore, the decision proclaimed that all houses should have the right to elect their own prior when the old one passed away, as long as it was confirmed by the prior generalis in Antvorskov. This meant that while the brothers in Antvorskov was free to elect their own prior, Eskilstuna would have been subject to the confirmation of Antvorskov.

Overall, the developments in the organisational structure of Dacia during the 1460s is characterised by increasing economic obligations for the houses in the province, as well as an increase in the authority of Antvorskov. This, in turn, increased the power of the Danish members of the Order. At the same time, the fact that Dacia managed to break away from the German tongue showed that renegotiating the commandery's place within the Order's hierarchy was conceivable in the mid-15th century.⁵⁸ The Order, especially in Scandinavia, was more akin to a confederation of smaller organisations, and the ability of the Grand Master to impose his will on the provinces was very limited. Since both the prior of Dacia, Hans Brun, as well as the Grand Master of the Order, Piero Raimondo Zacosta, died in 1467, alongside King Karl Knutsson re-entered the Sweden, this normally precarious control over the Scandinavian houses could be challenged and overcome.

That these increasing economic obligations and an aversion to Danish overlordship were the reasons for Eskilstuna rebellion can also be inferred from the memorandum of 1493. The text argues that the brothers in Eskilstuna and Kronobäck believe that the increased economic obligations owed to Rhodes has been

⁵⁶ Reitzel-Neilsen, *Johanniterordenens historie*, 257.

⁵⁷ Hatt Olsen, *Dacia og Rhodos*, 52.

⁵⁸ Similar renegotiations also happened during the 1460s regarding the Spanish and French *langues* relationship with Rhodes. See Vann, *The Exchange*, 42.

imposed maliciously by the prior of Dacia.⁵⁹ It is also evident from later charters that the Swedish brothers did not break with the Order itself, and continued to pay resposion to Rhodes.⁶⁰

The breakdown of Dacia was the result of a drawn-out process originating from local political tensions, economic stress induced by new demands from Rhodes and geographical realities, rather than disagreement with the mission and leadership of the organisation or a sudden rebellion by a single house. With this conclusion, the conflicts in the priory of Dacia can be placed in the context of a growing literature covering the increasing internal tensions within the Hospitallers during the Late Middle Ages.

As in the priory of Dacia, challenges to the appointment procedures concerning priors and commanders, and the organisational hierarchy of the Order's provinces occurred all over Europe during the mid-15th century. In 1466 the preceptory of Haarlem broke away from the bailiwick of Utrecht, questioning the the right of the prior of the German tounge to approve the election of the prior of Utrecht.⁶¹ In 1468, the commandery of Mailberg was separated from the priory of Bohemia after petitioning the papacy for autonomy.⁶² In the late 14th century, the Irish houses had broken away from the English tongue, remaining independent until the 1497.⁶³ In Hungary, the preceptory of Székesfehérvár seceded form the priory of Vrana in the 1450s.⁶⁴ Rather than a local event, the rebellion of Eskilstuna in 1467 was part of a greater pattern of increasing autonomy in many peripheral regions of the Hospitaller's priories.

⁵⁹ RLM, AOM 391, fol. 231v.

⁶⁰ See for example a charter confirming the privileges of the new Hospitaller convent in Kronobäck issued 26 July 1480, *Svenska diplomatariets huvudkartotek*, no. 30763, accessed 30 August 2024, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sdhk>.

⁶¹ *Sources Concerning the Hospitallers of St. John in the Netherlands, 14th–18th Centuries*, ed. Johanna Maria van Winter, Studies in the History of Christian Thought 80 (Leiden–New York: Brill, 1998), 21.

⁶² Karl Borchardt, "National Rivalry among Hospitallers?: The Case of Bohemia and Austria, 1392–1555," *Medievalista Online* 30 (2021): 204–245.

⁶³ Gregory O'Malley, *The Knights Hospitaller of the English Langue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 238–246.

⁶⁴ András Ribí, "From Hospitallers to Cruciferi: The history of the Knights Hospitaller province in Hungary from the Council of Constance to the end of the Middle Ages with special emphasis on the Székesfehérvár Convent," in *The Knights Hospitaller in Medieval Hungary*, ed. Zsolt Hunyadi and András Ribí, *Arpadiana* 13 (Budapest: Research Centre for the Humanities, 2023), 145–229.

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