# ROYAL SPLENDOR AND SACRED MEMORY: THE GOLDEN GOWN AND FUNERARY MONUMENT OF QUEEN MARGARET I OF DENMARK

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

ROYAL SPLENDOR AND SACRED MEMORY: THE GOLDEN GOWN AND FUNERARY MONUMENT OF QUEEN MARGARET I OF DENMARK

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and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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ROYAL SPLENDOR AND SACRED MEMORY: THE GOLDEN GOWN AND FUNERARY MONUMENT OF QUEEN MARGARET I OF DENMARK

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the material and symbolic legacy of Queen Margaret I of Denmark (1353–1412) through two key objects: the Golden Gown and her funerary monument. Queen Margaret's position as regent allowed her to wield unprecedented political power and orchestrate the Kalmar Union, which united Denmark, Sweden, and Norway under one monarch. Despite these achievements, Queen Margaret has often been overlooked. This thesis draws on existing studies in queenship, material culture, and medieval religious practices to contribute to a more nuanced interpretation of two objects that became central to the construction of Queen Margaret's posthumous identity. Through the Golden Gown, Chapter Three explores clothing as both a physical and symbolic entity that carries the ability to construct and reinforce narratives of power, authority, and even sanctity. Chapter Four examines Queen Margaret's funerary monument to illuminate the interwoven relationship between religious rhetoric and dynastic propaganda, and how memory can be preserved, manipulated, and reinterpreted across centuries. Through this thesis, I hope to introduce Queen Margaret into current broader discourse of late medieval queenship and offer new insights into two objects that reinforce her royal authority and connection to the sacred.

## Introduction

Upon its rediscovery at Uppsala Cathedral in 1906, the so-called Golden Gown (Figure 0.1 & Figure 0.2) captivated scholars and the public alike with its opulent material, intricate design, and perceived connection to Queen Margaret I of Denmark (d. 1412).[1] As one of the few surviving royal garments from the late medieval period, it stands as a rare and invaluable artifact and offers insight into both the material culture of medieval royalty and the enduring symbolic power of clothing. In an era where queenly authority was often challenged, the gown serves as a tangible connection to a ruling queen whose life and legacy has often been overlooked.

Overshadowed by time and the rise of other powerful queens, the legacy of Margaret I of Denmark has faded from popular memory. Yet, according to Vivian Etting she is "one of the most important political figures in Nordic history."[2] Both contemporary accounts and later histories emphasize her sharp intellect and extraordinary ability to navigate the complex political landscape of the late fourteenth century. Surrounded by political turmoil the entirety of her childhood, Queen Margaret had high ambitions to consolidate power and secure stability for her realms. Her remarkable accomplishments and renowned piety elevated her status beyond that of a mere monarch. Following Queen Margaret's death objects associated with her were transformed into relics and legends reshaped the Queen into a near-saintly figure.

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[1] The spelling of names of historical figures varies between the Scandinavian languages and the English translation. I will use the modern anglicized name forms which are most commonly in use, thus Queen Margaret (English) rather than Margrete (Danish) or Margareta (Swedish), King Haakon rather than Håkon or Håkan, King Olaf rather than Olav or Oluf, and so on.

[2] Vivian Etting, *Queen Margrete I, (1353-1412), and the Founding of the Nordic Union*. The Northern World: V. 9. (Brill, 2004), xvii.

The current thesis will provide an analysis of Queen Margaret's Golden Gown and funerary monument (Figure 0.3) – two objects which simultaneously present and conceal the presence of the Queen's royal body.[3] Informed by recent scholarship on queens and their material contexts, this study seeks to explore how these two objects functioned as both physical and symbolic forms of protection. The Golden Gown and funerary monument demonstrate how material objects become imbued with layers of meaning that transcend their original function. Through centuries of myth-making, reverence, and even political appropriation, the Golden Gown and funerary monument evolved into symbols of Margaret's royal authority, spiritual influence, and connection to the sacred.

Jules David Prown's article, "The Truth of Material Culture: History or Fiction?" has been instrumental in shaping this project by advocating for the analysis of objects as both artifacts of historical evidence and active participants in historical narratives. Prown discusses that artifacts, like historical events, result from causes: reasons why an object comes into existence in a particular configuration, is decorated with particular motifs, is made of particular materials, and has a particular color or texture.[4] He emphasizes that objects are deeply embedded within their cultural contexts, embodying the values, beliefs, and ideologies of the societies that produced them.[5] This perspective informed my examination of the diverse historical, political, economic, cultural, and religious

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[3] Susan Crane, *The Performance of Self: Ritual, Clothing, and Identity during the Hundred Years War*. (The Middle Ages Series. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 10.

[4] Jules David Prown, "The Truth of Material Culture: History or Fiction?," in *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture*, ed. Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press), 3.

[5] Prown, "The Truth of Material Culture: History or Fiction?," 16.

forces that transformed the Golden Gown and funerary monument into dynamic artifacts of Queen Margaret's legacy.

Despite Queen Margaret's political significance, this area of study remains surprisingly underexplored. Scholarship on Queen Margaret has largely focused on her political career, while studies of the material objects associated with her person have primarily examined their craftsmanship and historical provenance. The artifacts connected to Margaret have been displayed publicly for centuries as objects of historical interest, but only recently have there been technical studies and restoration efforts. This thesis seeks to fill this gap in the literature by integrating research on Margaret's life with analyses of the Golden Gown and her funerary monument, drawing upon recent scholarship on queenship and medieval religiosity to provide a deeper understanding of how material culture shaped and preserved her legacy. Each chapter will examine how existing studies contribute to a more nuanced interpretation of Queen Margaret's Golden Gown and funerary monument.

The first chapter establishes the foundation of the thesis by examining the historical events, cultural dynamics, and religious influences that paved the way for Margaret's unprecedented rise to power. Several texts delve into influencing factors; historian Gary Dean Peterson's book outlines political, cultural, and religious circumstances in Sweden from the age of the Vikings to Margaret's formation of the Kalmar Union,[6] Beñat Elortza discusses events leading up to and taking place after the catalyst for the Swedish civil war during the fourteenth century,[7] and the opening chapter

[6] Gary Dean Peterson, *Vikings and Goths: A History of Ancient and Medieval Sweden*. (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2016).

[7] Beñat Elortza, "The Swedish Brothers' War: 'The Entire Realm to the Duke did Fall.'" *Medieval Warfare* 10, no. 2 (2020): 20-25.

of historian Vivian Etting's book examines the state of Denmark during the reign of Margaret's father.[8]

In this chapter I also explore the fluid and evolving nature of queenship as a practice during the Middle Ages, considering the avenues women found to exercise authority and the behaviors typically expected of a queen. Historian Nanna Damsholt explores Margaret's rule through a gendered perspective, investigating Margaret's foundational relationships with other women, the "femininity" of her reign, and accounts of Margaret that deal directly with her womanhood.[9] Historian Armin Wolf examines the circumstances that lead to women being favored in the royal line of succession,[10] and Theresa Earenfight discusses the office of queenship and its institutional foundation within the monarchy.[11] Although Tracy Adams and Glenn Rechtschaffen discuss French queens, their examination of female regency helps reinforce the idea that female regency was reconstructed to conform to conditions at hand.[12] Steinar Imsen's overview of Scandinavian Union Queens in the late Middle Ages places emphasis on the unique situations which allowed Nordic queens to achieve unprecedented possibilities within the workings of politics.[13]

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[8] Vivian Etting, *Queen Margrete I, (1353-1412), and the Founding of the Nordic Union*. The Northern World: V. 9. (Brill, 2004).

[9] Nanna Damsholt, "Margrete - Power in the Hands of a Woman" in *Margrete I, Regent of the North: The Kalmar Union 600 years, Essays and Catalogue*. (Copenhagen: Danmarks Nationalmuseum, 1997).

[10] Armin Wolf, "Reigning Queens in Medieval Europe : When, Where, and Why," in *Medieval Queenship*. Ed. John Carmi Parsons. (New York: St. Martins Press, 1993).

[11] Theresa Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe*. Queenship and Power. (Basingstoke ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

[12] Tracy Adams and Glenn Rechtschaffen, "Isabeau of Bavaria, Anne of France, and the History of Female Regency in France." *Early Modern Women* 8 (2013): 119–47.

[13] Steinar Imsen, "Late Medieval Scandinavian Queenship" in *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe: Proceedings of a Conference Held at King's College London, April 1995*. Duggan, Anne, ed. (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK ; Rochaester, NY, USA: Boydell Press, 1997).

The veneration of saints played a crucial role in Nordic religiosity during the Middle Ages, and the cult of saints served both spiritual and political functions. This belief system influences Margaret's personal life and political decisions that will be explored throughout the thesis. Tracey R. Sands was an invaluable resource for information regarding this area of study. In the chapter "The Cult of St. Eric, King and Martyr, in Medieval Sweden" Sands provides context for the many ways the cult of saints permeated the everyday life of those living in Scandinavia in the Middle Ages, including direct references to Saint Olaf and Saint Eric – two saints that became important in Margaret's political campaign.[14] In "Saints and Politics During the Kalmar Union Period: The Case of Saint Margaret in Tensta" Sands further demonstrates the connection between Queen Margaret and her namesake, Saint Margaret of Antioch.[15] Building upon this foundation, my research will expand on these ideas by exploring the interwoven nature of political authority and religious devotion. The blending of faith and politics highlights how religious beliefs were not just a matter of personal devotion but an essential instrument in shaping medieval Scandinavian identity and governance.

Chapter Two is an overview of Queen Margaret's life, as she goes from the youngest of six children to overseeing the union of three Nordic realms. There have been several texts devoted to Queen Margaret, including the late nineteenth century account *Margaret of Denmark* by historian Mary Hill, first published in 1898.[16] Several biographical texts have been published since including chapters in historical books and

[14] Tracey R. Sands, "The Cult of St. Eric, King and Martyr, in Medieval Sweden" in *Sanctity in the North: Saints, Lives, and Cults in Medieval Scandinavia.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

[15] Tracey R. Sands, "Saints and Politics During the Kalmar Union Period: The Case of Saint Margaret in Tensta." *Scandinavian Studies* 80, no. 2 (2008): 141–66.

[16] Mary Hill, *Margaret of Denmark*. (T. F. Unwin, 1898). In her preface, Hill remarks that within her awareness a recount of the life of Queen Margaret had not been published in England.

several texts available in Danish, Swedish, or Norwegian.[17] There are also several fictitious retellings of Queen Margaret's life,[18] and historical poems.[19] In 2004, Vivian Etting's scholarly biography gathered Margaret's personal letters, chronicles, historical documents, and oral tradition to retell Margaret's life and political career.[20] Before the publication of her book, Etting provided a biographical essay for the catalogue *Margrete I, Regent of the North: The Kalmar Union* published in 1997.[21] The catalogue accompanied an exhibition on Queen Margaret I and the Kalmar Union that traveled to multiple locations in Scandinavia. First held at the National Museum of Denmark (December 26, 1996 - April 1, 1997) the exhibition then moved to several different locations: Kalmar Castle in Sweden (May 2, 1997 - July 20, 1997), Hämeen linna/Tavastehus Castle in Finland (August 20, 1997 - 2 November 2, 1997), and lastly the Museum of Defence in Norway (December 1, 1997 - March 31, 1998). The catalogue contains fifty-one short essays and a multitude of images with topics ranging from Etting's biography of Margaret, to iron production, to textiles and costumes.[22] As such, the catalogue provides an immense amount of information regarding everyday life during

[17] Peterson, "Margareta and the Kalmar Union" in *Vikings and Goths: A History of Ancient and Medieval Sweden*. (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2016)., Poul Grinder-Hansen, Lars Andersson, Nationalmuseet (Denmark), and Forsvarsmuseet (Norway). 1997. *Unionsdrottningen : Margareta I Och Kalmarunionen*. ([Stockholm]: Norden, Holm, Gretelise. 1988). *Dronning Margrete I : Fuldmægtig Frue Og Husbond*. 1. udg. ([København]: Munksgaard, 1988).

[18] Knut Ingar Hansen, *Biografien Om Margrete I. : Hersker over Tre Riker*. (Tiden: Gyldendal, 2000), Anne Lise Marstrand-Jørgensen, *Margrete I : Roman*. 1. udgave. ([København]: Gyldendal, 2020).

[19] Bernhard Severin Ingemann, *Dronning Margrete : Et Historisk Digt I Ti Sange*. Tiende udgave. (Kjøbenhavn: Reitzel, 1895).

[20] Vivian Etting, *Queen Margrete I, (1353-1412), and the Founding of the Nordic Union*. The Northern World: V. 9. (Brill, 2004).

