

## Was Saxo Grammaticus a Canon of Lund?

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Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum* (c. 1200) is a complex and important work which has fascinated general readers and scholars alike for many generations. It is therefore natural that numerous speculations about its author, and investigations into his life and background should appear. The relevant testimonies are unfortunately scarce and inconclusive, as for most medieval authors. In a recent book on Saxo's poetry I confined myself to mentioning testimonies which with certainty can be related to Saxo, and moreover refrained from entering into a discussion of the more controversial aspects of them. However, any scholar who wishes to understand Saxo's work in its entirety must at some point make up his or her mind about the whole material and its evidential weight, even if it means operating with probability rather than proof, and taking side in the often heated debate. In my opinion a renewed discussion of the nature of Saxo's relations with the archbishops of Lund, Absalon and Anders, is long overdue, and I hope that the present article may open the debate<sup>1</sup>. The subject matter is closely related to one of the most controversial questions of Saxo scholarship, namely whether Saxo was a layman or an ecclesiastic. As will appear from my reasoning, I consider that question misleadingly phrased.

The central evidence about Saxo consists in what he says in his work about himself and his employer (*Testimonies 1-3* below), and in addition three passages from other sources (*Test. 4-6*). A renewed discussion of this material is necessary, as a background to an evaluation of the more ambiguous evidence (*Test. 7-9*). I hope that the material for comparison which I have found, particularly in connection with *Test. 4* below, may justify another reading of *Test. 1-6*. The material will be presented in order of relevance. The most important passage in the *Gesta Danorum* is part of the very first period of the Preface:

Test. 1: Saxo Gramm. praef. 1,1 p. 3,3 Olrik/Ræder Danorum maximus pontifex Absalon ... mihi comitum suorum extremo ... res Danicas in historiam conferendi negotium intorsit inopemque sensum maius uiribus opus ingredi crebrae exhortationis imperio compulit.

1 I am indebted to Anders Leegaard Knudsen, Institute of History, for valuable references to secondary literature, to Birger Munk Olsen, Institute of Greek and Latin Medieval Philology, for the use of a computerized index to John of Salisbury's works, and to Lars Boje Mortensen, Institute of Classics, for several helpful suggestions.

Absalon, Archbishop of Denmark, ... placed the labour of compiling a history of the Danes upon me, the least of his entourage, and with his powerful insistence forced my weak intellect to embark on a project too huge for my abilities<sup>1</sup>.

Saxo (who does not mention his own name in the *Gesta Danorum*, cp. below) was thus one of Archbishop Absalon's *comites*, a member of his entourage, his *comitatus* or rather *clientela*, the latter being the most common word in Saxo for a bishop's household. The expression *extremus comitum suorum*, "the least among his followers", is a 'submission formula' in Curtius's sense of the word, not giving any clues to Saxo's actual place in the hierarchy<sup>2</sup>. This topos is particularly common in prefaces. Another topos of the *prooemium* is closely connected with the submission formula, namely the 'protestation of incapacity', and we find that too in *Test. 1* (*inopem ... sensum* and *maius uiribus opus*)<sup>3</sup>. Behind Saxo's formulaic phrases of submission and incapacity there is, in fact, a large portion of self-esteem, as a close reading of the context will reveal, but the main outlines of the relationship between Absalon and Saxo are clearly expressed. Absalon was in a position to confer on Saxo the task of writing a history of Denmark. The unusual phrase *mihi ... negotium intorsit* and especially the words *opus ingredi ... imperio compulit* are quite unambiguous. Absalon was thus without doubt Saxo's direct employer.

However, Absalon (archbishop 1178-1201) died before Saxo had finished his work, and therefore Saxo dedicates it, in the first place, to Absalon's successor - and relative - Archbishop Anders (1201-22), in the second place to King Valdemar II the Victorious (1202-41):

*Test. 2: Saxo Gramm. praef. 1,2 p. 3,19 O.-R. Cuius [sc. Absalonis] fati coepti mei metam praecurrentibus te potissimum, Andrea, penes quem saluberrimus suffragiorum consensus honoris huius successionem sacrorumque summam esse uoluit, materiae ducem auctoremque depono, obtreptionis liuorem qui maxime conspicuis rebus insultat tanti cognitoris praesidio frustraturus; cuius fertilissimum scientiae pectus ac uenerabilium doctrinarum abundantia instructum ueluti quoddam caelestium opum sacrarium existimandum est.*

But since his death outstripped my attempt before it reached its goal, I ask you especially, Anders, you whom a beneficial consensus voted to become successor to his rank and

1 My translations from Books I-IX of the *Gesta Danorum* to a large extent follow FISHER 1979.

2 See CURTIUS 1953 pp. 407-13.

3 Clear parallels to these two topoi are found in one of Saxo's most important sources, Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, dedicated to the Archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen. Adam writes in the Preface: A. minimus sanctae Bremensis ecclesiae canonicus, "I A(dam), humblest canon of the holy church of Bremen", although he was in fact magister scholarum and thus holder of an important office (see SCHMEIDLER 1917 p. LII); further on in the Preface he describes his undertaking in the following terms: nimirum ualde arduum et uiribus meis impar onus, "an extremely difficult task and quite beyond my abilities". LAUGESSEN 1975 has a good discussion of Saxo's Preface and its topoi.

head of the church, to be the guide and inspiration of my theme; I can thus disappoint the spleen of critics, who jeer most of all at remarkable objects, with your strong protection and advocacy; for men must consider your mind a shrine of heavenly treasures, abundant as it is in knowledge, furnished with a wealth of holy erudition.

Test. 3: Saxo Gramm. praef. 1,6 p. 5,14 O.-R. Te ergo, salutaris princeps ac parens noster ... Waldemare, dubium laboris huius progressum fauore prosequi rogo. ... Ceterum prisco atque hereditario obsequendi iure saltem ingenii uiribus tibi militare constitui, cuius clarissimi patris castrensem militiam parens ausque meus fidissimis bellici laboris operibus coluisse noscuntur.

So, my gracious lord and father of us all ... Valdemar, I beg you to look kindly on the wavering course of this undertaking. ... Now, following the ancient right of hereditary service, I am resolved, with the forces of my mind at least, to soldier for you like those loyal fighters my father and grandfather, who were recognised frequenters of your renowned sire's war camp.

Disregarding the purely chronological side of the evidence<sup>1</sup>, we notice that Saxo is extremely vague about the nature of his relations with Archbishop Anders. It is not possible to conclude from Saxo's words that he regards himself a member of the new archbishop's household, and for Saxo the main link between his former employer Absalon and Anders seems to be the fact that Anders is Absalon's legitimate successor on the episcopal throne, and a very learned man<sup>2</sup>. Saxo's dedication of the work to Anders does not with any certainty point to Anders as his new employer.

The dedication to King Valdemar is less ambiguous. It is hard to believe that Saxo would mention the king after the archbishop in the text if the king was his real employer. The address to the king is probably a bid for patronage for himself and his work, not the fulfilment of gratitude for benefits of the past. Test. 3 also gives important information about Saxo's social background. Saxo belonged to a family whose members traditionally served in the royal *hird*, that is, to a noble family. Saxo himself has not soldiered for his king, but he invites the king to regard his literary activities as an equivalent to military service, thus placing himself in the family tradition after all. Saxo's idea of himself as a 'soldier of the mind at least' may have some bearing on his civil status, since members of the clergy were not allowed to carry and use arms. The whole concept looks like a *topos*, and STEPHANIUS (1645 *ad loc.*) quotes an

<sup>1</sup> In the present article I shall not quote the, less controversial, testimonies which throw further light on the time of composition of the *Gesta Danorum*. They may be found for instance in C. WEIBULL 1915 pp. 11-17. The conclusion regarding the time of composition may be phrased like this: "Saxo was ... writing c. 1190 and did not finish until after 1208" (FRIIS-JENSEN 1987 p. 12).

<sup>2</sup> Cp. HØRBY 1985 p. 13.

interesting parallel from the conclusion of the contemporary epic *Ligurinus* about Frederick Barbarossa's heroic deeds, in which its author claims that his way of soldiering for his prince, namely by writing epic poetry, is just as valuable as ordinary military service<sup>1</sup>.

The next testimony to be quoted does not come from Saxo, but from his contemporary Sven Aggesøn's *Brevis historia regum Dacie*:

Test. 4: Sueno Agg. hist. 10 Quorum [sc. Suenonis filiorum] gesta plenarie superfluum duxi recolere, ne crebrius idem repetitum fastidium pariat audientibus, cum illustri archipresule Absolone referente contubernalis meus Saxo elegantiori stilo omnium gesta executus [executurus coni. Gertz vix recte] prolixius insudabat.