[21] Vivian Etting, "Margrete - Mistress and Master of the North" in *Margrete I, Regent of the North: The Kalmar Union 600 years, Essays and Catalogue*. (Copenhagen: Danmarks Nationalmuseum, 1997).

[22] Kirsten Christiansen, Nationalmuseet, Kalmarunionen, and Nordic Council of Ministers, eds. *Margrete I - Regent of the North: The Kalmar Union - 600 Years; Essays and Catalogue.* (Copenhagen: Danmarks Nationalmuseum, 1997).

the Kalmar Union – although a majority of the topics covered in the catalogue occur in the last decade of Queen Margaret's life or after her death.

Chapter Three turns to objects that are at the heart of this thesis, including the Golden Gown and other items associated with Queen Margaret's tomb that attained the status of relics. This chapter explores how tangible artifacts can be imbued with layers of meaning that transcend their original function. Historian Poul Grinder-Hansen provides a brief overview of the objects associated with Margaret that were venerated as relics.[23] Written by Fynes Moryson and published in 1593, *An Itinerary Written by Fynes Moryson Gent* is a primary account of his visit to Roskilde Cathedral.[24] Moryson's itinerary is the earliest recorded account of Margaret's gown being displayed near her tomb, as well as other objects that became important within the collection of relics associated with the queen. Archaeologist Margareta Nockert's catalogue chapter discusses textiles as outward manifestations of wealth, power and social standing while examining surviving examples of Scandinavian textiles.[25]

The focal object of Chapter Three is the Golden Gown that is said to have belonged to Queen Margaret. In 1985 Agnes Geijer, Anne Marie Franzén, and Margareta Nockert published *Drottning Margaretas Gyllene Kjortel i Uppsala Domkyrka (The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral).*[26] Entirely about the Golden Gown, the book provides an extensive amount of information regarding the fabric,

[23] Poul Grinder-Hansen, "At Margaret's Tomb" in *Margrete I - Regent of the North: The Kalmar Union - 600 Years; Essays and Catalogue.* (Copenhagen: Danmarks Nationalmuseum, 1997).

[24] Fynes Moryson, *An Itinerary Written by Fynes Moryson Gent,* 1617.

[25] Margareta Nockert, "Textiles and costume 1350-1450" in *Margrete I - Regent of the North: The Kalmar Union - 600 Years; Essays and Catalogue.* (Copenhagen: Danmarks Nationalmuseum, 1997).

[26] Agnes Geijer, Anne Marie Franzén, and Margareta Nockert, *Drottning Margaretas Gyllene Kjortel i Uppsala Domkyrka (The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral)*. (Stockholm, Sweden. Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1985).

construction, and possible wearers of the garment. It should be noted that a majority of the book is in Swedish with chapter summaries in English provided in the back of the book, no doubt the English translation lacks many details provided in the main chapters. To contextualize the gown within broader discussions of clothing, I draw on literary historian Susan Crane's work on how garments function as layered symbols and construct identity.[27] Additionally, Jane E. Burns' study of the Virgin's chemise and its replicas informs my analysis of how pieces of fabric from the Golden Gown may have been repurposed.[28] In this chapter I explore clothing as both a physical and symbolic entity that carries the ability to construct and reinforce narratives of power, authority, and even sanctity.

Chapter Four examines Queen Margaret's funerary monument as a constructed narrative, including a brief history of its location, discussion of the presumed artist, and hypotheses on the included iconography and its relation to Queen Margaret. This study illustrates how memory can be preserved, manipulated, and reinterpreted across centuries. Originally completed in 1423, the funerary monument as it stands today is largely a modern reconstruction and will also be examined with the ideals of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in mind.[29] The reconstructed figures and relief scenes of the monument were intended to reproduce and complete the original program. These sculptural works represent ecclesiastical figures and depict stories from the Life of the

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[27] Susan Crane, *The Performance of Self: Ritual, Clothing, and Identity during the Hundred Years War*. The Middle Ages Series. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

[28] Jane E. Burns, "Saracen Silk and the Virgin's Chemise: Cultural Crossings in Cloth" *Speculum* 81, no. 2 (2006): 365-97.

[29] Michael J. Lewis, *The Gothic Revival*. World of Art. New York, N.Y: Thames & Hudson, 2002., Lars Bo Kaspersen, "The Creation of Modern Denmark – A Figurational Analysis." *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 45, no. 1 (171) (2020): 182–206.

Virgin and the Crucifixion. The choices in iconography will be conceptualized in the context of the cultural and religious beliefs of both the Middle Ages and the early twentieth century.

The original artist of the funerary monument remains unidentified as no official documentation survives. Art historian Anna Elisabeth Albrecht's catalogue entry provides an overview of the two fundamentally different views about the monument's artist,[30] while art historian Theodor Müller staunchly believes the artist is Johannes Junge and provides instances of stylistic similarities between works attributed to Junge on grounds of style and the tomb.[31] This chapter also discusses possible cross-cultural exchange within the formation of Queen Margaret's tomb. I propose that the marriage between Philippa of England (d. 1430) and Eric of Pomerania (d. 1459) may have led to English influence within the stylistic choices of the tomb Eric commissioned for Margaret. In this argument I rely on broader studies of late medieval tombs, particularly studies by art historians Anne McGee Morganstern and John A. Goodall in the book *Gothic Tombs of Kinship in France, the Low Countries, and England*,[32] while situating Margaret's tomb within the cultural and religious circumstances of its original production and reconstruction. Art historian Jessica Barker's methodology regarding expressing

[30] Anna Elisabeth Albrecht, "New Reflections on Queen Margrete's Tomb in Roskilde Cathedral and its Artist" in *Margrete I - Regent of the North: The Kalmar Union - 600 Years; Essays and Catalogue.* (Copenhagen: Danmarks Nationalmuseum, 1997).

[31] Theodor Müller, *Sculpture in the Netherlands, Germany, France, and Spain: 1400 to 1500*. The Pelican History of Art 25. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966).

[32] Anne McGee Morganstern and John A. Goodall. *Gothic Tombs of Kinship in France, the Low Countries, and England*. (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000).

representation within a memorial ensemble forms a significant basis for my examination of Queen Margaret's funerary monument.[33]

Chapter Four employs ideas expressed in the introductory chapter of *Memory and the Medieval Tomb* by the art historians Elizabeth Valdez del Alamo and Carol Stamatis Pendergast.[34] The authors outline three devices often utilized within commemorative monuments to activate or manipulate the memory of the deceased. I implement these devices in discussion of Eric of Pomerania's intention behind his patronage of Margaret's funerary monument. Much like Valdez del Alamo and Pendergast, historian John Carmi Parsons' chapter on queenly funerary activities offers preliminary answers regarding symbolic language, rituals, and the intention behind the construction of English queenly funerary monuments.[35]

Through these chapters, this thesis seeks to introduce Queen Margaret into current broader discourse on late medieval queenship and offer new insights into the objects associated with her legacy. By examining her Golden Gown and funerary monument, this study highlights how material objects reflect royal authority, sanctity, and memory. These artifacts became central to the construction of Queen Margaret's posthumous identity to reinforce her status as both a ruler and a near-mythical figure. Integrating historical analysis and material culture studies, I aim to provide a more nuanced understanding of how Queen Margaret's power was expressed, preserved, and reinterpreted over time.

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[33] Jessica Barker, "Gender, Agency and The Much-Married Woman" in *Stone Fidelity: Marriage and Emotion in Medieval Tomb Sculpture*. (Boydell Studies in Medieval Art and Architecture. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2020).

[34] Elizabeth Valdez del Alamo and Carol Stamatis Pendergast, *Memory and the Medieval Tomb*. (Aldershot Brookfield (Vt.): Ashgate, 2000).

[35] John Carmi Parsons, "Never was a body buried in England with such solemnity and honour': The Burials and Posthumous Commemorations of English Queens to 1500" in *Queens and Queenship In Medieval Europe:Proceedings of a Conference Held at King's College London, April 1995.* (Woodbridge: the Boydell press, 1997).

## Chapter 1: Political Turmoil, Queenship, and the Cult of Saints in Medieval Scandinavia

This chapter explores three key themes that shaped the physical and symbolic representations of Queen Margaret's royal power. Drawing on a range of scholarship from historians, queenship studies, and medieval religiosity, this chapter introduces the framework used to examine the Golden Gown and funerary monument as tangible manifestations of Margaret's legacy.

### The State of Nordic Countries

Prior to the formation of the Kalmar Union under Queen Margaret in 1397, the countries of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden were in a state of conflict for some time (Figure 1.1). The twelfth and thirteenth centuries were filled with bloodshed and political unrest within the three countries of Scandinavia, setting the stage for the continuous power struggle coming to a head in the fourteenth century.

Here, I will provide a brief overview of the political turmoil and cultural factors within Scandinavia during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that made Margaret's unprecedented rule possible. Throughout Scandinavia during the middle ages political alliances were often formalized through marriages among the ruling dynasties, which further strengthened ties among the aristocratic families (Figure 1.2).[36] These political alliances became pivotal during various civil wars of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but geopolitical dynamics outside Scandinavia were also crucial. The fragility of these

[36] Elortza, "The Swedish Brothers' War", 22.

diplomatic relationships underscores the continuous transfer of power between the three countries, and these relationships often influenced decisions made about alliances.

In October 1263, Haakon IV of Norway (d. 1263) commanded a failed mission at Largs that led to a strong counter-attack by the Scottish.[37] This failed mission eventually led to Magnus IV of Norway (d. 1280) and Alexander III of Scotland (d. 1286) to sign the Treaty of Perth on July 2, 1266. In the treaty, the country of Norway surrendered sovereignty over all the Western Islands and the Isle of Man but managed to retain possession of Orkney and Shetland. The loss of the Western Islands and Isle of Man drew Norway's attention away from Scotland, and the country began to focus more on its neighboring Scandinavian countries in the following centuries.

The beginning of the fourteenth century marked a drastic turning point in the political landscape of Scandinavia. Alliances created by political marriages led to all three countries becoming embroiled in Sweden's brutal and devastating civil war. In Sweden, kings were replaced and often disposed of in violent ways and their legitimacy was constantly challenged and often undermined. The Swedish nobility sought to keep one singular person from gaining a majority of the political power. The continuous shifting social structure of the country established a natural concentration of power in the king's hands that the nobility attempted to exploit.[38]

In December 1317, King Birger of Sweden (d. 1321) invited his two brothers to a Christmas celebration feast at Nyköping Castle. Despite the siblings' relationship being tense due to past conflict between the three brothers, both Duke Eric and Duke Valdemar attended the feast. The day after the feast, both brothers were captured by the king's

[37] The following paragraph contains information found in Oxford Reference, "Treaty of Perth."

[38] Peterson, *Vikings and Goths,* 246.

retainers and imprisoned in the castle tower. During imprisonment the two brothers were badly mistreated and malnourished, leading to Eric and Valdemar's deaths in early 1318.

Following what is now known as the Nyköping Banquet, the Swedish nobility organized against their king and rallied around Eric's wife Ingeborg of Norway – daughter of King Haakon V of Norway. King Haakon himself also sent troops to support his daughter's husband.[39] Meanwhile Eric VI of Denmark sent an army to support King Birger, as Birger was married to his sister Martha. Following his brother's deaths, Birger attempted to flee to Denmark but he was deposed shortly after.

Having already been previously inaugurated as the King of Norway, Duke Eric Magnusson's three-year-old son Magnus Ericsson (d. 1374) was elected king of Sweden in July 1319. Following Magnus's inauguration, many of King Birger's supporters and confidants were executed, including his son Magnus Birgersson (d. 1320). By executing anyone who posed a threat to young Magnus, the aristocracy aimed to consolidate their own power during the king's lengthy minority.[40]

The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries also saw several Danish kings removed from the throne. In 1286 Eric V of Denmark was murdered, causing internal conflicts within the dominating power of Denmark. Over the following decades the succeeding kings – Eric VI and Christopher II – led the Danish state to near dissolution.[41] Throughout this time Denmark and Norway fought for dominance in southern Scandinavia, leading the area to be divided into Norwegian and Danish spheres of influence.

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[39] Peterson, *Vikings and Goths,* 249-250.

[40] Elortza, "The Swedish Brothers' War", 25.

[41] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 1-2.

When Margaret's father, King Valdemar (d. 1375), assumed power in 1340 the situation in Denmark was catastrophic.[42] During the reign of King Valdemar's predecessor Christopher II (d. 1332), war with the Hanseatic League weakened the country so much that it barely recovered from almost total disintegration. Formed in the twelfth century, the Hanseatic League was a federation of north German towns and German merchant communities that facilitated trade and protected its mutual interests. The league dominated commercial activity in northern Europe from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century and became a major opponent to the three realms of Scandinavia. When King Valdemar took the throne, only a quarter of Jutland (the peninsula that forms the continental portion of modern day Denmark) actually belonged to the crown and the rest of the country was dispersed between noblemen from Germany and Holstein. Over a period of twenty years King Valdemar was able to unite the kingdom again.