Their [i.e. Sven Estridsen's sons'] achievements I have found it superfluous to treat fully, lest a too frequent repetition of the same thing shall create distaste among the audience: for, according to the illustrious Archbishop Absalon, my colleague Saxo exerted himself for a long time writing a history of all those in an elegant style.

Sven is undoubtedly speaking about the author of the *Gesta Danorum*, thus confirming, if necessary, the tradition concerning his name. This passage, however, presents many difficulties of interpretation<sup>2</sup>.

For the moment we will concentrate on the question which is most important for our investigation, the meaning of the word *contubernalis*. From 1915 and until recently, *communis opinio* was that Sven uses the word in the sense 'fellow housecarl' (Danish 'hirdfælle'). M.Cl. Gertz is

- 1 Ligurinus 10,576ff. ASSMANN 1987 pp. 88ff. discusses the author's, in all probability ecclesiastical, status; Assmann assumes that the author was a chaplain at Frederick's court.
- 2 The translation states my position on some points. In the case of the much-discussed 'Absolone referente', the ablative absolute must indicate Sven's source of information for the statement, not Saxo's, as some scholars still maintain (cp. the discussion in K. CHRISTENSEN 1975 pp. 133 & 140-42). John of Salisbury often mentions his source in this way when retelling a story, e.g. policr. 8,11 p. 749c referente Ualerio Socrates ... respondit eqs., where Valerius Maximus is evidently John's, not Socrates's, source, cf. Val.Max. 7,2 ext.1. The other examples from John of Salisbury are: policr. 2,17 p. 435c. 8,4 p. 719d. 8,11 p. 753b. 8,13 p. 767a. metal. 2,8 p. 865c; I owe one of them to a reference kindly given by Thomas Riis many years ago. The meaning of 'prolixius' is a problem that has been overlooked (LARSEN 1925 pp. 256f. is an exception, but his result is that 'prolixius insudabat' is a later addition). GERTZ 1916 p. 67 translates as if 'prolixius' qualifies 'execu<tu>rus', parallel to 'elegantiori stilo': "(Saxo anstrengte sig) just da ivrigt med at ville skildre alle disses Bedrifter vidtløftigere i en finere Stil"; apart from the asyndeton of the two adverbial expressions, which is not an insurmountable problem, this solution tempts the reader unduly to understand 'prolixius' in the pejorative sense 'rather long-windedly'. In my opinion the word order makes it most natural to connect 'prolixius' with 'insudabat'; the adverb would then mean 'for a fairly long time', as an equivalent to the neutral temporal meaning of the adjective 'prolixus' which seems to be common in the Middle Ages (the normal meaning in Saxo, cp. BLATT 1957 s.v.; Joh.Sarib. policr. 5,7 p. 554c languor prolixior, ibid. 8,6 p. 728a prolixioris inediae (from St Jerome)). As to 'insudabat', ThLL s.v. insudo p. 2029,34 quotes a parallel to Sven's absolute use of the verb, Greg.M. moral. 2,23 p. 567a illius [sc. dei] iram toleras, cui quotidie seruiens insudabas: Sven's 'executus' is thus a parallel to Gregor's 'seruiens' (the perfect participle of the - deponent - verb being in this case the equivalent of a present participle, as noticed by Peter Allan Hansen; see K. CHRISTENSEN 1975 p. 141).

the originator of this theory. In his epoch-making edition of Sven's works, he discovered that the original text of another work by Sven, the "Law of the Hird" or *Lex castrensis*, uses the word *contubernium* for the royal hird, even, according to Gertz, "repeatedly"<sup>1</sup>; that, in his opinion, also settles the matter for the cognate word *contubernalis*, found in the *Historia brevis*. Unfortunately the examples of *contubernium* are not quite as numerous and unambiguous as Gertz seemed to believe. The word is only found twice, and in neither case does it look as if it is used as a technical term for the royal Danish hird.

The two examples of 'contubernium' occur at the beginning of the work. Here Sven gives an account of the historical background to the Law of the Hird, which Sven by the way calls 'legem castrensem et militarem uel legem curie' (Sueno Agg. lex praef., et passim).

The first example is from the Preface: *effrenis contubernii iuuentus militaris*, "the unruly youth of the military fellowship". The use of the qualifying adjective 'militare' to 'contubernium' shows that for Sven 'contubernium' is a concept which may also extend to a non-military sphere. In the second example the word is more obviously a military term (*ibid.* 2): (The king decreed that only well-equipped soldiers be admitted to his personal retinue:) *cedit enim honori principis, si cetus eum, contubernii corona stipatum, comitetur herilis*, "it reflects credit on a prince if it is a crowd of noblemen that accompany him, when he is surrounded by the circle of his retinue". The sentence seems to be a general statement about all princes, not only about Canute. Our result is that it is not possible to claim with any certainty that Sven uses 'contubernium' as a technical term for the royal Danish hird. In view of Sven's own title of the work, one or two other words would be expected as his own technical terms, such as 'militia' or 'curia': but in his desire for variation, Sven in fact uses several near-synonyms.

The situation is different when we come to terms for 'housecarl' and 'fellow housecarl'. In the Law of the Hird, Sven's usual word for 'housecarl' is 'miles' (about half a dozen examples), and for 'fellow housecarl' he logically uses 'commilito' (about twenty-five examples; a synonym for 'commilito', 'sodalis', is found twice). It should not surprise us that 'commilito' is much more frequent than 'miles', because the Law of the Hird to a large extent consists of stipulations regulating relations between fellow members of the hird. If we can judge from the Law of the Hird, the normal word for Sven to use if he wanted to call somebody 'my fellow housecarl', would thus be 'commilito meus'. Consequently we must consider the meaning of Sven's 'contubernalis' in a wider context.

The classical Latin words 'contubernium' and 'contubernalis' are both derived from 'con' and 'taberna' (cf. ThLL s.vv.), and their central meanings are 'tent-companionship' and 'tent-companion'. Most likely they originated as military terms, and as military terms they cover two different kinds of relations, that between two or several soldiers of roughly equal rank (perhaps the original meaning), or that between a higher officer (general, emperor) and a group of soldiers of lower rank who form his retinue. The medieval use of the words in the sense 'hird' and 'housecarl' clearly belongs to the second group. Very early the words extended to the civil sphere (first example in Plautus), and here the nature of the relationship is predominantly that of equals. Thus in non-military contexts 'contubernalis' normally means 'friend', 'comrade', 'mate', etc., whereas in a medieval military context it may mean either 'fellow soldier' (=commilito) or 'member of a king's or nobleman's military retinue', 'housecarl' (=miles).

Sven's contemporary Saxo uses both words. In Saxo there are twelve examples of 'contubernium' (cp. BLATT 1957 s.v.), six of which are used in the sense of a king's or

1 GERTZ 1915 p. 197 & 1916 p. 66: "gentagne Gange".

nobleman's hird, whereas the other examples are more heterogeneous, denoting for instance the communal bed of a married couple, non-military lodgings, or the affinity of abstract concepts.<sup>1</sup> Saxo has only four examples of the word 'contubernalis', all in the meaning 'a king's or nobleman's housecarl'; Saxo's normal term for that is 'miles' (cp. BLATT s.v., noting hundreds of occurrences). We cannot, therefore, use Saxo to corroborate Gertz's translation 'fellow housecarl' of the word 'contubernalis'.

If Sven uses the word in a non-military sense, as one would expect from the context of *Test. 4*, it most probably means 'comrade' or 'colleague'. Sven's and Saxo's acquaintance may go back to their school days or to a time when they studied abroad, or to many other occasions: we simply do not know. One should perhaps note that medieval authors more than once use the word to describe the relations between fellow writers. In BOTSCHUYVER's edition (1935, cp. index s.v.) of a, probably Carolingian, commentary on Horace's works, *contubernalis* is found five times in this sense, e.g. ad carm. 1,3 p. 13,16 *Uergilio contubernali Horatii*<sup>2</sup>. In the same way, the twelfth-century scholar Conrad of Hirsau calls the poets Varius and Tucca *contubemales Uirgilii et Oratii*, in his *Dialogus super auctores* (HUYGENS 1970 p. 122 l. 1569).<sup>3</sup>

Our next testimony comes from the *Chronica Sialandie uetustior* (second half of the thirteenth century), where it introduces a long quotation from Saxo:

Test. 5: Chron.Sial.uet. a.1103 (GERTZ 1917-22 II p. 27,9) ut refert in Gestis Danorum Saxo, cognomine Longus, mire et urbane eloquentie clericus;  
as Saxo, nicknamed 'the Tall', a clerk of astonishing and polished eloquence, tells in the Gesta Danorum.