Tragically, almost immediately after Valdemar reunified the territories of Denmark, disaster struck Europe. The bubonic plague or 'Black Death' killed approximately 25 million people during the years 1347 to 1352, almost a quarter of the total population.[43] After a flock of scourgers attempted to enter the city of Lübeck in Northern Germany and flagellants moved toward the southern border of Denmark, the border was sealed by royal ordinance. For the most part, Scandinavia was spared the most gruesome aspects of the plague.[44] Following the plague, there was an economic and agricultural crisis leading to the price of land falling, as did the *landgilde* – royal income

[42] The following paragraph contains information in Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 1-2.

[43] Peterson, *Vikings and Goths,* 271.

[44] Peterson, *Vikings and Goths,* 273.

from taxes.[45] In addition, a large number of farms were abandoned and whole villages disappeared. Although Scandinavia managed to evade some of the more devastating outcomes of the plague, the reduction in European populace affected each country's social, economic, and political spheres.[46] The effects of the plague eventually lead to dismantling Magnus Eriksson's already weakening empire in Sweden and Norway. Magnus' oldest son Eric took over a considerable amount of Sweden which he ruled independently and his rule was backed by the Swedish nobility.[47] Eric died of the plague in 1359, and as a result Magnus recovered control of most of Sweden. He then moved to strengthen ties with his younger son Haakan, who had become king of Norway and would later marry Queen Margaret I.

With the death of Eric, the Swedish nobility and the anti-Magnus party lost their political authority within Sweden. They then backed Albrecht III of Mecklenburg, the son of Magnus Eriksson's sister Euphemia. Supported by the Hanseatic League, Albrecht and his father defeated Magnus, who was deposed and incarcerated in Stockholm Castle for six years but was released in exchange for a ransom of 12,000 silver marks.[48] During this time the Hanseatic League was at the height of its power, able to dominate trade in the Baltic and North Sea and even have a hand in determining the monarchs of neighboring kingdoms. The alliance with a powerful German state seemed to be an advantageous

[45] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 1-2.

[46] Peterson, *Vikings and Goths,* 271.

[47] The following paragraph contains information found in Peterson, *Vikings and Goths,* 275.

[48] Peterson, *Vikings and Goths,* 276.

move at the time, but would prove to be a problem for the countries of Scandinavia in the succeeding decades.[49]

The political upheavals of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries created an environment in which Queen Margaret was able to achieve unprecedented power. The near-constant shifts in power driven by dynastic marriages and civil wars left Scandinavia fragmented and vulnerable to external influence – most notably from the Hanseatic League and the House of Mecklenburg. The devastation of the Black Death further destabilized the region, increasing the economic and political crises that rulers struggled to contain. Queen Margaret's skillful navigation of the volatile political landscape she inherited secured her own authority while redefining the possibilities of queenship in medieval Scandinavia.

Medieval Queenship

In addition to providing historical background for the unprecedented nature of Margaret's rule within Scandavia, I also wish to explore the evolving nature of queenship as a practice during the Middle Ages. Across Europe, queens adapted to their political environments by leveraging their roles as wives, mothers, and widows to assert influence in governance, diplomacy, and cultural patronage. As Damsholt argues, "In a patriarchal society like medieval Denmark, it was in principle men who had the right to represent the family line and to take offices, but temporarily, and in special cases, women could replace men when it served the interests of those in power."[50] This ideology was not exclusive to Denmark, but was exercised throughout Europe during the late Middle Ages. From 1350 to 1450 there were 100 accessions of new monarchs – twelve of which resulted in

[49] Peterson, *Vikings and Goths,* 252.

[50] Damsholt, "Margrete - Power in the Hands of a Woman", 268.

reigning queens.[51] There were several reasons a woman ruler may have been preferred; if the woman was closer in blood to the previous king, if she descended from the male rather than the female line, if she was the legitimate rather than illegitimate heir, if she was healthy rather than handicapped, or if she was a native rather than a foreigner.[52]

By the later Middle Ages, queens were intrinsically linked to monarchy. Queenship now had a solidified institutional foundation, and had become a recognizable office.[53] Previously, the queen-consort had been viewed as just the king's wife and mother of the heir, or a model of piety and mediator. In the Middle Ages, patronage became a critical aspect of effective royal power regardless of gender. The queen's participation in the culture of patronage was often a measure of her power, and could be deployed strategically to broaden her influence.[54] Late medieval queen-consorts thus became large benefactors of political, religious, and everyday life. These women commissioned books, religious artifacts, "statement" jewelry, gold and silverware intended for their chosen religious establishments, buildings, and even religious institutions themselves.[55]

Another avenue in which a queen exercised unofficial authority was through queenly intercession based on her status as a wife and mother. This mediation was a major manifestation of the influence a queen held due to her position and was exercised in several ways. The queen might act as a peacemaker between the king and his subjects or his foreign counterparts, work to secure a privilege – such as a pardon, grant, or

[51] Wolf, "Reigning Queens in Medieval Europe", 171.

[52] Wolf, "Reigning Queens in Medieval Europe", 177-178.

[53] Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe,* 185-186.

[54] Zita Eva Rohr and Lisa Benz, *Queenship, Gender, and Reputation in the Medieval and Early Modern West,* 1060–1600*: Queenship and Power*. 1st edition. Queenship and Power 14523. (New York, NY: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2016), xxv.

[55] Rohr and Benz, *Queenship, Gender, and Reputation*, xxv.

appointment – from the king at the request of someone else, or intercede on their own prerogative for a personal request from the king.[56]

The office of queenship was ever evolving. It shifted in response to changing conditions alongside kingship and adjusted to each realm's subtle but distinct social, political, and cultural differences.[57] Although during this time a queen's direct role was somewhat limited by an increase in the delegation of royal authority to a professional bureaucracy, the king also delegated his official political authority.[58] Kings would sometimes entrust political authority to the queen for considerable and lengthy periods to govern when he was away or too ill to govern. The various avenues these women were able to exert their power reinforces the idea that female regency was restructured to conform to the conditions at hand.[59]

There are numerous examples of queens who governed a kingdom temporarily as regents, acting as a stand-in for her father, her husband, or minor son and are examples of effective government by women.[60] French queen mothers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries such as Catherine de Medicis (d. 1589), Marie de Medicis (d. 1642), and Anne of Austria (d. 1666) have been well studied, as female regency achieved a quasi-institutional status during this time.[61] In the early modern period the queen mother came to be the first choice among possible regents. As guardian of her son, the queen

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[56] Rohr and Benz, *Queenship, Gender, and Reputation*, xxiv.

[57] Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe,* 187.

[58] Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe,* 185-186.

[59] Adams and Rechtschaffen, "Isabeau of Bavaria, Anne of France, and the History of Female Regency in France", 138.

[60] Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe,* 251.

[61] Adams and Rechtschaffen, "Isabeau of Bavaria, Anne of France, and the History of Female Regency in France", 119.

mother could rule through him until he was capable of ruling himself. However, earlier queen mothers or queens acting as regent have attracted less scholarly attention.

Although not a widow, Isabeau of Bavaria (d. 1422) was entrusted with overseeing important business of the kingdom during her husband's episodes of insanity in a series of ordinances passed between 1402 and 1409.[62] Beginning in 1402 Isabeau was given the power to mediate certain conflicts on behalf of her husband Charles VI, represent him on the Royal Council during his absences, and settle financial issues in the king's name.[63]

Isabella of France (d. 1358) is believed to have been largely in charge of her son's government during his minority, although all commands and letters were issued in Edward III's name.[64] Jeanne of Evreux (d. 1371) and Blanche of Navarre (d. 1398) were both widowed young and took on responsibilities following their husbands deaths such as administering lands, giving charity to the poor and sick, patronizing religious organizations, and occasionally serving as a mediator for the French king and his enemies.[65] Meanwhile in the sixteenth century, much of Anne of France's (d. 1522) effectiveness can be attributed to her self-representation as a less dangerous regent than the new king's closest male heir, who was her cousin Louis of Orleans – later King Louis XII.[66]

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[62] Adams and Rechtschaffen, "Isabeau of Bavaria, Anne of France, and the History of Female Regency in France", 122.

[63] Adams and Rechtschaffen, "Isabeau of Bavaria, Anne of France, and the History of Female Regency in France", 128.

[64] Warner, Kathryn. *Philippa of Hainault: Mother of the English Nation.* (Amberley Publishing, 2020).

[65] Marguerite A Keane, *Material Culture and Queenship in 14th-Century France: The Testament of Blanche of Navarre (1331-1398)*, Art and Material Culture in Medieval and Renaissance Europe, volume 5. (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 51.

[66] Adams and Rechtschaffen, "Isabeau of Bavaria, Anne of France, and the History of Female Regency in France", 123 & 144.

Philippa of Hainault (d. 1369) is one of the most beloved queens in English history. Queen Philippa was trusted by her husband and was involved in her husband's government when Edward III was absent from England. Although some more unreliable sources claim Philippa acted as regent while Edwarrd III was away at the hundred years war, Warner describes how it is very difficult to ascertain exactly how Philippa wielded influence, and whether or to what extent she was responsible for making and implementing decisions.[67] Warner claims Edward III trusted Philippa's judgement and that she would faithfully carry out his wishes, but that it is almost impossible to determine exactly how and on which occasions she did so.[68]

The position of queen-regnant became important in several realms in Europe. In the cases of Maria, Queen of Hungary and Poland (d. 1395), and Jadwiga, Queen of Poland (d. 1399), both queens inherited the realm but shared governance with their husbands.[69] Isabel of Castile (d. 1504) ruled in her own right after the death of her father until her own death alongside her king-consort, Ferdinand II, who governed his inherited realm of the Crown of Aragon.[70]

In medieval Scandinavia, a prominent woman could wield significant influence through her young son, particularly if he showed promise as a future ruler. Estrid Svendsdatter (d. 1057) exemplifies this dynamic.[71] The daughter of King Sven Forkbeard (d. 1014) who established control over Norway in 1000 and, alongside his son Cnut (d.

[67] Warner, *Philippa of Hainault: Mother of the English Nation.*

[68] Warner, *Philippa of Hainault: Mother of the English Nation.*

[69] Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe,* 191.

[70] Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe,* 191.

[71] The following paragraph contains information found in Thyra Nors, "Estrid", Dansk Kvindebiografisk Leksikon (Danish Women's Biographical Encyclopedia), April 22, 2023.

1035), conquered England in 1013. As the sister to King Cnut, Estrid was uniquely granted the title of queen, despite never having been married to a king. Instead, she wed the English Earl Ulf, who at the time was a trusted ally of her brother. In 1026 tensions began to emerge and while attending a funeral at Roskilde Cathedral, Ulf was assassinated by Cnut's men. Despite her husband's supposed conspiracy, Estrid's political relevance did not fade. Using her position as a wealthy widow, she leveraged her status and donated land to Roskilde Cathedral and financed the construction of another church in Roskilde as a memorial to her husband. Perhaps the most telling sign of her enduring influence is that her son Sven, upon becoming king, adopted the dynastic name "Estridsen" in her honor.

When a Scandinavian queen attained the position of regent through her minor son the title was usually in name only and the women still did not have access to the full power of their husbands' titles. In Denmark Margaret Sambiria (d. 1282), who was married to Christopher I (d. 1259), became her son's guardian and later co-regent as her son Eric was a minor when his father died. Margaret Sambiria made great diplomatic efforts at the Papal Curia to have female succession recognized in Denmark, but she never became Queen in her own right.[72]

Ingeborg of Norway (d. 1361) became regent due to the death of her husband Duke Eric at the Nyköping Banquet. Magnus Ericsson was only around one year old when his father was murdered and his mother oversaw the kingdom until he could rule. In the early 1320s Ingeborg based her dynastic foreign politics on her status as widow and guardian of her son.[73] Peterson claims when Magnus ruled in his own right he had

[72] Damsholt, "Margrete - Power in the Hands of a Woman", 268.

[73] Imsen, "Late Medieval Scandinavian Queenship", 58.

problems with his mother, that she was power-hungry and trying to gain a position of influence in the government.[74] During Magnus Eriksson's reign, his wife Blanche of Namur (d. 1363) often participated in government together with her husband. Blanche also ruled parts of the kingdom herself, partly on behalf of her husband and partly in her own name. As Damsholt states, "…for the history of all the Nordic kingdoms offered examples of dowager queens who exercised royal power on behalf of hereditary monarchs during their minority."[75] Margaret of Sambiria and Ingeborg of Norway show that the combined role of widow and king-mother could bring women to the top in politics and government in the Middle Ages.[76]

One commonality found within the histories of such powerful women is their vilification. Largely seen as power hungry villainesses, many of these women only had access to power due to the loss of their husband, finding power through their underage sons or monetary gains due to widowhood. Royal and noble widows throughout Europe often suffered from public prejudice against women in power unless they were extremely adept at diplomacy.[77] Notably, if the dowager queen was a foreigner she was more likely to face prejudice. In England, the reputation of Eleanor of Castile (d. 1290) was shaped by conflicting fictitious accounts portraying her as either the dedicated companion of Edward I or as a scheming Spaniard. In Sweden, Blanche of Namur (d. 1363) was made a political scapegoat by the opposition of the nobility against her husband. After her eldest son Eric died from the plague, Birgitta Birgersdatter (later St. Birgitta) accused Blanche

[74] Peterson, *Vikings and Goths,* 252.

[75] Damsholt, "Margrete - Power in the Hands of a Woman", 268.

[76] Imsen, "Late Medieval Scandinavian Queenship", 58.

[77] Katharina M Wilson and Nadia Margolis, *Women in the Middle Ages: An Encyclopedia*, (Westport (Conn.): Greenwood Press, 2004), 941.

of poisoning her son. Blanche's innocence was not finally proved until the advent of modern critical historiography at the end of the eighteenth century.[78]

This brief study of medieval and early modern queens examines the fluid and evolving nature of queenship, demonstrating the idea that female rule was often restructured to conform to the conditions at hand.[79] These women used regency, intercession, and patronage to exercise authority within the male-dominated monarchical system. Across Europe, queens adapted to their political environments and leveraged their roles as wives, mothers, and widows to assert influence. Although often vilified or dismissed as power-hungry, these women navigated a system that allowed for their rule only under exceptional circumstances. The legacy of Queen Margaret and other ruling queens highlights the critical role women played in shaping European political history.

The Catholic Church and the Cult of Saints

The Christianization of Scandinavia has traditionally been dated from the eighth to the twelfth century. The conversion process has often been condensed into three key events: the recorded presence of an Anglo-Saxon missionary in Denmark around 710 CE, the late tenth-century Jelling runestone declaring that King Harold Bluetooth "made the Danes Christian," and the establishment of a Scandinavian archbishop in Lund in 1103 CE.[80] Despite these three events often being referenced as the standard defining moments in texts, the Christianization of Scandinavia was far more complex and was largely fulfilled through several regional and local processes that each differed in their history,

[78] Imsen, "Late Medieval Scandinavian Queenship", 54-55.

[79] Adams and Rechtschaffen, "Isabeau of Bavaria, Anne of France, and the History of Female Regency in France", 138.

[80] Anders Andrén, "The Significance of Places: The Christianization of Scandinavia from a Spatial Point of View." *World Archaeology* 45, no. 1 (2013): 27.

pace and visibility.[81] Moreover, many historical accounts of this transition were shaped by contemporary political and religious agendas rather than objective documentation. Even Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, written in the 1070's functioned as a piece of propaganda rather than an impartial historical record.[82]

The institutional conversion of Scandinavian kings made the establishment of regular church organization possible, but happened very slowly. In Denmark, the first regular dioceses were founded in 1018 or 1019 by King Cnut (d. 1035), and this diosesan structure was not completed until about 1060.[83] The only major change made before the Reformation was the previously mentioned elevation of the see of Lund to archbishop around 1103.[84] Overall, the Christian church appears to have been more or less established in Denmark by the later tenth century and Norway by the early eleventh century, but it was not until the early twelfth century that ecclesiastical structures seem to be established in Sweden.[85]

There remains much debate about pagan cult-site continuity and the conversion to Christianity within Scandinavia. Due to different forms of hybridization, it has not been easy to distinguish between pagan and Christian traits during the early stages of transition. Andrén remarks it may have been a Chrisitian strategy to combine the new inherited tradition with aspects of local retrospective traditions.[86] As the process of

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[81] Andrén, "The Significance of Places", 27.

[82] Lesley Abrams, "The Anglo-Saxons and the Christianization of Scandinavia." *Anglo-Saxon England* 24 (1995): 214.

[83] Peter Sawyer, "The Organization of the Church in Scandinavia after the Missionary Phase." *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 12/13 (1988): 480.

[84] Sawyer, "The Organization of the Church in Scandinavia after the Missionary Phase," 480.

[85] Sands,"The Cult of St. Eric", 203.

[86] Andrén, "The Significance of Places", 41.

Christian conversion was only a few centuries old, it is possible that local folkloric and pagan practices were still being practiced in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[87] In provincial codes of the twelfth, thirteenth, and early fourteenth centuries prohibitions against 'pagan customs' were still reinforced.[88]

The cult of saints became a central aspect of the recently converted Nordic religious belief,[89] and may have remained tinged with pagan traditions. Saints fulfilled a variety of functions for those who venerated them, promoted their cult, or made use of their image or name.[90] Devotees connected saints to their lives in various ways, from the enormous range of church, chapel, and altar dedications, prebends and masses, images in churches as well as institutional and personal seals, written prayers and legends, and naming traditions.[91] Saints and their images were important components of artistic, spiritual, and political life of the medieval Nordic region.

Saints likely functioned as examples of behavior to emulate or aspire to, but also as intercessors that could plead the case of the devotee. According to Sands, saints and their images could also serve a symbolic function, as a reference to a person, cause, or idea (even an institution) not directly related to the saint's legend.[92] St. Eric was one of the best known and most widely venerated Swedish saints by the end of the Middle

[87] In Sweden during the bubonic plague outbreak of the 13th century there are records of young maidens and small children being buried alive to appease the pagan gods worshiped in the past. See Peterson, *Vikings and Goths,* 273.

[88] Andrén, “The Significance of Places”, 27.

[89] Sands, “Saints and Politics During the Kalmar Union Period”, 141.

[90] Sands, “The Cult of St. Eric”, 203.

[91] Sands, “Saints and Politics During the Kalmar Union Period”, 141.

[92] Sands, “Saints and Politics During the Kalmar Union Period”, 147.

Ages.[93] King of Sweden from 1156 to 1160, St. Eric was largely considered the patron of Sweden and venerated as a martyr for the Church. St. Eric was the founder of an important dynasty of Swedish kings and became a holy and legitimizing ancestor.[94] In a similar way, Olaf Haraldson (d. 1030) became Norway's beloved royal saint and St. Knud (d. 1086) Denmark's. As Anna Liden points out, even before the beginning of the Kalmar Union, portrayals of St. Eric together with St. Olaf of Norway and/or St. Knud of Denmark could serve to emphasize the unity of the Nordic region in the eyes of the church.[95] As medieval Sweden's only canonised saint, St. Birgitta became another saint with important royal and political connections. Born Birgitta Birgersdotter, she was related to the Swedish kings through her mother. In addition, St. Birgitta founded the Birgittines, or *Ordo Sanctissimi Salvatoris* (Order of the Most Holy Saviour) in 1344. St. Birgitta was active in politics throughout her life, and after her death the Birgittines maintained their political influence in Sweden.

The veneration of saints served a crucial role in both spiritual and political functions. Saints like St. Eric, St. Olaf, and St. Knud were not only revered as intercessors but were also used as tools of royal legitimacy to reinforce dynastic continuity and regional unity. Their images and cults became powerful symbols that could be manipulated by rulers to strengthen their claims to power. This chapter examined the broader mechanisms of power in medieval Europe, highlighting how dynastic marriages, queenship, and sanctity were essential instruments in shaping medieval Scandinavian identity and governance.

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[93] Sands, "The Cult of St. Eric", 203.

[94] Sands, "The Cult of St. Eric", 205.

[95] Sands, "Saints and Politics During the Kalmar Union Period", 216.

## Chapter 2: The Life and Political Career of Margaret I of Denmark

Queen Margaret came into power within the complex political situation of Scandinavia outlined in the previous chapter. Although the exact date of her birth is unknown, Margaret was born around 1353 to the Danish King Valdemar (d. 1375) and Queen Helvig (d. 1374). The Chronicle of Zealand states: "In the year 1353 the queen gave birth to a daughter, and the baptismal service was performed by the honorable father Bishop Henrik in Roskilde, and she was called Margrete."[96] Margaret was the youngest of six children, and her elder brother Christopher was destined to succeed his father on the throne of Denmark.[97] At the time of her birth it did not seem like a possibility that Margaret would one day rule Denmark, let alone all three countries of Scandinavia.

The continuous power struggle between the countries of Scandinavia due to shifting allegiances within the ruling families directly affected Margaret's own marriage. At the age of six Margaret was betrothed to the eighteen year old King Haakon of Norway. The former lady-in-waiting to Blanche of Namur (Queen of Sweden), Birgitta Birgersdotter (later St. Birgitta) originally opposed the marriage between Margaret and Haakon. Birgitta wrote a letter to the pope saying, "from this marriage there will come troubles and no health to the kingdom [Sweden]. Nor shall its seed become firmly rooted, and the inhabitants shall not rejoice over an heir."[98] During this time Haakon's older

[96] Etting, *Queen Margrete I*, 2. Etting cites the Chronica Sialandie. Annales Danici, p. 176. This anonymous historical work is divided into two parts, traditionally called the Older and the Younger Chronicle of Zealand, which together cover the years 1028–1363. No medieval manuscript has survived, and the chronicle is only known through post-medieval copies and their copies.

[97] Etting, "Mistress and Master of the North", 18.

[98] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 3. Etting provides a translation from Johanne Skovgaard, *The Holy Birgitta*, 1912.

brother Eric died from the plague, and for a short time Haakon had also become King of Sweden and Norway. This shift in dynastic power led to the engagement to be renounced for some time. However, on April 9th, 1363, ten-year-old Princess Margaret and King Haakon were married as recorded in the Annals of Scania, "The King of Norway Haakon was married to Margrete, daughter of Valdemar, King of Denmark, and a solemn wedding was celebrated in Copenhagen, where Archbishop Nikolaus celebrated his first mass."[99] Margaret likely remained with her parents for some time after her wedding before moving to the royal castle of Akershus where an appropriate upbringing and education for the Queen would be provided.

Although Birgitta Birgersdotter opposed the union, her daughter Marta Ulfsdotter was appointed as Margaret's chief lady-in-waiting and had a very strong influence on her education.[100] Margaret's education presumably focused on religion, learning to read and write, her future duties as a queen, and studying the political and social relations of the time.[101] Throughout her life Margaret was concerned about the salvation of her soul, and was a generous patron to the Church. Margaret likely observed her father's own good relations with the papacy and during her reign intentionally continued his ecclesiastical policies.[102] During the Great Schism of 1378, Margaret increased her political power by staying loyal to the pope in Rome, who remained extremely attentive to Margaret's

[99] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 6. Etting cites The Annals of Scania (Annales Scanici): Annales Danici.

[100] Etting, "Mistress and Master of the North", 19.

[101] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 7.

[102] Hamre, "Church and Clergy", in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 667.

wishes.[103] Margaret also showed an interest in establishing and supporting Birgittine convents,[104] most likely due to her close relationship with St. Birgitta's daughter Marta.

St. Birgitta's deeply Marian spirituality and close association with the cult of the Virgin Mary appears to have held particular appeal for Queen Margaret.[105] In the medieval period, the Virgin Mary was venerated as the Bride of Christ, Personification of the Church, Queen of Heaven, and Intercessor for humanity's salvation. The Virgin's roles as Queen of Heaven and Intercessor were closely tied to the identity and authority of medieval queens, who often expressed their piety and reinforced their legitimacy by aligning themselves with the Virgin. Through such associations, queens could enhance both their spiritual stature and political influence. As a future queen, the cult of the Virgin likely served as a powerful model for queenly conduct and authority for Margaret. Later in life Queen Margaret explicitly mentions worship of the holy Virgin in a majority of her donations for memorial masses, underscoring the centrality of Marian worship in her religious and political identity.[106] Margaret clearly understood the strategic importance of the Church's support, especially given the Catholic Church's significant role in shaping the political and economic landscapes of medieval Europe.

The unstable political conditions and desperate economic situation following the Hanseatic League installing Albrecht III of Mecklenburg on the Swedish throne led Margaret to write a letter to her husband (Figure 2.1). There is some uncertainty about the dating of the letter as it does not state the year, but it was probably written while

[103] Hamre, "Church and Clergy", 667.

[104] Damsholt, "Margrete - Power in the Hands of a Woman", 269.

[105] Hamre, "Church and Clergy", 667.

[106] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 115.