The *Chronica Sialandie uetustior* was probably written more than half a century after the completion of the *Gesta Danorum*, so that its information should be treated with caution. This passage confirms the tradition of the name of the author of the *Gesta Danorum*, as Sven Aggesøn did in an indirect way. The traditional title of the work, which may go back to Saxo, is found here for the first time. Another interesting piece of information is the word used about Saxo, *clericus*: what does it mean in

1 Saxo Gramm. 3,2,9 p. 66,5 *abundantiae et egestatis diuiduum contubernium*.

2 Some of the examples were taken over from Porphyrio's commentary on Horace, others are new.

3 Ellen JØRGENSEN 1931 p. 32 n. 4 quotes an eleventh-century author who in a letter uses the word 'contubernium' to refer to his and the recipient's school days together, Adelm.Leod. epist. ad Bereng. *contactaneum te meum uocauit propter dulcissimum illud contubernium, quod tecum ... in achademia Carnotensi ... duxi*. In the dictionaries of medieval Latin which have made sufficient progress to include the word 'contubernalis', the meaning 'comrade' seems to dominate, but the number of examples is altogether small.

the context, and does it constitute genuine evidence about Saxo? Since the word also occurs in the following testimony, we shall discuss it briefly.

Our point of departure is the well-documented article 'clericus' (subst. masc.) by Peter Stotz in the *Mittelaltersches Wörterbuch* (1973), taking up four closely printed columns and covering the German material down to the end of the thirteenth century. The classification is simple and clear, dividing the material into two groups. The first group, comprising more than three-quarters of the text, with various subdivisions, is defined thus: "in the strict sense of the word: the same as an ecclesiastic". The second group comprises examples of a broader sense, in three subdivisions, "A: an ecclesiastic performing the functions of chaplain, notary, and the like, a scribe" (twelve examples), "B: a man of letters" (eight examples), and "C: a pupil, student" (seven examples)<sup>1</sup>. We cannot use the number of quotations in the article to quantify the probability of this or that meaning of the word 'clericus', among other things because the examples quoted in the article are only a selection of the material, but, on the other hand, the general impression seems clear. A man described by the term 'clericus' is nearly always an ecclesiastic. Even in cases where 'clericus' is used in the sense 'man of letters' or 'pupil, student' (group II B-C), the person thus described will normally be an ecclesiastic: in medieval Europe (at least outside Italy) a school education was to a very large extent the privilege of the clergy<sup>2</sup>.

Philippe DELHAYE puts this very clearly in his survey *L'organisation scolaire au XIIe siècle* (1947 p. 211): "Dans les pays d'Occident, au XIIe siècle, l'enseignement et les études sont pratiquement un monopole du clergé. Lettré est synonyme de clerc". Moreover, he quotes a very interesting passage from Philip of Harvengt (d. 1183, Premonstratensian abbot), actually discussing the meaning of the word in his *De institutione clericorum* (PL vol. 203 p. 816b): *Loquendi usus obtinuit ut quem uiderimus litteratum statim clericum nominemus. ... Et tamen militem [sc. litteratum] quem dicimus presbytero meliorem clericum esse, scimus procul dubio clericum non esse, sed improprii sermonis usus ... praeualuit, "It has become [Latin] usage that we instantly call a literate man a clerk. ... And yet we know without doubt that the [literate] knight whom we call a better clerk than the priest, is no clerk, but a faulty usage of speech ... prevailed". This passage fully corroborates the impression we obtained from the modern dictionary: the word 'clericus' retains its ecclesiastical connotations, even when, occasionally, it is used about laymen.*

1 MLW vol. II,5 1973 p. 713,51-717,38: "I strictius i.q. ecclesiasticus ...; II latius: A ecclesiasticus munere capellani, notarii sim. fungens, scriba ...; B homo litteratus ...; C discipulus, studiosus litterarum". STRAND 1979 (p. 139 nn. 19-21) also refers to the MLW article in connection with Test. 6. The other dictionaries of medieval Latin available for the word 'clericus' give a similar picture.

2 Curt Weibull refers to Arnold of Lübeck (C. WEIBULL 1915 p. 11 n. 2, 1978 p. 88, 1981 p. 182) and to Stephan of Tournai (id. 1981 p. 182) as evidence of the fact that Danes attended secular schools abroad at the end of the twelfth century, but the passages in question cannot be interpreted as he proposes. Arnold says (3,5) that young Danes are sent to Paris "to be educated in secular subjects" (*secularibus rebus instituendos*), but his next sentence makes it clear that he opposes 'artes (liberales)' with 'theologia'; and although the liberal arts were secular subjects, they were studied in the normal schools, which, outside Italy at least, were kept by members of the clergy. Likewise, when Stephan refers to Absalon's wish to send the young Peder Sunesøn "to the schools of the seculars and the word-peddlers either on the Mountain [of Ste-Geneviève] or in Paris" (*uel in monte uel Parisius ad secularium scholas et uenditores uerborum mittendo*, Steph. Tornac. epist. 93 Desilve, DD I,3 no. 131), he is thinking of schools kept by the secular clergy, masters licensed by the chancellor of Notre-Dame, in fact the usual range of schools at Paris, as opposed to Stephan's own school at Ste-Geneviève, kept by regular canons (the letter is discussed by DELHAYE 1947 p. 245).

The Danish material for the word 'clericus' has never been discussed in its entirety, but the article in the *Lexicon Mediae Latinitatis Danicae* (1988), based on excerpts, confirms the overall picture we saw in the MLW. The article quotes an example which uses 'clericus' as an opposition to 'laicus', DD II,9 no. 295 (1326) *alii quamplures tam clerici quam layci*. I have come across similar examples in earlier documents: DD I,2 no. 163 (1164-1178) *multis fidelibus astantibus clericis et laicis*, *ibid.*: *Clerici multi et laici fideles astantes*; DD I,5 no. 3 (1211) *multis ... aliis tam clericis quam laicis*; DD I,5 no. 4 (1211) *multis ... aliis nobilibus tam clericis quam laicis*. In Denmark the ecclesiastical connotations of the word 'clericus' were clearly alive, too. The article in the LMLD does not quote the examples of 'clericus' found in Test. 5 and Test. 6.

In connection with *clericus* in Test. 5 we must conclude that the use of the word in all probability implies that the author of the chronicle regarded Saxo as an ecclesiastic. One may perhaps also argue that it would be redundant to use *clericus* in the sense *homo litteratus*, since the expressions *refert in Gestis Danorum* and *mire et urbane eloquentie* make it clear that Saxo is a lettered man, but the argument is not decisive.

The next testimony, a passage from Archbishop Absalon's will, also contains the word *clericus*, and in a less ambiguous context. Moreover, the testimony is contemporaneous with the historiographer. The difficulty is that we cannot with certainty identify its Saxo with our historiographer.

The stipulations of Absalon's will seem to have been loosely organized in sections: the rank or social status of the recipients is one organizing principle, the nature of the gifts they receive is another, and now and then these two principles are at cross purposes. The section quoted below follows a comparatively well-defined section in which Absalon grants liberty to a number of serfs:

Test. 6: DD I,4 no. 32 (1201)

Saxoni clerico suo duas marcas argenti et dimidiam concess<era>t [-cessit trad., DD], quas sibi donauit<sup>1</sup> - Saxo debet duos libros, quos archiepiscopus ei concesserat, ad monasterium

1 There cannot be much doubt about the general meaning of the clause: a provisional gift (a loan) was made permanent (the restitution to Saxo of a gift from Saxo seems out of the question). Therefore it is illogical that both verbs (*concessit* and *donauit*) are in the perfect. The traditional interpretation (C. WEIBULL 1915 p. 4 n. 1 may be an exception) makes 'concessit' the verb of the final donation and 'donauit' the verb of the loan, thus understanding 'donauit' as an equivalent to a pluperfect; see for instance DRB (1958) ad loc.: "Sin klerk Saxo overlod han de 2 1/2 mark sølv, som han havde givet ham". This seems unsatisfactory in view of the sense of the verbs: it is more difficult to understand 'donare' than 'concedere' in the meaning 'to give provisionally' 'to lend' (cp. the other example of 'concedere' in Test. 6). In the will, the normal verbs used in donations are 'donauit' and 'dedit', and - apart from the two occurrences in Test. 6 - 'concedere' in fact only occurs once, in a clause which looks like a parallel: *Episcopo Roskildensi quinquaginta marcas argenti duabus minus concesserat ad emendum Alertofta, quas <e>idem episcopo remisit*, "He had entrusted the Bishop of Roskilde with forty-eight marks of silver to buy Alertofta; those he remitted to the same bishop". I propose to understand the first part of Test. 6 in a similar way; even if one does not wish to correct 'concessit' into 'concesserat'



de Sora referre.