Maragaret was still at Akershus in 1370. In the letter, Margaret informs Haakon of the fraught economic situation of the castle, "Know, my dear Lord, that I and my servants suffer great want of food and drink, so that neither they nor I receive what we need," and asks Haakon to find a solution to the issue, so that her servants “shall not be separated from me on grounds of hunger."[107] The letter informs us that even at age seventeen Margaret was not afraid to approach issues directly, something that became apparent in her later political career.

It is likely Margaret was pregnant at the time of writing the letter, and around Christmas in 1370 she gave birth to her first and only child, Olaf.[108] Similar to Margaret, Olaf was a pawn in a continuous game of political chess between the countries of Scandinavia and he was, in a sense, the indirect cause of Margaret’s political career.[109] From his birth, Margaret was positioning Olaf to be a contender for the throne of Norway. Named after Norway's beloved saint-king Olaf (d. 1030), Margaret and her advisors were conscious of making the significant symbolic connection between a “national” saint and a possible ruler.[110]

After the death of her brother Christopher, when Margaret’s father Valdemar died in 1375 he did not leave an heir and the line of succession was unresolved. This opened the way for strong aristocratic influence on the government of the kingdom.[111] There was talk of choosing a son of the king’s eldest daughter Ingeborg, who was married to Duke

[107] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 10. Etting provides a translation of the letter which currently resides in The State Archives, Oslo.

[108] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 11.

[109] Etting, “Mistress and Master of the North”, 19.

[110] Sands, “Saints and Politics During the Kalmar Union Period”, 147.

[111] Schück, “The Political System.” in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 682.

Heinrich of Mecklenburg, a brother of the King of Sweden.[112] However, Queen Margaret managed to win the support of the Danish national council through favourable grants of fiefdoms and other agreements. Additionally, throughout her life Margaret fashioned herself as the "king's daughter" or the "rightful heir", as Denmark at this time was an elective monarchy.[113] Consequently, Margaret was able to put her bid in and have her son elected as Denmark's heir. On May 3rd 1376, at the *Danehof* (national assembly) Olaf was chosen as King of Denmark with Queen Margaret and King Haakon as his guardians.[114]

According to Etting, forty year old King Haakon is practically absent at this time.[115] This is unusual, since it is expected he would strongly support his son's bid for the Danish throne. It seems he was suffering from a serious illness and died in 1380, leaving Maragret to hold sole regency.[116] Like Margaret Sambiria and Ingeborg of Norway before her, Margaret legitimized her political positions in Denmark and Norway based on the guardianship of her minor son.[117] Throughout this time Margaret continued to style herself as Queen of both Norway and Sweden, and after taking over Scania she had Olaf assume the title "true heir to the kingdom of Sweden."[118]

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[112] Etting, "Mistress and Master of the North", 19.

[113] William Monter, "Gendered Sovereignty: Numismatics and Female Monarchs in Europe, 1300-1800." *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 41, no. 4 (2011): 540.

[114] Etting, "Mistress and Master of the North", 19.

[115] Etiing, *Queen Margrete I,* 16.

[116] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 16.

[117] Imsen, "Late Medieval Scandinavian Queenship", 58.

[118] Etting, "Mistress and Master of the North", 20.

While on tour in Scania, sixteen year old King Olaf suddenly took ill and died a few days later.[119] The justification of Queen Margaret's position of political power was now gone, since it was built on her role as regent for her son.[120] Despite this, just ten days after the death of Olaf, Margaret was elected in Lund (Figure 2.2) as "almighty lady and husband and guardian for the whole kingdom of Denmark."[121] This was unprecedented in the history of Denmark for three reasons: it had been executed in the absence of the assembled Danish Rigråd, the closest male heir of the Danish Royal line had been passed over, and – perhaps most importantly – sole royal power had been given to a woman.[122]

Margaret managed to win this unique status as "almighty lady and husband" or "sovereign mistress and master" in both Sweden and Norway based on her position as Valdemar's daughter but primarily on merit of her political ability.[123] In both Denmark and Sweden Margaret's regency was intended to be an interim of sorts and was to be terminated when an acceptable male candidate was found. However, in Norway Margaret was elected regent for life and was urged to adopt an heir of her choice to revive the dynasty. Like other queens where female regency was restructured to conform to the conditions at hand,[124] these unprecedented proceedings were likely quickly sanctioned to avoid any attempts by the House of Mecklenburg to seize power.

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[119] Etting, "Mistress and Master of the North", 20.

[120] Etting, "Mistress and Master of the North", 20.

[121] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 55. Etting cites Diplomatarium Danicum translated in "Danmarks Riges Breve."

[122] Etting, "Mistress and Master of the North", 21.

[123] Damsholt, "Margrete - Power in the Hands of a Woman", 268.

[124] Adams and Rechtschaffen, "Isabeau of Bavaria, Anne of France, and the History of Female Regency in France", 138.

Margaret legitimized her new political positions by being the only adult representative of the united dynasties of Norway-Sweden and Denmark.[125] Margaret continued to rule as an elected regent for some time without a formal figurehead – a male heir to the throne. In 1389 Margaret used her power over each Nordic kingdom to present her grand-nephew as successor to the throne.[126] Margaret adopted her great-nephew Bogislaw from Pomerania, who was the grandson of her sister Ingeborg. Bogislaw was renamed Eric – known later as Eric of Pomerania – and Margaret proclaimed him as her new heir.[127] His new name was chosen most likely in reference to St. Eric, who was upheld in Sweden as a model for a just king. Margaret once again forged a connection between a national saint and her heir. In this case, Margaret bestowed allegorical legitimacy on Eric in a specifically Swedish context.[128] Using this evidence, we can guess Margaret was planning to gain power in Sweden as early as 1389 – nine years before the formation of the Kalmar Union. Aside from bestowing political legitimacy, perhaps another meaning can be gained by examining one of the well known miracles of St. Eric from 1270:

> A farmer was called Oluf. He was of good repute and virtuous company , but he became quite wild and lost his senses through God's mysterious judgment, so that his friends had to guard him carefully lest he do harm to himself or others. One day he escaped and ran to the woods, and seeing people wanting to recapture him, he took his knife and stabbed himself in the breast around the heart, five terrible mortal wounds. When his son arrived and asked his friends for their counsel, they advised him to make a vow to St Eric on his father's behalf. He did, and calling piously on St Eric and God immediately looked mercifully on this wretched man. For as he lay there without breathing, like a dead man, there appeared to him a lordly man in royal clothes, with a crown on his head and a royal spire in his

[125] Imsen, "Late Medieval Scandinavian Queenship", 58.

[126] Schück, "The Political System," 683.

[127] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 65.

[128] Sands, "Saints and Politics During the Kalmar Union Period", 147.

> hands. This man touched the wounds with his right thumb and said: 'Son, put thy faith in God, and remember what has been promised on thy behalf, and when you are healed, make your way to me.' And with these words the man recovered his full senses, and sent for the priest and made his confession. And in a short time, all his wounds were healed, and he was recovered both in body and mind. Oluf himself attested and told of this miracle at the shrine of St Eric on the next following feast of St Lars [Lawrence, August 10].[129]

The man, Olaf, was remade and given a second chance through the work of Saint Eric. By aligning her chosen successor with the revered figure of Saint Eric, Margaret not only strengthened Eric of Pomerania's political legitimacy but also wove his rule into the broader religious and cultural fabric of Scandinavia. Just as Saint Eric's miraculous intervention restored Olaf to life, Margaret's adoption of Eric symbolized a renewal for the Nordic kingdoms.

Although Margaret ruled the Scandinavian kingdoms in her own name from 1387 to 1396, she acted as a kind of stepmother for Eric after 1389.[130] Eric was crowned and began to rule at the age of eighteen, but in actuality Margaret was the active ruler of Scandinavia for the rest of her life. Margaret's masterful handling of people and situations is exemplified in the secret instructions she gave to Eric before a visit to Norway in 1405 (Figure 2.3):

> When you meet the Norwegians you must give them a drink of the good German beer which I have sent in advance,' she begins, and continues, 'At the first meetings it is important to create a friendly atmosphere. If Sir Ogmund or somebody else invites you to be his guest, you should eat with them, and if anyone, man or woman, young or old, want to give you a gift, you must receive it thankfully, even if the gift be very humble; people might misunderstand a rejection and become angry… You must also remember to pray to the Lord and be his servant, late as well as early and mind your words; don't say too much, neither in anger nor needlessly as this can cause great damage to yourself as well

[129] Sands, "The Cult of Saint Eric", 221.

[130] Imsen, "Late Medieval Scandinavian Queenship", 59.

> as to others… You should also summon the members of the Council of the Realm and do your best to establish friendly relations with them. Ask for their advice, but remember never to summon all members of the Council at once… If the Norwegians ask you to return the Great Seal you can answer that this will have to wait until we have found a qualified keeper… Nevertheless you should tell the counselors who in your opinion might be an actual candidate, and if they protest against him, say that… nobody should be critical until our man has proved if he is able or not I believe that you will never find a more competent candidate for the position of chancellor…Don't let anybody move you to deprive our candidate fo hid benefices that is a questions for us and God alone. You should know that there are a lot of people who do not like our man, partly because he is a foreigner, and partly because he stands firm on the rights of the Crown… And finally remember to read this instruction carefully.[131]

This letter is a small example of the type of education and guidance Queen Margaret provided Eric after proclaiming him as her heir. There is no evidence that Eric resented this political 'stepmothership', instead he saw himself as a loyal apprentice in Margaret's skillful handling of statecraft.[132]

Perhaps the most notable achievement of Margaret's reign is the formation of the Kalmar Union which unified the countries of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. In 1397 Margaret pushed for a formal union of all three Scandinavian monarchies.[133] In Margaret's vision for the union, each country would be governed by its own people according to local laws regarding internal matters. As Peterson states, "The Kalmar Union engineered and enforced by Queen Margaret was a grand idea and worked as long as there was an individual devoted to its success and strong enough to guarantee equality

[131] Imsen, "Late Medieval Scandinavian Queenship", 60.

[132] Imsen, "Late Medieval Scandinavian Queenship", 59.

[133] Peterson, *Vikings and Goths*, 282-83.

and sustain each country's rights."[134] The 'Treaty of the Union' proposed a monarchy in common which would provide for a united defense and foreign policy.[135]

Led by Queen Margaret and fifteen year old Eric, noblemen and clergy from Denmark, Sweden, and Norway gathered in Kalmar in the summer of 1397.[136] There are two documents that survive from the meeting: the coronation letter with its confirmation of Eric of Pomerania's election as joint king over the three kingdoms (Figure 2.4), and a draft of the 'Treaty of the Union' document which constitutes the main elements of the Nordic union (Figure 2.5).[137]

The main event of the meeting was Eric's coronation and on Sunday June 17th, Eric was crowned as king of the union.[138] Despite Eric being crowned in mid-June, the coronation letter is dated July 13th – almost a month after the event. This 'Assertion of Loyalty' was written on parchment and sealed by 67 people in all.[139] Within the document the prelates and noblemen thanked Queen Margaret for having stood by them and for all the good deeds she had done – although it was formally King Eric to whom their allegiance was sworn.[140] Through the Kalmar Union Margaret achieved her aim of uniting the three Nordic royal crowns under her own dynasty.[141]

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[134] Peterson, *Vikings and Goths*, 282-83.

[135] Peterson, *Vikings and Goths*, 282-83.

[136] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 96.

[137] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 96.

[138] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 96.

[139] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 97.

[140] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 97.

[141] Nils Blomkvist, "Kalmar 1397 – The Town and the Age Named after It" in *Margrete I, Regent of the North: The Kalmar Union 600 years, Essays and Catalogue. (*Copenhagen: Danmarks Nationalmuseum, 1997), 25.

The second document from the meeting is a draft written on paper of a treaty between Queen Margaret and King Eric as a unit, and the counselors, men, and royal boroughs of each realm.[142] This 'Treaty of the Union' has also been dated to later in the summer, as it is highly possible negotiations were extensive and lasted through the summer.[143] The negotiations likely focused on the extent and nature of the union, and a full agreement may have never been achieved. The document cannot be viewed as a final and valid treaty, but must be considered as a draft.[144] This 'Treaty of the Union' is drafted on paper, not parchment, which was the material typically used for important official documents.[145] Additionally, only 10 out of 17 seals were issued, and they were not the pendant seals that were required in an official treaty.[146]

This draft of the treaty was intended for ratification on the day commemorating Saint Margaret of Antioch.[147] According to Etting, this could have been either the same day or a week later, as the Day of Saint Margaret could be either the 13th or 20th of July.[148] The use of St. Margaret's Day for ratification was likely done to honor Queen Margaret, as it is a reference to her namesake saint – a connection that is not a singular occurrence.