Magistro Iohanni bicarium argenti dedit.

Magistro Walthero pallium griseum, quo in natali domini uestiebatur, dedit.

He had entrusted his clerk Saxo with two and a half marks of silver; those he presented him with - Saxo must restore the two books with which the archbishop had entrusted him, to the monastery of Sorø.

He gave Magister Johannes a silver beaker.

He gave Magister Walther the grey fur coat which he wore on Christmas Day.

*Test. 1-5* are without doubt genuine testimonies about the Saxo who was the author of the *Gesta Danorum*. The Saxo of *Test. 6* may be another person of the same name, but nearly all Saxo scholars, irrespective of their general theory about Saxo's person, have accepted that the name refers to the author of the *Gesta Danorum*. So do I, for reasons that will be mentioned shortly. *Test. 6*, however, is the key to the rest of the material, and one should always be aware of its cardinal importance for further hypothesizing. If *Test. 6* falls, we cannot proceed further than we have done already. On the other hand, if one accepts *Test. 6*, one has in my opinion an obligation to take the consequences. Ellen JØRGENSEN demonstrates a fruitful approach (1931 p. 33): "In the stipulations of the will, Saxo found his place side by side with men belonging to the archbishop's chancellery". Her identifications of Magister Johannes and Magister Walther with Absalon's notary and chaplain of those names<sup>1</sup> are not certain, but the general idea that one should try to connect the historiographer Saxo with other members of Absalon's household mentioned in the will, looks promising to me.

The well-known arguments for the genuineness of *Test. 6* as information about our Saxo are of a double nature. In general, it is difficult to imagine that in his household Absalon had not only one, but two well-educated men carrying the, by no means common, name Saxo<sup>2</sup>: for we know from *Test. 1* that our Saxo belonged to that household. And, incidentally, if there were two Saxos, why was only one of them remembered in Absalon's will, although Absalon has remembered so many

(in palaeographical terms a minor correction), it is in my opinion still preferable to understand 'donavit' as the verb of the final donation.

- 1 Cp. DD I,3 no. 90 (1180) Ego Iohannes notarius archiepiscopi Absalonis subscripsi, and the testimonies on the chaplain Walther mentioned below.
- 2 Cp. the article 'Saxi' in KNUDSEN/KRISTENSEN/HORNBÝ vol. I 1936-48. C. WEIBULL's claim (1978 p. 88) that in the days of the historiographer Saxo "no less than six Saxos are known to belong to, or supposed to belong to, the clergy", is polemical. Apart from the Saxo (or Saxos) mentioned in *Test. 4-9*, only two other ecclesiastics of the name are known: a provost of the chapter at Roskilde (cp. Ellen Jørgensen's article on him in Dansk Biografisk Leksikon, 2nd & 3rd edd.), who is clearly older than our Saxo, and a regular canon of the Victorine house of Æbelholt.

others, including serfs? Specifically, the mentioning of the two books which Saxo had borrowed and must bring back to the monastery of Sorø, points to the author of the *Gesta Danorum*<sup>1</sup>. We know that Absalon had donated manuscripts of the Roman writers Valerius Maximus and Justinus to the monastery of Sorø<sup>2</sup>, and exactly those two were among the favourite classical models of the author of the *Gesta Danorum*.

Now what does *clericus* mean in *Test.* 6? Here we find ourselves on much firmer ground than in *Test.* 5. The *clerico suo* of the will must be an equivalent to a *clericus episcopi* or, if he were employed by the king, a *clericus regis*, in the words of the *Mittelateinisches Wörterbuch* "an ecclesiastic performing the functions of chaplain, notary and the like, a scribe". Ellen JØRGENSEN (1931 p. 34) has drawn attention to a royal charter of 1180 (DD I,3 no. 89) that sheds light on the term *clericus regis*<sup>3</sup>. In the *corroboratio* of the charter eight noble laymen are named as witnesses, whereas in the *subscriptio* ten ecclesiastics sign, among them what is apparently the entire staff of the royal chancellery: *Karolus cancellarius regis ... Emerus capellanus regis ... Ionas clericus regis ... Andreas clericus regis ... magister Iohannes ... Baldwinus clericus regis*. It seems that the *clerici* are ordinary members of the chancellery, which was headed by the chancellor. However, the term *clericus* (*regis* or *episcopi*) does not necessarily imply a low rank. Ellen JØRGENSEN (*ibid.*) mentions the case of John of Salisbury: after having distinguished himself in the service of Archbishop Theobald of Canterbury, John is nevertheless grouped with the archbishop's *clerici* when named among the witnesses of a letter<sup>4</sup>, whereas another employer of John's, Abbot Peter of S.-Remi, repeatedly calls John his *clericus*, in quite positive contexts<sup>5</sup>.

There are in fact two similar examples among Absalon's employees. The first is Absalon's chaplain Walter, from Absalon's period as Bishop of Roskilde (it is difficult to tell whether he is the Magister Walther men-

1 So Ellen JØRGENSEN 1931 p. 33.

2 The Justinus Ms. is still extant (København, Det kongelige Bibliotek, Gl.kgl.Saml. 450 fol. = MUNK OLSEN 1982 Just. C. 11; cp. MUNK OLSEN 1987 p. 296), the Valerius Maximus Ms. is known from a seventeenth-century collation (Uppsala, Universitetsbiblioteket, Hs. R. 370; cp. MUNK OLSEN 1987 pp. 328 & 296).

3 The three examples of 'clericus regis' in the charter are also quoted in the LMLD s.v. 'clericus', with the translation "hofpræst, sekretær" (royal chaplain, secretary).

4 Ellen Jørgensen quotes a letter of 1155, now printed in SALTMAN 1956 p. 536 (supplementary documents A). John is in fact named among the 'clerici archiepiscopi' in another two charters, *ibid.* nos. 35 (1157-61) and 263 (1150-61). For John's position in Theobald's household see *ibid.* pp. 169-75.

5 Ellen Jørgensen refers to the following letters by Peter: PL vol. 202, nos. 513, 519, 521, 556. Cp. MILLOR/BUTLER/BROOKE 1955 pp. XVif.

tioned many years later in Absalon's will)<sup>1</sup>: he twice signs charters as *capellanus episcopi*<sup>2</sup>, he is mentioned once as *magister Walterus domni episcopi Absalonis capellanus*<sup>3</sup>, but a fourth time he is called *magistri Gualteri, clerici tui* (sc. Absalonis)<sup>4</sup>! The second example is Absalon's cousin's son Peder Sunesøn, Anders Sunesøn's brother. Peder became a regular canon of the Victorine house of Ste-Geneviève, while studying in Paris in the middle of the 1180s<sup>5</sup>. He showed signs of a weak constitution, and his abbot Stephan (of Tournai) released him from his vows, on the condition that Peder's uncle Archbishop Absalon provided for him in a suitable way in Denmark. Absalon procured a prebend for Peder at the chapter of Lund, and probably made him his own *clericus*, eventually in 1192 securing for him the episcopal see of Roskilde<sup>6</sup>. The terms used by Stephan in his letters to Absalon makes it fairly evident that Peder actually obtained the position of *clericus archiepiscopi* in his uncle's household. Stephan mentions him as *fratre nostro karissimo, clerico et filio uestro Petro* (DD I,3 no. 154), and in the same letter expresses the pious hope that Peder will serve God and the archbishop with equal care, *ut ... et deo seruiat in misteriiis suis et uobis placeat in ministeriiis uestriis*<sup>7</sup>. Peder belonged to one of the leading families of the country, and he was the possessor of a prebend when he functioned as Absalon's clerk. Consequently, the expression *Saxoni clerico suo* of *Test. 6* in no way implies condescension on Absalon's part, but merely suggests that Saxo was a member of the archbishop's household whose activities lay in the sphere of letters in a broad sense, and who was most probably an ecclesiastic.