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[142] Erik Lonnroth, "The Kalmar Assembly in 1397" in *Margrete I, Regent of the North: The Kalmar Union 600 years, Essays and Catalogue.* (Copenhagen: Danmarks Nationalmuseum, 1997), 36.

[143] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 98.

[144] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 98.

[145] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 98.

[146] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 98.

[147] Lonnroth, "The Kalmar Assembly in 1397", 36.

[148] The following paragraph contains information found in Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 139-142, Kala, Regional and Trans-regional Traditions in Saints' Cults" in *Symbolic Identity and the Cultural Memory of Saints*, 138n51 and 141n56. In the printed text of Belinus' Martyrology the date of the feast of St. Margaret is July 20th, but it has been stricken through under that date and transferred to July 13th as a marginal addition.

Saint Margaret of Antioch was one of the most venerated saints during the Middle Ages. Saint Margaret was named as one of the fourteen holy helpers who were thought to be particularly helpful in times of sickness. A virgin and martyr, her cult gained popularity with laywomen because of her promise to protect women in childbirth.[149] According to her vita, just before her death, she said: "In the house where a woman is in labor-pain with a child, as soon as she calls to mind your name and my pain, Lord, quickly help her, Lord, and hear her prayer; and in that house let no malformed child be born, neither lame nor hump-backed, neither deaf nor mute, nor afflicted by devils."[150] The connection between Queen Margaret and her namesake saint becomes an important aspect of the legends that began to circulate around her memory following her death, and will be referenced throughout the current thesis.

Following the unification of the Kalmar Union, Margaret made plans for Eric and the three realms to prosper after her death. In 1399 King Richard II of England was dethroned and Henry IV established the Lancaster dynasty.[151] His newly acquired kingdom had a fragile foundation and Henry IV knew he would have to make strong foreign alliances to secure stability. Seeing Margaret's effective reign and the recent defeat of the House of Mecklenburg, Henry IV was interested in forming a possible alliance between England and the Kalmar Union. In 1401 two marriage negotiations began, one between King Eric and Henry's youngest daughter Philippa, and Eric's sister Katharina and the Prince of Wales – who later became Henry V. While the marriage

[149] Jenny C. Bledsoe, "The Cult of St. Margaret of Antioch at Tarrant Crawford: The Saint's Didactic Body and Its Resonance for Religious Women." *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures* 39, no. 2 (2013): 189.

[150] Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson, "St. Margaret," in *Anchoritic Spirituality: "Ancrene Wisse" and Associated Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 303.

[151] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 139.

negotiations between Katharina and Henry V eventually fell through, the marriage between Eric and Philippa was celebrated in Westminster Abbey with a proxy for King Eric on December 8th 1405. Philippa did not leave England until the following summer, and finally the wedding was celebrated in the cathedral of Lund on October 26th 1406.

On October 27th, 1412 Margaret died aboard her vessel in Flensburg Harbor.[152] Following her death, stories of 'supernatural circumstances' circulated, adding to the mystique attached to the queen for centuries. The Holstein chronicle recounted her death as having occurred during a "great and strange storm of thunder and lightning."[153] Meanwhile, the Lübeck chronicle claimed that traitors the queen had ordered to be arrested condemned her to death.[154] While these stories help add to the legend of Queen Margaret, it is much more likely she passed away due to the plague epidemic sweeping Flensborg at the time.

Following Queen Margaret's death Eric assumed control of the Kalmar Union. Peterson remarks that contemporary sources claim he was intelligent and charming, but that he lacked diplomatic sense.[155] Margaret's vision for the union crumbled when Eric favored his interests in Denmark over Norway and Sweden. Eric was an early advocate of a fairly secular, mercantile, and centralized nation-state.[156] He abolished old public offices, the national councils were marginalized, and castles in Sweden and Norway were

[152] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 155-56.

[153] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 156. Etting cites The Chronicle of Holstein (Presbuter Bremensis). Ed. Anna Hude 1903, p. 125.

[154] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 156. Etting cites the Chronicle of Lubeck (the later additions to Detmar). Ed. Grautoff II, p. 602.

[155] Peterson, *Vikings and Goths*, 283.

[156] Blomsvist, "Kalmar 1397 – The Town and the Age Named after It", 29.

often run by Danes and Germans.[157] In comparison to Margaret, he proved to be a weak ruler and he was deposed in all three of his realms and withdrew to Pomerania in 1449.[158]

The opposition to Eric was shown in many ways, one of which employed the known language of the cult of saints. Located in the northern part of the province of Uppland in Sweden, Tensta church contains murals believed to be completed around 1437, twelve years before Eric's deposition.[159] In the painted murals the aristocratic donor, presumed to be Bengt Jonsson, is depicted amongst a grouping of saints. On the north wall of the chancel is an image of the donor surrounded by seven haloed saints that each carry or are accompanied by their typical late medieval attribute. The second is Saint Margaret of Antioch who is holding a book and has a small dragon beside her (Figure 2.6). The legend of Saint Margaret that rose in popularity during the Middle Ages was her confrontation with the devil in the form of a dragon. The dragon is said to have swallowed Margaret, then burst as it was unable to contain such a holy being in its stomach.[160] While the dragon is a common iconography associated with St Margaret (Figure 2.7 - Figure 2.9), in the mural she also wears a crown.[161] This is unusual, since the other four images of virgin martyrs within the mural are depicted without crowns.

Sands sees this unique depiction as evidence that the figure of Saint Margaret is an allusion to Queen Margaret. The claim is validated by the fact that the saint to the east

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[157] Blomsvist, "Kalmar 1397 – The Town and the Age Named after It", 29.

[158] Peterson, *Vikings and Goths*, 283.

[159] The following paragraph contains information found in Sands, "Saints and Politics During the Kalmar Union Period", 150-162.

[160] Dresvina, "The Significance of the Demonic Episode in the Legend of St. Margaret of Antioch." *Medium Ævum* 81, no. 2 (2012): 189.

[161] While some depictions of Saint Margaret include a crown, she is typically depicted uncrowned with a veil.

of Margaret is Saint Olaf holding an axe as typical of his iconography (Figure 2.10). The image of Saint Olaf and his location near Saint Margaret can be seen as a reference to Queen Margaret's son. An image of Saint Eric is also included in the church, although Saint Eric is located on the west wall apart from the other saints. Again, this can be read as a reference to Eric of Pomerania, who was ruling the Kalmar Union during the creation of the murals. Separating the image of Saint Eric from those of Margaret and Olaf was likely a conscious decision by the patron to subtly display his opposition to the leadership of Eric of Pomerania over the Kalmar Union. Another admiring depiction of Queen Margaret was recorded in the gallery of "virtuous and high-spirited heroines" in the *Heltinners Pryd* (Ornament of Heroines) by Leonora Christina in the 1680s.[162]

However, not everyone was so generous in their judgment of Margaret after her death. There were differing assessments of her character that often related to the personal feelings regarding the founding of the Kalmar Union. Unsurprisingly, Margaret often found her womanhood being disputed both during her reign and after.[163] Damsholt remarks it is said members of the Hanseatic League called Margaret *fru Kongen* ("Mistress King").[164] In 1389 after Margaret was victorious over Albrecht III of Mecklenburg at the Battle of Asle the Scanian Chronicle said, "Praise the Lord for all eternity, who granted an unexpected victory into the hands of a woman."[165] In the sixteenth century there was a ballad depicting the same event. In the ballad, Albrecht verbally attacks Margaret's gender, virtue, and the behavior of her clerical advisers.

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[162] Damsholt, "Margrete - Power in the Hands of a Woman", 270-271.

[163] Damsholt, "Margrete - Power in the Hands of a Woman", 270-271.

[164] Damsholt, "Margrete - Power in the Hands of a Woman", 270-271. Damsholt does not provide a citation.

[165] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 63. Etting cites The Annals of Scania: Annales Danici, p. 191.

Albrecht claims after his victory he will sleep at the queen's side and calls her *munkedeje* (which can be interpreted as "monk-crumpet").[166]

Margaret's legacy remained a point of both admiration and contention. Most sources agree in acknowledging Margaret's intelligence, although they tend to turn this negatively and spin Margaret's cleverness into political deception and cunning. Soon after her death one Swedish Chronicle stated, "She was very miserly. With incredible cunning she subdued three kingdoms, which she degraded to almost nothing. Nobody was able to resist her cleverness. This is the opinion of Margaret among Swedes and some noble Danes as well. Only the clergy regard her as very religious and pious."[167] The Swedish Rhymed Chronicle (the so-called Karl's Chronicle) probably written around 1440 begins with a description of Margaret full of respect for her abilities, but at the same time expresses irritation:

> It happened then
> That the Swedes paid homage to a Danish woman.
> She was named Queen Margareta.
> Indeed one would have to look far
> To find a person who with such prudence
> Was able to unite these kingdoms.
> Very seldom is such a woman born.
> I don't think that the Swedes were wise,
> When they chose her as their leader.[168]

Queen Margaret's life and political career illustrate her extraordinary ability to navigate and reshape the power structures of medieval Scandinavia. From her unexpected rise to power to orchestrating the formation of the Kalmar Union, she demonstrated a unique combination of political ingenuity, strategic diplomacy, and authoritative

[166] Damsholt, "Margrete - Power in the Hands of a Woman", 270-271.

[167] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 192-93. Etting provides no citation.

[168] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 192. Etting cites The Swedish Rhymed Chronicle: Nya eller Karls-Kronikan: Ud. G.E. Klemming Stockholm 1866, s. 1, lines 5-14.

governance. Even after her death, Margaret's legacy remained a point of both admiration and contention. Her reign left an enduring mark on the political landscape of Northern Europe and her influence on Scandinavian history is undeniable.

## Chapter 3: Relics of Power

Following Queen Margaret's death a collection of objects associated with the queen accumulated around her funerary monument in Roskilde Cathedral.[169] Her status was elevated beyond a mere monarch, and many of the objects associated with the Queen were transformed into relics. In his essay "At Margaret's Tomb," Grinder-Hansen discusses these objects and their association with Margaret's burial place.[170] However, most of the objects do not survive and are only known because of later written descriptions of Roskilde Cathedral. The most evocative of the surviving objects is the Golden Gown that will be the focus of this chapter.

Upon its rediscovery at Uppsala Cathedral in 1906 by Agnes Branting, the Golden Gown (Figure 3.1) was brought to international attention.[171] The dress has long been associated with Queen Margaret, but recent carbon dating has led to these traditionally held beliefs and presumptions found in written records to be called into question. The oldest recorded mention of the dress dates to 1593 when Englishman Fynes Moryson describes his visit to Roskilde.[172] In the following centuries visitors writing of their travels to Roskilde Cathedral began hypothesizing the dress' original relation to Queen Margaret, leading to many differing accounts of the gown's production date and purpose. One claimed the gown was worn by Margaret at her wedding, while another stated that

[169] Grinder-Hansen, "At Margaret's Tomb", 276.

[170] Grinder-Hansen, "At Margaret's Tomb", 276.

[171] Geijer, Franzén, and Nockert, *The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral*, 57.

[172] Moryson, *An Itinerary Written by Fynes Moryson Gent,* 57-58.

Margaret wore the gown in her own funeral procession.[173] There was also a myth circulated that the garment worked miracles for women in childbirth.[174] During its stay at Roskilde the gown may have been lent out to queens or nobles in labor and pain, and there is evidence that pieces of the fabric were taken as souvenirs.[175]

These accounts are just a few examples of the repeated pattern of unreliable information regarding objects associated with Queen Margaret. Throughout the centuries an abundance of conflicting information was recorded in writing or passed down through oral tradition. In addition, it is almost impossible to tell from contemporary sources what the Queen actually looked like, as representations of the Queen primarily survive only from after her death.[176] Physical depictions of the Queen were largely completed after her death and based on her effigy which depicts the Queen as a young woman. In addition, there were no coins created bearing Queen Margaret's name or likeness.[177] This could be for a multitude of reasons, but the lack of physical imagery adds to the mythos of Queen Margaret.

The National Museum of Denmark houses a cameo of Queen Margaret (Figure 3.2) as part of a collection titled *Kaméer af kongerækken* (Cameos of the Royal Line), which includes approximately twenty cameos portraying various Scandinavian rulers. This collection spans from Dan, a legendary early king of the Danes, to King Frederick II (d. 1588). Although the museum does not provide a specific creation date for the Queen

[173] Geijer, Franzén, and Nockert, *The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral*, 43.

[174] Medieval Histories. "Royal Golden Dress from ca. 1400 Returns to Denmark." *Medieval Histories* (blog), September 9, 2021. https://www.medieval.eu/royal-golden-dress-from-ca-1400-returns-to-denmark/.

[175] Geijer, Franzén, and Nockert, *The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral*, 57.

[176] Geijer, Franzén, and Nockert, *The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral*, 63.

[177] Monter, "Gendered Sovereignty", 540.

Margaret cameo, the piece portrays an older woman in a style influenced by classical tradition. Notably, Margaret's chest features a heart-shaped cavity filled with a cross, and she appears to be holding a heart bearing three crowns – likely symbolizing the kingdoms of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. It is highly probable that these cameos were produced at a later date to commemorate and celebrate key figures in Denmark's royal history.

Many of the objects associated with the queen that survive are religious donations, either by Margaret herself or donated in her name. Like many other queens, Margaret contributed large amounts of monetary donations and religious gifts to the Roman Catholic Church throughout her life.[178] In particular, Margaret had a special relationship with the bishops and chapter of Roskilde, which is the same parish where she was baptized and now holds her funerary monument.[179] Margaret's entombment ceremony was celebrated on July 4th, 1413 at Roskilde Cathedral with what was considered the greatest religious ceremony ever seen in Denmark. A contemporary account from Herman Korner, a German chronicler, describes the event:

> King Eric celebrated a solemn funeral ceremony in Roskilde… The ceremonies lasted for three days. The first day was in honour of the recently-deceased Queen Margrete, and the requiem was celebrated at 50 altars. From the king every altar received a golden adornment, from the queen a golden altar-cloth or a weaving of silk from Damascus, and besides this a gilded chalice of silver… The offering of these adornments and chalices to each altar were done according to Queen Margrete's own decision when she was alive. The altar-cloths were made by her own hands. Such a magnificent entombment with rich gifts of altar-cloths, chalices and golden coins to the church has never been celebrated elsewhere in Europe.[180]

[178] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 120-21.

[179] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 120.

[180] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 157.

There are surviving chalices which could have been among the donations to the side-altars, such as a chalice from Kronge Church (Figure 3.3) now located at the National Museum of Denmark.[181] The chalice bears a Latin inscription on its foot reading, "Merciful gift for Lady Margrete, Queen of Denmark, Sweden and Norway; pray for her" which may indicate that this chalice was one of the fifty given out at her entombment ceremony. Margaret donated many chalices and other altar-utensils to a number of Danish cathedrals in her will, but were disseminated to various churches during and after the Reformation. Notably, Korner explicitly mentions the golden altar-cloths dispersed at the ceremony were made by Margaret's own hand. Unfortunately, a more detailed description of the altar cloths is not provided and none of the altar-cloths gifted during the entombment ceremony survive.

Writing in the decades after her death, Swedish historian Ericus Olai remarked they [the Danes] think she should be canonized as a saint.[182] Although the comment was most likely sarcastic and meant in jest, the observation might be a hidden truth. Greijer, Franzén, and Nockert note that interest in Margaret's funerary monument approached that of a saint and the objects thought to have belonged to her, or mentioned in legendary stories of the Queen, were valued and dedicated to her memory.[183] Grinder-Hansen additionally remarks the collection of objects near Queen Margaret's tomb is reminiscent

[181] Nationalmuseets Samlinger Online. "Alterkalk." Accessed May 8, 2024. https://samlinger.natmus.dk/dmr/asset/167996.

[182] Grinder-Hansen, "At Margaret's Tomb", 276.

[183] Geijer, Franzén, and Nockert, *The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral*, 42. Translated using DeepL.

of collections of relics associated with the cult of saints that were prominent during this time.[184]

In Denmark, major shrines of pilgrimage were predominately to local saints rather than relics of international saints.[185] A community's chosen saint can be viewed as a reflection of the community in which the saint was venerated.[186] Therefore, the practice of crafting a shrine of relics to form a pilgrimage site may have extended to include the veneration of Queen Margaret. While not necessarily an attempt to canonize her as a saint, as Olai joked, it may have served to venerate the Queen and enhance the prestige of her memory. This elevation in status likely contributed to the transformation of objects associated with the queen into relics by imbuing them with spiritual significance among her supporters, particularly during a period marked by the disappointment of her less successful successors of the Kalmar Union.

It is not possible to establish when the objects were placed near the queen's tomb,[187] and it is difficult to answer how and when they may have come into existence. However, the oldest recorded mention of the objects dates to the late fifteenth century, when Fynes Moryson described his visit to Roskilde.[188] Two of the objects must, as far as we understand, be characterized as physical manifestations of the legends surrounding

[184] Grinder-Hansen, "At Margaret's Tomb", 276.

[185] Martin Wangsgaard Jurgensen, "One of Us: Local Danish Saints" in *Symbolic Identity and the Cultural Memory of Saints*, (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018). 237.

[186] Jurgensen, "One of Us: Local Danish Saints", 220.

[187] Grinder-Hansen, "At Margaret's Tomb", 276.

[188] Moryson, *An Itinerary Written by Fynes Moryson Gent,* 57-58.

Queen Margaret and the battles with her most notable political opponent Albrecht III of Mecklenburg.[189]

The first object is a giant “whetstone” or sharpening-stone that is said to have been sent by King Albrecht to Queen Margaret. The sharpening-stone is reported to have hung over Margaret’s tomb for many years.[190] Moryson notes in his itinerary Albrecht is said to have presented the sharpening-stone to her, "bidding her to whet her swords therewith."[191] Hill remarks we do not know whether the whetstone was sent as a contemptuous gift aimed at the Queen and her army to be used for her spears and lances, or if the gift was directed at Margaret as a woman to suggest that her feminine tools – needles and scissors – needed attention.[192] Another object is a primitive banner of coarse linen,[193] which is believed to have been another mocking present from Albrecht.[194] According to Grinder-Hansen, there have been mentions of Queen Margaret’s hat, apron, and saddle also being on display over the centuries.[195]

In his itinerary Moryson also remarked "such was the veneration shown by the Danes for the memory of this queen that they also displayed the apparel she had worn.”[196] This quotation is largely believed to be a reference to the Golden Gown which originally hung near the foot of Margaret’s funerary monument. On his visit to Roskilde in 1617 the

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[189] Geijer, Franzén, and Nockert, *The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral*, 42.

[190] Geijer, Franzén, and Nockert, *The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral*, 60.

[191] Moryson, *An Itinerary Written by Fynes Moryson Gent,* 57-58.

[192] Hill, *Margaret of Denmark,* 82-83.

[193] Geijer, Franzén, and Nockert, *The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral*, 60.

[194] Grinder-Hansen, “At Margaret’s Tomb”, 276.

[195] Grinder-Hansen, “At Margaret’s Tomb” , 276.

[196] Moryson, *An Itinerary Written by Fynes Moryson Gent,* 57-58.

Danish Duke Carl Philip also noted the dress, which he said was to be "wirkad av guld" ("work of gold").[197] In 1623 the Duke of Anholdt claimed that the gown was worn by Margaret at her wedding.[198] Six years later the Frenchman de Hayes mentioned the Queen's tomb while noting the gown at that time consisted of two garments and was still intact.[199] A Swedish man named Jakob Fleming visited Roskilde in 1659 and stated the gown had been worn by Queen Margaret during her own funeral procession.[200]

Later in 1659, Denmark was attacked by the Swedish and the gown was taken to Uppsala Cathedral in Sweden where the gown remains housed and on display today.[201] Additionally, the Borås School of Weaving and the Durán Textile company produced a recreation of the gown around 2009, and it is exhibited at the Historical Museum in Stockholm (Figure 3.4 & Figure 3.5).[202]

In 1959 a more thorough investigation of the dress was completed which led to new discoveries.[203] Over the centuries, the dress had broken into several pieces under its own weight and what remained of the extravagant gold fabric had varying degrees of damage.[204] The gown would have used up approximately eleven meters (or 36 feet) of expensive golden brocade fabric crafted in Italy that would only have been available to

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[197] Geijer, Franzén, and Nockert, *The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral*, 43. Geijer cites Carl Philips lefwerne och utländska resor. Edited by S. Loenbom 1772, p. 49f.

[198] Geijer, Franzén, and Nockert, *The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral*, 43.

[199] Geijer, Franzén, and Nockert, *The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral*, 43.

[200] Geijer, Franzén, and Nockert, *The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral*, 60.

[201] Geijer, Franzén, and Nockert, *The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral*, 63.

[202] Fashion & Textile Museums. "Medieval Dress." Accessed March 17, 2025. https://www.fashionandtextilemuseums.com/medieval-dress/.

[203] Geijer, Franzén, and Nockert, *The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral*, 57.

[204] Geijer, Franzén, and Nockert, *The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral*, 57.

those in high ranking circles.[205] A summary of the material of the fabric is provided in *The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral*:

> The ground weave of the gold fabric is a five-shafted warp satin with a thread count of 80 per cm. The pattern-forming layer of the weave is shot through with gold. The gold thread is a lamella spun round a silk thread. Due to the thinness and unevenness of the gilt layer, the silver sometimes shows through. The silver itself contains copper (9%) and lead (0.3%) additives, while the gilt is 75% gold, 21% silver and 4% copper.[206]

Typically fabrics containing a large percentage of metal were often burned when they were worn out, so that the metal could be recovered and reused.[207] The gown likely survived this unfortunate fate because of the belief it once belonged to Queen Margaret.

The fabric is composed of two separate layers in weft-faced and warp-faced binding, which forms a pattern by alternating on the surface. This technique was utilized before and after the period of construction of the Golden Gown, but Geijer, Franzén, and Nockert claim it was the main technique used in fourteenth century Italian silk weaving.[208] The surface of the gown is ornamented with elaborate, meticulously woven patterns that demonstrate the artistry and technical skill of medieval textile production. These intricate details not only serve as decorative embellishments but may also carry deeper meanings that reflect contemporary fashion trends, cultural influences, and the status associated with the wearer.

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[205] Geijer, Franzén, and Nockert, *The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral*, 59-60.

[206] Geijer, Franzén, and Nockert, *The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral*, 59-60.

[207] Nockert, “Textiles and costume 1350-1450”, 208.

[208] Geijer, Franzén, and Nockert, *The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral*, 59-60.

The identification of the central motif woven into the fabric has been debated, with some suggesting it resembles a pineapple-like fruit,[209] while others argue that it depicts crowns.[210] Despite these differing interpretations, there is general agreement the surrounding framework features garlands interspersed with pomegranates (Figure 3.6).[211] This pomegranate pattern was especially prevalent in damask and velvet textiles produced in Italy during the early and mid-fifteenth century.[212] The pomegranate has long carried significant symbolic meaning across various religious and cultural traditions, most commonly representing themes of life, fertility, and reproduction.[213] Both the fruit and its tree were frequently associated with maternal deities, reinforcing its connection to concepts of birth and abundance.[214] The presence of symbols linked to both royal authority and fertility within the fabric suggests a deeper, intentional meaning, which will be further explored later in the chapter.

The gown is relatively small, contributing to the belief in its connection to ten year old Princess Margaret and her wedding ceremony. The narrow and close fitting top is composed of a bust measurement of only 81cm (31.88 in).[215] The gown has a rounded neck opening which measures 56 cm (22 in) in circumference.[216] Geijer, Franzén, and Nockert hypothesized the slit in the front seam of the bodice was needed to make the

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[209] Geijer, Franzén, and Nockert, *The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral*, 57.

[210] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* Plate 4.

[211] Geijer, Franzén, and Nockert, *The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral*, 57.

[212] Nockert, “Textiles and costume 1350-1450”, 204.

[213] A.R. Ruis, “Pomegranate and the Mediation of Balance in Early Medicine.” *Gastronomica* 15, no. 1 (2015): 22.

[214] Ruis, “Pomegranate and the Mediation of Balance in Early Medicine,” 23.

[215] Nockert, “Textiles and costume 1350-1450”, 208.

[216] Nockert, “Textiles and costume 1350-1450”, 208.

dress easier to pull on.[217] The bottom of the dress is bell-shaped and broadens out from the waist to form a train. Only a small section of the original hem survives, located in the front right. Using the central seam, the original front length of the gown was measured at 146 cm (57.48 in). Measurements from the reconstructed dress provide the circumference of the train, which is estimated to be around 420 cm (165.35 in) in width. According to Nockert, there is nothing about the cut of the garment to prevent it dating from Margaret's time.[218]

The dress shows evidence of being meticulously repaired and altered for the original wearer. The lower edge of the skirt has been stepped on, resulting in the fabric tearing.[219] Two patches of the same fabric as the original gown were installed so that the mend is almost invisible on the exterior.[220] This suggests both the construction and the mending was executed in the same workshop, most likely by the court tailor. Today only the upper parts of the sleeves now survive, although in a very fragmentary state. Reconstructed sleeves have been added to give an idea of the original silhouette of the gown. Both of the sleeve fragments next to the shoulder were made up of several small gores.[221] Gores, also known as godets, are generally triangular shaped pieces of fabric inserted into a slash or a seam to give extra fullness to a garment.[222] However, the upper part was not quite similar in both sleeves: the left sleeve has six gores while the right

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[217] Geijer, Franzén, and Nockert, *The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral*, 59.