Ellen JØRGENSEN's conclusions in her biographical article on Saxo (1941 p. 592) are well phrased and deserve to be quoted in this context,

- 1 In a different context, Ellen JØRGENSEN (1931 p. 33) makes the identification between the magister of the will and the chaplain; she does not use the letter mentioning 'magistri Gualteri clerici tui' quoted below.
- 2 DD I,2 nos. 162-163 (1164-1178).
- 3 DD I,2 no. 185 (1167-1174).
- 4 DD I,2 no. 189 (1169). PALUDAN-MÜLLER (1861 p. 30) mentions the last parallel, but he does not combine it with the three other occurrences of Walther's name.
- 5 The main sources for Peder's earlier years are DD I,3 nos. 128-133, 153-154, all of them letters from Stephan of Tournai.
- 6 See SKYUM-NIELSEN 1971 p. 227 for Peder's prebend and bishopric (WEIBULL 1923 p. 114 is the source for the prebend). In DD I,3 no. 132 Stephan seems to ask for a *beneficium* or a prebend in general for Peder, not specifically for a bishopric, as the editors suggest: *Absit ut acefalus exeat [sc. Petrus] a nobis, ... sine titulo clericus*; cf. DESILVE 1893 (no. 150) ad loc.
- 7 Cf. Stephan's words in an earlier letter (DD I,3 no. 131): *ei [sc. Petro] sicut filio karissimo consulimus, mandamus et precipimus, ut quamdiu in terra illa [sc. Dania] moram fecerit, ... uobiscum in curia uestra religiose sicut decet et expedit conuersetur*.

although she implicitly rejects the identification of the historiographer with the canon Saxo of *Test.* 7-8 below: "Saxo was one among the many clerks who in those days belonged to a high-ranking prelate's staff, men with a literary education, but without ordination and ecclesiastical offices, most often performing minor tasks, but now and then acting as their employer's confidants, his assistants and spokesmen in letters, pamphlets, and treatises".

It is now time to discuss some of the objections against our Saxo being an ecclesiastic. Curt WEIBULL, one of the founders of modern critical Saxo scholarship, phrases it like this in his 1915 dissertation (pp. 10f.): "No compelling reason exists to consider Saxo an ecclesiastic, as it is generally done. The word *clericus* of Absalon's will and of the *Chronica Sialandie uetustior* [*Test.* 6 and *Test.* 5] only implies that he was Absalon's scribe and a learned man. The opinions held by Saxo are rather those of a humanistically educated layman than those of a monk or priest, and his Latin shows that he is more familiar with Valerius Maximus and the classical authors than with the Vulgate and the fathers of the church". Curt Weibull wrote this before M.Cl. Gertz had published the critical edition of Sven Aggesøn, containing his new interpretation of the word *contubernalis*, but Weibull has endorsed Gertz's interpretation in two recent articles (C. WEIBULL 1978 and 1981).

We have already become acquainted with M.Cl. Gertz's opinion that the word *contubernalis* in *Test.* 4 is connected with *contubernium* in the sense 'royal herd'. But since his views form the cornerstone, as it were, of the theory of Saxo's lay status, we shall quote Gertz's own characterization of Saxo (GERTZ 1915 p. 197): "Sven obviously also knew Saxo, and when he calls him his *contubernalis* ... it is for me comparatively certain proof that Saxo, too, for a period of his life belonged among the king's housecarls and was a warrior. Saxo is certainly predominantly interested in warfare, and now and then one finds opinions and descriptions of sexual matters that are so free and outspoken that one is reluctant to attribute them to an ecclesiastic, whereas they are evidently more suitable in the mouth of an old warrior".

Erik KROMAN has written a clear and useful little survey of the discussion about Saxo's person and status, and he is himself an ardent spokesman of Weibull's and Gertz's position (1971 pp. 24f.): "Whereas ecclesiastical writers are thoroughly influenced by the Augustinian philosophy of life as a struggle between good and evil, Saxo's outlook is anything but ecclesiastic, although he pays the church due respect. That is enough to belie the assertion that he is a man of the church. ... He

mainly describes warfare and combat. ... Absalon is his hero above all, not in his capacity as prince of the church, but as warrior. ... So like Sven Aggesen, whose status as housecarl has been undisputed since Kinch's time, Saxo was a housecarl who served in the royal hird at the time when Sven Aggesen was writing. [*Several Saxo scholars have accepted this view, but the historian Ellen Jørgensen did not agree*] ... In certain quarters there has evidently been some aversion to the idea that Saxo was probably a housecarl".

Interestingly enough, very few scholars have opposed Weibull's and Gertz's views openly. Kroman mentions Ellen JØRGENSEN (1931 & 1941) as an exception; we have already seen some of her conclusions. More recently Birgit STRAND (1979) has shown convincingly that Saxo's general attitude in the *Gesta Danorum* by no means excludes his being an ecclesiastic, an article that takes C. WEIBULL 1915 and 1978 as its immediate point of departure; Strand does not include *Test.* 7-9 in her study, whereas for *Test.* 6 the meaning of *clerico suo* is the object of a careful discussion.

Specialists of twelfth-century Danish history, writing since Ellen JØRGENSEN 1941, have taken up a cautiously agnostic attitude, in some cases no doubt in deference to the enormous authority of the Weibull tradition. Some of them, such as Aksel E. Christensen and Niels Skyum-Nielsen, have managed to avoid discussing the subject altogether, at least to my knowledge. Others, like Tage E. Christiansen and Inge Skovgaard-Petersen, phrase their views with extreme caution. Tage E. CHRISTIANSEN (1966 pp. 77f.) says that "Saxo was not a housecarl", thus approving of Ellen Jørgensen's non-military interpretation of the word *contubernalis* of *Test.* 4. He nevertheless avoids committing himself to the theory that Saxo was an ecclesiastic. The furthest he goes is to characterize Saxo, in a felicitous phrase, as "the man of letters with a housecarl's mind" (*ibid.* p. 83).

In her general understanding of the *Gesta Danorum*, Inge SKOVGAARD-PETERSEN relates the work closely to an ecclesiastical context (latest in the dissertation 1987). Her most explicit commitment to the existing testimonies about Saxo's person is found in her biographical article on Saxo (1982). Here she accepts *Test.* 4-6 and, perhaps surprisingly, also *Test.* 9, as evidence about our Saxo. She interprets the word *contubernalis* of *Test.* 4 in the way in which Ellen Jørgensen and Tage E. Christiansen understood it, but her conclusion concerning Saxo's status is cautious (*ibid.* p. 638): "In his capacity of Absalon's clerk [Saxo] is not necessarily

ordained, but he has had the benefit of the best education available, and that was organized by the church".

Before we pursue the further implications of our conclusion that Saxo was most probably an ecclesiastic, I should like to give a short characterization of three of Saxo's colleagues who were also remembered in Absalon's will, and who did not, at that time at least, belong to the dignitaries of the chapter. By doing so I hope to give an idea of the sort of people that surrounded Absalon, and thus perhaps indirectly characterize Saxo, too. One of them, Magister Johannes, was mentioned next to Saxo in Absalon's will.

We read in the text of the will that Absalon's "chaplain Thord, canon of Lund", was present in the monastery of Sorø in 1201 when Absalon dictated it. Absalon left him various fur coats. He has been identified with the next archbishop Anders's notary Thord, canon of Lund<sup>1</sup>. He was later promoted, and died dean of the chapter at Lund, leaving real estate in Lund and in the countryside to the "common table" of the canons<sup>2</sup>.

In his will Absalon made certain stipulations concerning the prebend of a "Magister Hugo", who was not present at Absalon's deathbed, and gave him a fur blanket. He has been identified with the deacon and *magister scholarum* Hugo, canon of Lund, who at his death left two marks of silver, various possessions at his farm, and his private house in Lund to his fellow canons<sup>3</sup>. He is without doubt the *magister Hugo* of *Test.* 9 below.

"Magister Johannes, canon of Lund" was present at Absalon's deathbed, as the text of Absalon's will mentions, and further on in the text Absalon leaves him a silver beaker (see *Test.* 6). He has been identified with a canon of Lund *Magister Johannes presbiter* and a Magister Johannes who owned a house in Lund "with gardens and other appurtenances"<sup>4</sup>. In addition I propose to identify him with a Magister Johannes mentioned in a letter of Abbot Wilhelm of Æbelholt, addressed to Archbishop Absalon and datable to the last years of Absalon's life (DD I,3 epist. Wilh. 2,31).

1 DD I,4 nr. 52 (1202-1211); this and the following identifications were made by, among others, Lauritz WEIBULL 1923 p. 118.

2 Thord is mentioned as no. 36 in the list of presbyters in the *Necrologium Lundense* (L. WEIBULL 1923 p. 118), and in the *Liber daticus Lundensis uetustior* (19 May) (WEEKE 1884-89 p. 127).

3 L. WEIBULL 1923 p. 122 (no. 13 on the list of deacons in *Necr.Lund.*), WEEKE 1884-89 p. 29 (*Lib.dat.Lund.uet.*, 6 February).

4 Lauritz WEIBULL 1923 p. 119 (no. 44 on the list of presbyters in *Necr.Lund.*; DD I,5 no. 203 (1222) *curiam cum ortis et aliis pertinenciis suis, que olim fuit magistri Iohannis*).

Johannes was a common name about 1200, and there are other *magistri* of that name from the period, but in this case the wording of the letter is very detailed and suggestive. Wilhelm complains about the death of a certain Magister Petrus, and about heavy losses of grain. Magister Petrus, who seems to have had cordial relations with the Victorine abbey of Æbelholt, has left a town house (probably in Lund) in which the Victorines used to enjoy hospitality. They do not want to lose their accommodation, but cannot afford to buy the house, and therefore Abbot Wilhelm urges Absalon to help Magister Johannes buy the house. Magister Johannes is described as one of Absalon's most faithful employees: *fidelissimo uestro magistro Io(hanni)*<sup>1</sup>, *qui uestris perficiendis negociis fideliter sapius et totus insudat et quasi certis periculis obicere sese uestro pro honore non recusat*, "your most faithful Magister Johannes, who often and with his whole heart exerts himself to settle your affairs faithfully, and who is not reluctant to undergo almost certain dangers for Your Honour". It seems likely that he is the same Magister Johannes who followed Absalon on his last journey to Sorø, and who was remembered in his will. I shall not claim that the house Johannes wants to buy is the house he is known to have possessed later, but his interest in real estate is unmistakable.

Such men were Saxo's colleagues in Absalon's court at Lund. Their status as canons of the cathedral chapter gives us an incentive to see what sort of life was led at the chapter about 1200. The chapter of St Lawrence at Lund was clearly a congregation of secular canons, with a developed hierarchy, individual prebends for the canons, and the right to possess private property. In principle, historians have known this all along, but the scarcity of material elucidating the period at the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, combined with the existence of a set of statutes for the chapter from c. 1123, has led scholars to focus on the earlier period.

SKYUM-NIELSEN (1971 p. 92) writes the following about the two oldest cathedral chapters in Denmark, Roskilde and Lund, both organized in the 1080s: "In both places the brethren lived common lives, even if separate estates had been conferred on the prebends from the very beginning. After 1259, the outward traces of a common life at Roskilde disappeared, since the term 'brother' became obsolete. But the turning point probably lay earlier. At Lund the common life had dried up, too". A.E. CHRISTENSEN (1977 p. 314) says similarly: "The two cathedral chapters [of

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1 Earlier in the text: *per magistrum Iohannem*.

Roskilde and Lund] followed the mild precepts of the Achen Rule<sup>1</sup>, which restricted common life to the dormitory and the refectory, apart from participation in the prescribed services held in the choir of the church and in the chapter house of the monastery. Individual prebends and the right to own private property secured considerable independence and freedom, and conferred a comparatively secular status on the canons". In his ecclesiastical history of Scania (1946), Lauritz WEIBULL is equally unspecific about life c. 1200 at the chapter of Lund.

The salient point of the canons' common lives was probably their common dormitory. When canons begin to live in separate houses with separate households, their lifestyle changes. They may still meet daily at chapter meetings and services, and eat regularly together, but they do not form one family any longer. When did the canons of Lund move into private residences? Probably at some time before the middle of the thirteenth century, as Skyum-Nielsen suggests above. But there is evidence to indicate that it had happened already at the turn of the century. According to Lauritz Weibull<sup>2</sup>, several canons living at the end of the twelfth century and in the first decades of the thirteenth century are known to have possessed houses in Lund at their death: *Eschillus de Hafn* (no. 29 on the list of presbyters), the *Thort presbiter et decanus* already mentioned, *Ascerus decanus* (no. 42 on the list of presbyters), the *Magister Johannes presbiter* already mentioned, *Sueno Longus* (no. 47 on the list of presbyters)<sup>3</sup>, and finally the *Hugo magister scholarum* already mentioned. Some of them may have lived themselves in the monastery while collecting rent from their houses, but that was hardly the case for all of them. Moreover, we know from presbyter Sven Longus's obituary note that canons, too, were prospective tenants of a city house (cp. preceding note).

The well-known question of canons' concubinage may also throw some light on canons' residences. Lauritz WEIBULL (1946 p. 176) is probably

1 The statutes of Lund from c. 1123 comprise the Achen Rule (chapters 114-45) and a (secularized) version of the Marbach Rule, originally written for regular canons. The editor of the second text, BUUS (1978 p. 103), emphasizes the fact that both rules were in force simultaneously, supplementing each other: the rule inspired from Marbach did not cancel the Achen Rule. KOCH (1936 pp. 102f.) stresses the secular features of the chapter in general.

2 L. WEIBULL 1923, the notes to pp. 117ff.

3 Like most of the evidence, Sven's house is mentioned in his obituary note (6 January) in the *Liber daticus Lundensis uetustior* (WEEKE 1884-89 pp. 5f.): *Ad hec ex munificentia sua contulit ecclesie Lundensi curiam suam cum domibus hac condicione apposita ut quicunque canonicorum eam tenuerit dimidiam marcam denariorum soluat annuatim ex ea eqs. - fellow canons are prospective tenants!*



right when he assumes that a papal letter to Archbishop Anders about canons' concubines in Anders's ecclesiastical province has been provoked by a report from the archbishop himself (DD I,4 no. 87, 1203). In any case the pope writes that "canons of cathedral churches keep concubines publicly in their houses (*in suis domibus*) and show them almost conjugal affection", a practise that of course must be brought to an immediate end. Such relations were most conveniently cultivated in private residences, and the pope's use of the words *suis domibus* points in the same direction. Now all Denmark was Anders's province, but morals at Lund were hardly better than elsewhere. Weibull himself mentions as an example the canon *Andreas archidiaconus* of Lund (d. 1219), who seems to have had at least three sons<sup>1</sup>.

The archaeological evidence cannot help us on this point. Although many features of medieval Lund in general, and the building history of the cathedral in particular, have been elucidated by various excavations, we know nothing about the monastic buildings at this time<sup>2</sup>. However, some of the institutions connected with the cathedral and chapter can be illustrated by means of other sources. There are several references to the cathedral school and its masters in documents and letters<sup>3</sup>, and we know that in the twelfth century the monastery was home of a scriptorium with a certain standard. The library of the chapter contained many important historical texts, besides a collection of the necessary liturgical and theological books.

The importance of Lund as the centre of history writing in Denmark in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was demonstrated by Anne K.G. KRISTENSEN in her epoch-making study from 1969 of the oldest Danish annals. Among her conclusions are the following, which give an excellent characterization of the literary activities at the chapter (p. 150): "There is no doubt, then, that the Lundensian see was the centre of Danish annal-writing from its beginning ab. 1140 until ab. 1265. ... Apart from tracing the development of medieval Danish annal-writing, this investigation attempts also to establish, as far as possible, the non-annalistic sources of annal-records. The medieval annalist doing research into the source material compiled all available evidence, irrespective of kind and origin, embodied into his work excerpts of chronicles, obituaries etc., and

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1 Cp. WEEKE 1884-89 p. 220.

2 Cp. L. WEIBULL 1946 p. 44 and ANDRÉN 1980 p. 69. Against earlier opinions, however, Andrén is inclined to date the - now vanished - medieval cloister, built around the apsis of the cathedral, to the Romanesque period.

3 Cp. L. WEIBULL 1946 pp. 164ff.

brought consistency and harmony to the account. In other words his method did not differ substantially from that of other historians of his day. A comprehensive library, such as the one at Lund, was a *sine qua non* for the medieval historian wanting to exploit the method of his time. Historical tradition as represented by *Adam of Bremen*, *Ailnoth*, the *Chronicon Roskildense*, the *Chronicon Lethrense*, *Saxo*, and others eventually became available in the Lund collection. Several minor chronicles and royal genealogies still extant can be ascribed to Lundensian writers. Throughout the 12th and 13th centuries the archiepiscopal see remained the natural and most important centre of literary and artistic production".

Anne K.G. Kristensen does not mention Saxo explicitly as one of the writers active at Lund, because his work is outside the scope of her investigation. However, *Test. 1* and *Test. 6* indicate that Saxo belonged to Absalon's household, so that it would be most natural to see the archbishop's residential city of Lund as the centre of Saxo's activities. And what is more, Anne K.G. Kristensen's results regarding the writing of annals render it probable that Saxo, too, belonged to and profited from the milieu and the library at Lund. After all, Saxo used the same written sources for his work as the annalists did. To put it differently, *Test. 6* makes it clear that Saxo did not work at the monastery of Sorø (or he would not need to borrow its books)<sup>1</sup>, whereas Anne K.G. Kristensen has demonstrated the difficulties of assuming other Danish centres of history writing in Saxo's days besides Lund, for example at Sorø and Roskilde. In another context C.A. CHRISTENSEN (1952) has pointed out that Saxo is not quite well-informed about the hierarchy of dignities at the chapter of Roskilde, which may also indicate that he did not live at Roskilde.

So far so good. We have now located our Saxo to Lund and gained some information about the environment there. We may, however, be tempted into further speculations about Saxo's status at the archiepiscopal court. If Archbishop Absalon was Saxo's direct employer, as *Test. 1* and *Test. 6* suggest, Absalon must also have provided Saxo with a living. Board and lodging could certainly be found in the archbishop's own palace at Lund. But if, in the long run, the archbishop wanted to show his appreciation of his employee's work in a more tangible way, the most natural thing would be to provide him with a *beneficium* of some kind, an income from property. Absalon was the bishop of a cathedral with a

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1 So also LAUGESEN 1972 p. 18.

well-endowed chapter, comprising at least eighteen prebends for canons<sup>1</sup>, and the bishop traditionally had influence on the appointment of new prebendaries and a right to use some of them in his own service (cp. SCHNEIDER 1885 pp. 80f.). Nothing could be more natural than to give Saxo a prebend, if he fulfilled the conditions of possessing it.

There was actually a canon of the name of Saxo in Absalon's time. Scholars who believe that Saxo the author of the *Gesta Danorum* was a layman and a housecarl, have naturally not been inclined to make the identification. But even among those modern scholars who accept Saxo's ecclesiastical background, nobody has ventured to take the last step. Before taking up this discussion again, we shall quote the two testimonies about the canon Saxo, together with a last contemporary testimony:

Test. 7: Necrol.Lund. series canonicorum Lundensium subdiaconorum 12 (WEIBULL 1923 p. 125) Saxo. Acolitus.

Test. 8: DD I,3 no. 96 (DD: c. 1180-83; SKYUM-NIELSEN 1951-52 p. 22: c. 1180-1201)<sup>2</sup> Ego Saxo Lundensis ecclesie canonicus subscripsi;

I Saxo, canon of the church at Lund, have signed.

Test. 9: DD I,3 no. 225 (1197-1201) Ericus Nidrosiensis archiepiscopus Petrus Roschildensis Nicolaus Asloensis Nigallus Stauangrensis Iuarus Hammarensis episcopi magister Hugo magister Walterus magister Saxo Acho prepositus Ericus Butti et complures alii [sc. subscriberunt];

Erik, Archbishop of Nidaros; the bishops Peter of Roskilde, Nicolaus of Oslo, Nigel of Stavanger, Ivar of Hamar; Magister Hugo; Magister Walther; Magister Saxo; Provost Age; Ericus Butti; and several others [have signed].

*Test. 7* has been taken from the list of sub-deacons who died as canons of Lund. In the *Necrologium* there is only one more canon of the name Saxo, a sub-deacon, but he was alive in 1241 and died at the middle of the century. The acolyte Saxo was entered on the list with a characteristic hand. L. WEIBULL (1923 p. 125) rightly identifies it with the hand that entered the name of the above-mentioned Magister Hugo on the list of deacons, and Absalon's name on the list of archbishops<sup>3</sup>. There is thus no chronological objection against his being our Saxo. L. Weibull himself (*ibid.*) identifies the acolyte Saxo with the canon of *Test. 8*.

<sup>1</sup> See for instance SKYUM-NIELSEN 1971 p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> The narrow time limits "c. 1180-1183" of the DD seem to be founded on Absalon's use of the title 'apostolice sedis legatus primas Danie atque Suethie' in the intitutatio. This title is not found later than c. 1183 (*ibid.* no. 114), being since replaced by 'a.s.l. (et) Suethie primas'. However, the argument does not carry much weight since the entire protocol has been taken over from the model, Archbishop Eskil's corresponding charter, *ibid.* no. 13. In the subscriptio of no. 96, Absalon in fact signs himself 'a.s.l. et Swethie primas'.

<sup>3</sup> Cp. the facsimile edition KROMAN 1960 pp. 350, 356, & 358.

The document from which *Test. 8* has been taken, a charter of Archbishop Absalon, cannot be precisely dated. It has been signed by four men: Absalon himself; Saxo; Tobias, abbot of the monastery which the charter concerns; and last by the archbishop's deacon Magnus. So nothing in itself speaks against the assumption that the Saxo of *Test. 8* is our Saxo.

The *Magister Saxo* of *Test. 9* may be identified with either the canon of *Test. 7* and *Test. 8*, or with our Saxo, Absalon's *clericus*, or with both – it would be extravagant to claim that he is a third Saxo, especially when one considers the context. *Test. 9* has been taken from a digest of a now lost charter of Absalon, which in certain passages, however, contains word-to-word quotations. All the men who signed the charter were also mentioned in Absalon's will, except perhaps for Saxo and Ericus Butti (but Ericus Butti is most probably identical with *Henrico Batti* of the will)<sup>1</sup>. They thus seem to belong to Absalon's staff or to his circle of acquaintances, such as the four exiled Norwegian bishops who spent several years in Absalon's court at Lund. The title *magister* indicates that this Saxo at some point in his career taught at the cathedral school at Lund or elsewhere, and thus implies that he was an ecclesiastic. A *magister* may be identified with a canon, such as in the case of Magister Hugo, but he may also be identified with a *clericus (episcopi)*, as we saw in the case of Absalon's chaplain Walther from his time as Bishop of Roskilde. Consequently it is not excluded that the canon Saxo of *Test. 7* and *Test. 8* is the same man as Magister Saxo of *Test. 9*, and that he is Saxo the author of the *Gesta Danorum*.

If we look for scholars who do not hesitate to identify the historiographer Saxo with a canon, a prebendary of a cathedral chapter, we must go back to the time before Curt Weibull and Gertz. The idea that our Saxo was Saxo the provost of Roskilde mentioned above, originates in the late Middle Ages, but its most ardent recent spokesman was Caspar PALUDAN-MÜLLER (1861). His thesis was rejected by later historians, for methodological<sup>2</sup> and chronological reasons, and the provost Saxo now enjoys an independent existence as an older contemporary of the historiographer. The rival hypothesis, that the historiographer was a canon of the chapter at Lund, was advanced by two eighteenth-century professors of the University of Lund<sup>3</sup>, whereas its most learned and eloquent

1 'Hericus' is a frequent variant of 'Ericus'; in the text of the will (DD I,4 no. 32), one of the sources reads 'Herico Batti'.

2 See for instance ERSLEV 1891-92.

3 See for instance KROMAN 1971 p. 13.

recent defenders were the editor of Saxo, J.M. VELSCHOW (1858), and the Swedish scholar Henrik SCHÜCK (1896). The evidence advanced by Velschow and Schück, *Test.* 7-8, has suffered the disgrace of being swept away more or less unnoticed in the general turmoil that followed Curt Weibull's and Gertz's secularization of Saxo. In my opinion its time has come again. Saxo scholars have come to a better understanding of the many-faceted character of the church of twelfth-century Europe, an institution which was certainly comprehensive enough to hold a writer like Saxo. Now it should also be possible to form a more detailed picture than before of the conditions of life in Lund about 1200, as we started doing above.

Curt Weibull's, Gertz's, and Kroman's view of Saxo as - crudely put - a writer whose passionate interest in military affairs and outspokenness in sexual matters were only matched by his ardour in imitating the Roman classics, may be true as far as it goes. However, recent works by, among others, Inge Skovgaard-Petersen and Birgit (Strand) Sawyer have demonstrated that this attitude is in no way incompatible with a profound sense of the importance of the church in the course of history, and in the shaping of contemporary Danish society. The dual character of Saxo's personality as a writer also corresponds very well with what we know about his employer Archbishop Absalon's interests. For that reason alone it is highly problematic to claim that Saxo's attitude rules out the possibility of his being an ecclesiastic.

In these matters, too, we should perhaps see Saxo in a European perspective. During recent years scholars have discussed the ethical and intellectual outlook common to the secular clergy of the later twelfth century, that which Klaus Guth calls "das neue Standesethos der Weltkleriker" (GUTH 1984 p. 69 et passim, with references). Guth himself takes John of Salisbury as his point of departure, and makes an interesting attempt at outlining the positions of the secular clergy against those of the regular (monastic) clergy on the one hand, and the lay aristocracy on the other. Among typical representatives of the secular clergy of Saxo's time one could mention, beside John of Salisbury, men such as Walter Map and Peter of Blois. Their works show a mixture of devotion and worldliness similar to John's, and their careers lead via service in episcopal and royal households to substantial canonries. Walter died an archdeacon of Oxford, Peter an archdeacon of Bath<sup>1</sup>. We should per-

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<sup>1</sup> For Walter Map see the introduction in JAMES/BROOKE/MYNORS 1983, for Peter of Blois SOUTHERN 1970 and DRONKE 1976.

haps in this connection note that, among the men mentioned above as bishops' clerks, at least two of them were at the same time canons of a cathedral chapter, namely John of Salisbury<sup>1</sup> and Peder Sunesøn.

In what follows I have collected various observations which speak in favour of Saxo being not just an ecclesiastic, but more precisely the canon of Lund whom we have met in *Test.* 7-8. The canon Saxo is an acolyte, that is he is in the highest of lesser orders. According to the lists of canons in the *Necrologium Lundense*, it is very unusual to find acolytes among the prebendaries: they are normally clerks in major orders (presbyters, deacons, and sub-deacons). There are only two acolytes among them, both entered in the list of sub-deacons, which numbers nineteen 'real' sub-deacons (see L. WEIBULL 1923 pp. 124-6). The corresponding lists of presbyters and deacons comprise fifty-one and thirty canons respectively. Some scholars are of the opinion that it speaks against an identification with the historiographer that the canon Saxo died an acolyte, since the historiographer would have deserved to be promoted to a more dignified position in the chapter (e.g. PALUDAN-MÜLLER 1861 pp. 102f.). In my opinion the reverse is the case. There must be some particular reason for giving a prebend to a man in lesser orders: we must remember that, although tonsured, acolytes were in principle not required to be celibate. A specialist of medieval ecclesiastical institutions, the Finnish scholar Jarl Gallén, characterizes acolytes endowed with prebends in the following way in his article "Akolyt" (KLNM vol. 1 1956 p. 65), unfortunately without giving any specific references: "Whereas the other *ordines minores* were early reduced to stages on the way towards entering major orders, the order of acolyte became not seldom in the Middle Ages a final position for secularly engaged or less religiously-minded prebendaries". Gallén certainly did not have Saxo in mind when he wrote that, but somebody looking for arguments in favour of the identification of the historiographer with the canon and acolyte, could not have phrased it more beautifully.

The city, cathedral, and chapter of Lund take up a prominent position in the *Gesta Danorum*, as one would expect of the metropolis of twelfth-century Denmark. The only other Danish city which can claim a rival place in Saxo's attention is Roskilde. Saxo may be critical in his judgment of the inhabitants of Lund during the Scanian rebellion in the early 1180s (cp. SKOVGAARD-PETERSEN 1988 p. 80), but that is only natural when we remember that Saxo himself was probably a native of Zea-

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1 For John of Salisbury's career as a canon see BROOKE 1984 p. 4.

land<sup>1</sup>, and thus as much of a foreigner as the archbishop and the king's Zealander administrators of Scania against whom the Scanians rebelled.

Saxo shows a particular interest in the economy of the church of Lund: he actually gives a digest of the royal privilege of 1085 which laid the economical foundations for the chapter and the canons' prebends<sup>2</sup>, an effort he does not make in the case of any other ecclesiastical institution. Saxo inserts the digest of the privilege into the history of St Knud IV, the benefactor of the church of Lund, but the stipulations show the amended form they were given in Saxo's own days in the royal confirmations of the original privilege. This fact has led scholars to state that Saxo had no access to the original document<sup>3</sup>. That may be so, but insofar as the amendments to the privilege come close to a falsification on part of the church of Lund, there was a common interest at Lund in keeping the original out of reach<sup>4</sup>. Saxo's procedure only shows his concern for the rights obtained, and a wish to anchor them as firmly as possible in historical tradition, in his usual fashion.<sup>5</sup> Saxo's final words about St Knud's privilege confirm his concern: "This edict retains its old force to the present day, although it has been rashly challenged by many since then". Saxo's interest in the canons' rights is not difficult to understand if he was actually one of them himself, although it cannot serve as proof of his status.

Saxo's knowledge of canon law, which has been emphasized latest by Inge SKOVGAARD-PETERSEN (1987, e.g. pp. 123-9) and by Kai HØRBY (1988 pp. 143f.), may perhaps also point towards his being an actual member of the ecclesiastical establishment. In our context it is interesting to note that his knowledge is particularly pronounced when it comes to the canonical procedure for the election of a bishop (*in casu* the election of Archbishop Absalon in 1177, cp. SKOVGAARD-PETERSEN *ibid.*, with references), in which procedure the canons of the cathedral chapter play a very important part. Saxo's emphasis in *Test. 2* on the point that a cor-

1 So Comp. *Saxonis praef.* (14th cent.), ed. GERTZ 1917-22 I p. 216,1; Saxo's general attitude towards Zealanders also makes it plausible.

2 Saxo Gramm. 11,12,8 p. 322,15ff. O.-R.

3 See DD I,2 no. 21 p. 46.

4 See L. WEIBULL 1910-13 p. 268 and 1925 pp. 142ff.

5 An analogous case is the Vederlov, the Law of the Royal Hird, whose text was established in the 1180s on the initiative of King Knud VI and Archbishop Absalon, allegedly reproducing the law Knud the Great gave to his housecarls in the early eleventh century. Saxo inserted the law into the history of Knud the Great, without mentioning in a word Knud VI and Absalon.

rect procedure has been followed for the election of Archbishop Anders may have similar implications<sup>1</sup>.

In general Saxo's way of portraying Archbishop Anders in the Preface makes good sense if one assumes that Saxo was a member of the chapter. Saxo shows a sympathetic understanding of Anders's many virtues, his learning, splendid career, and beneficial activities for the church of Lund. He finishes the portrait with an eulogy of Anders's efforts in restoring the celibacy of the clergy, as it seems (Saxo Gramm. praef. 1,2 p. 4,16): "Moreover, men prone to a loose life who gave way to uncontrolled dissipation were recalled, by your sound persuasions and exemplary self-denial, from weak flabbiness to a manlier frame of mind, taught, whichever it was, by your words or your behaviour". In Saxo's deliberately universal and non-technical language, the objects of Anders's zeal are in fact only mentioned as *lasciuioris uitae studiosos* and *intemperantiae ... indulgentes*, but the sentence only makes real sense if they are men in holy orders,<sup>2</sup> and Anders's first and most important target group was the members of his own chapter. We have already heard of Anders's reforms in connection with the papal letter of 1203 against canons' concubinage. Saxo clearly sympathized with Anders's efforts and with the official papal policy in this question.

I hope to have demonstrated that there are several minor points that may speak in favour of an identification of the historiographer Saxo with the canon. The impression we have received above of some of Saxo's contemporaries in the chapter and colleagues in the archiepiscopal household is equally suggestive. The learned historiographer who, besides his unquestionable knowledge of ecclesiastical affairs, took such an interest in warfare and other mundane matters and had a realistic attitude towards sex, would no doubt feel at home among the, in certain respects very secular, members of the chapter at Lund. If Saxo was actually a canon of the chapter, it is also easier to understand why his dedication of the *Gesta Danorum* to Archbishop Anders shows so few signs of inferiority and submission. *Test.* 2 hints that Saxo chose to dedicate his book to Anders because he was Absalon's successor and a learned man who would appreciate and protect "remarkable objects" (*conspicuis rebus*), that is Saxo's own work. These are hardly words one would address to

1 The expression 'saluberrimus suffragiorum consensus' of *Test.* 2 may be a reference to the concept of 'sanioritas' in connection with an 'electio per compromissum', as was the case at Lund; cp. BUUS 1978 pp. 67f.

2 So also MÜLLER/VELSCHOW 1839 ad loc. and VELSCHOW 1858 p. 4 ad loc. The Danish translations of Saxo are even vaguer than Saxo on this point.



one's direct employer and the procurer of one's daily bread. But they give excellent meaning as an address by a canon to the head of his chapter. The bishop is a man whom a canon owes due respect, but also a man who has been elected by the body of men to which the canon belongs, and whose sources of income, although far more abundant, are essentially of the same kind as the canons' prebends.

The aim of my argumentation has not been to prove that the historian Saxo, Absalon's former clerk, is identical with the canon Saxo, a member of the secular clergy, because the present evidence does not allow us to do that. However, I hope to have shown that there is a strong possibility that the identification is valid, and that it constitutes a hypothesis which scholars ought to consider in future work on Saxo Grammaticus.

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