[218] Nockert, “Textiles and costume 1350-1450”, 208.

[219] Geijer, Franzén, and Nockert, *The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral*, 60.

[220] Geijer, Franzén, and Nockert, *The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral*, 60.

[221] Geijer, Franzén, and Nockert, *The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral*, 59.

[222] “Recreating 16th and 17th Century Clothing: The Renaissance Tailor.” Accessed April 9, 2024. https://renaissancetailor.com/demos_goresgussets.htm.

sleeve has only five.[223] These gores are an extremely notable irregularity in the tailoring, as they tell us that the wearer likely had a crooked shoulder.[224] The gore sections also give the impression of having been specially improvised for this lady's gown.

Despite the gown being traditionally attributed to Queen Margaret, there is little evidence to confirm this theory. For centuries, it was believed the gown was worn by Queen Margaret at her wedding, or was connected to her funeral procession. Another theory that arose was the gown actually belonged to the Queen's daughter-in-law Philippa of England. This became a popular theory around the time of the original carbon dating of the dress, which showed results of the dress being crafted around 1400, along with the size of the gown which suggests that the wearer was a small woman – or a young girl.

In 1994 the Svedberg Laboratory at Uppsala conducted an updated C-14 examination of different parts of the garment, which showed the fabric of the gown was woven between 1403 and 1439. The carbon dating has revealed the gown could have been made during the last decades of Margaret's lifetime, but was likely not her wedding gown as previously believed.[225] Sparked by the recent dating of the fabric to the early fifteenth century, Danielsson argued the gown belonged to Margaret of Denmark, Queen of Scotland (d. 1486) rather than Queen Margaret I as the dating only applies to the age of the threads, not to when the gown was made.[226] He also claims the style of the Golden Gown is quite different from that associated with the reign of Queen Margaret I of

[223] Geijer, Franzén, and Nockert, *The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral*, 59.

[224] Geijer, Franzén, and Nockert, *The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral*, 59-60.

[225] Nockert, "Textiles and costume 1350-1450", 209.

[226] Danielsson also cannot provide definitive proof of how the gown was transferred to Roskilde, but suggests the gown was a donation by either Margaret of Scotland herself or her mother Dorothea. See footnotes 23 and 24 in Arne Danielsson, ""Drottning Margaretas Gyllene Kjortel"—Än En Gång." *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift/Journal of Art History* 65 (1996): 1–18.

Denmark and the construction of the dress aligns more with the fashion around 1470.[227] However, all theories surrounding the dress have been unable to be proven since Margaret's tomb has never been opened.[228] Researchers have been unable to compare Margaret's skeletal remains to measurements of the dress or the irregularities found within its construction. Both historical documentation and technical studies thus far have not been entirely conclusive on who the dress originally belonged to.

It is particularly noteworthy that two of the three major objects in Margaret's reliquary collection were directly linked to her contentious relationship with Albrecht III of Mecklenburg and were likely intended as symbols of mockery. The Golden Gown stands apart as the only artifact unconnected to Albrecht, serving instead as protection of her royal body and a visual manifestation of Margaret's royal authority. Regardless of whether Margaret was indeed the original owner of the gown, its significance extends beyond mere possession. The provenance of the garment is not what truly matters, but the powerful connection it forged with Margaret in the collective memory of the public. The gown became more than a piece of clothing – it transformed into a relic imbued with deep symbolic and spiritual meaning.

Throughout history, clothing has functioned as a powerful medium for constructing identity, carrying layers of cultural, political, and historical meaning.[229] The Golden Gown's transformation into a relic of Queen Margaret was not immediate but developed gradually over time, fueled by the belief that the fabric had once intimately

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[227] Danielsson, ""Drottning Margaretas Gyllene Kjortel"—Än En Gång.", 1–18.

[228] UNESCO World Heritage Site, "Guide to Roskilde Cathedral", (Morten Thomsen Højsgaard, 2024).

[229] Crane, *The Performance of Self*, 29.

touched her body. This physical connection imbued the gown with aspects of Margaret's mythos and elevated it from a mere garment to an object of reverence. As clothing played a crucial role in rituals and rites of passage, the legend that Margaret wore the gown at her wedding likely further enhanced its sacred status. Her marriage to Haakon laid the foundation for her eventual rule and the creation of the Kalmar Union, reinforcing the gown as a visual and symbolic marker of royal authority.

The gown's association with Margaret extended beyond political symbolism and extended into a mystical dimension. The myth that the garment possessed miraculous properties, particularly in aiding women during childbirth, further solidified its status as a relic.[230] The presence of pomegranate motifs reinforced the perception of the gown as an object of protection and blessing. Margaret's youth and presumed virginity at the time of her wedding reinforced parallels between herself and Saint Margaret of Antioch, a revered virgin martyr and the patron saint of women in labor. Additionally, posthumous depictions of Queen Margaret associated her image with her saintly namesake, such as in the mural located at Tensta. Over time, these legends of the gown's miraculous properties may have evolved, transforming the gown into an established fertility relic.

The idea of fabric relics carrying sacred power was not unique to Margaret's gown. In medieval Europe, another holy textile gained great significance – the Virgin's chemise.[231] Believed to have been worn by the Virgin Mary during Christ's conception and birth, this garment was revered because it had lain directly against the Virgin's

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[230] Medieval Histories. "Royal Golden Dress from ca. 1400 Returns to Denmark." *Medieval Histories* (blog), September 9, 2021. https://www.medieval.eu/royal-golden-dress-from-ca-1400-returns-to-denmark/.

[231] The Virgin's chemise as a sanctified version of the common undergarment typically worn "next to the skin" of men and women in medieval France: a long, loose-fitting shift usually made from linen. Located at Chartres, the chemise became the most highly prized of all the relics attributed to the Virgin in medieval France.

skin.[232] Replicas of the chemise became widely venerated, not only as symbols of purity and divine intervention but also as objects believed to possess protective and curative properties. This precedent suggests a similar trajectory for Margaret's gown, explaining why it may have been lent to queens and noblewomen in labor or distress.[233] It is also unsurprising that some women may have kept pieces of the fabric as personal relics, carrying with them a fragment of the protection and prestige associated with the legendary queen.[234]

The transformation of objects associated with Queen Margaret – particularly the Golden Gown – into relics of power illustrates the powerful role of clothing as a medium of identity, status, and memory. Whether or not the gown truly belonged to Queen Margaret, its association with her became more important than its actual provenance. Through centuries of myth-making the gown evolved into a symbol of Margaret's royal authority, spiritual influence, and connection to the sacred. The practice of displaying objects near her tomb and the miraculous attributes ascribed to them highlight the way tangible artifacts can be imbued with layers of meaning that transcend their original function.

[232] Burns, "Saracen Silk and the Virgin's Chemise: Cultural Crossings in Cloth", 365.

[233] Medieval Histories. "Royal Golden Dress from ca. 1400 Returns to Denmark." *Medieval Histories* (blog), September 9, 2021. https://www.medieval.eu/royal-golden-dress-from-ca-1400-returns-to-denmark/.

[234] Geijer, Franzén, and Nockert, *The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral*, 57.

## Chapter 4: The Power of Memory

Like clothing, funerary monuments serve the dual function of presenting and concealing the body, forming both physical and symbolic representations of the deceased.[235] A substantial portion of medieval artwork was created as a means of commemoration to inscribe the memory of the esteemed into public consciousness through tangible materials that conveyed specific narratives about their life and status. Funerary monuments in particular were intended to symbolically maintain the presence and power of the dead.[236] As Barker states: "the many registers of representation within a memorial ensemble – visual and textual, figural and heraldic, sculpted and spoken – offered the opportunity to express multiple identities and affiliations."[237] Following these ideas, Queen Margaret's funerary monument (Figures 4.1 & Figure 4.2) will be examined with the aim to illuminate the relationship between its layered iconography, King Eric's personal concerns and political motivations, and Queen Margaret's enduring legacy.

As requested while she was alive, Queen Margaret was originally buried in a tomb next to her father and son located in Sorø,[238] which at the time may have been viewed as a distinctly Danish royal burial church.[239] However, her body only remained there for less than a year, as the following summer Bishop Peter Jensen Lodehat and King Eric had her body relocated to the cathedral at Roskilde.[240]

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[235] Crane, *The Performance of Self*, 10.

[236] Valdez del Alamo and Pendergast, *Memory and the Medieval Tomb,* 1.

[237] Barker, "Gender, Agency and The Much-Married Woman", 173.

[238] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 158.

[239] Grinder-Hansen, "At Margaret's Tomb", 273-74.

[240] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 158.

By moving Margaret's body to Roskilde, Eric was able to connect the newly formed Kalmar Union to the rich historical and cultural traditions of the cathedral. In his Hamburg episcopal chronicles (c. 1070) Adam of Bremen wrote that King Harold Bluetooth's (d. 987) body was brought by his army and buried in the church.[241] This is also the site where King Cnut (d. 1035) had his sister Estrid Svensdatter's husband murdered. After the death of her husband Estrid built what is likely the first stone church in Denmark in place of the previous wooden church.[242] Construction of a new cathedral began around 1170 with the original structure in Romanesque form. When the cathedral was half-built, the plan was changed due to the incoming Gothic style from France.[243] Construction resumed and Roskilde became Scandinavia's first Gothic cathedral to be built of brick.[244] Various chapels, porches, and other structures were added to the outside of the structure in the successive centuries, offering an overview of the development of European religious architecture.[245]

The relocation of Margaret's body began a royal burial tradition that continues to the present day. With the queen's internment, Eric hoped to establish Roskilde Cathedral as the burial church for all regents of the Kalmar Union. Although the Kalmar Union dissolved in the early sixteenth century, almost all Danish royalty have been buried in the Cathedral since Margaret's entombment. Fifteen Danish queens, an Empress of Russia

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[241] Erik Moltke, *Roskilde Cathedral*, (Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gad, 1956), 9.

[242] Moltke, *Roskilde Cathedral,* 9.

[243] Moltke, *Roskilde Cathedral,* 17-18.

[244] Moltke, *Roskilde Cathedral,* 17-18.

[245] UNESCO World Heritage Centre, "Roskilde Cathedral." https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/695/

and twenty kings of Denmark lie buried in Roskilde.[246] Altogether, there are more than 1,000 graves in the church.[247]

Roskilde Cathedral remained a catholic establishment for around four centuries. In 1536 Christian III (d. 1559) established Lutheranism as the state religion and his realms – Denmark and Norway – became part of the Protestant Reformation. A major restoration of the cathedral was initiated by King Christian IV (d. 1648) during the early seventeenth century to rectify the neglect that followed the Reformation,[248] but the restoration efforts did not extend to Margaret's tomb. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a substantial amount of the fine relief and alabaster of Margaret's tomb was destroyed.[249] While the tomb was in a state of disrepair it was surrounded by an iron grating showcased in the drawings located in the collection of the National Museum of Denmark. I hypothesize these drawings (Figure 4.3 & Figure 4.4) were completed by Søren Abildgaard in the mid eighteenth century, as the National Museum of Denmark website notes the drawings are signed by S. Abildgaard, although a date is not listed.[250] Søren Abildgaard was an illustrator that traveled throughout Denmark to create drawings of tombstones, runes and other historic monuments.[251] To be more specific, from 1755 to

[246] Moltke, *Roskilde Cathedral,* 80.

[247] UNESCO World Heritage Site, "Guide to Roskilde Cathedral"

[248] UNESCO World Heritage Centre, "Roskilde Cathedral." https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/695/

[249] Moltke, *Roskilde Cathedral*, 84.

[250] Nationalmuseets Samlinger Online. "7. Dronning Margrete, Død 1412, Gravmæle." Accessed May 8, 2024. https://samlinger.natmus.dk/dmr/asset/20175.

[251] "Søren Abildgaard." In *Wikipedia*, December 26, 2023. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=S%C3%B8ren_Abildgaard&oldid=1191855081.

1778 he worked as a master draftsman at the Royal *Gehejmearkivet* in Copenhagen, and his drawings from this time are kept at the National Museum of Denmark.[252]

It was not until the late nineteenth century work on restoring the entire building of Roskilde Cathedral was initiated. This aligns with the revival of gothic art and architecture seen throughout Europe at this time. During the nineteenth century two major ideological movements, nationalism and liberalism, swept across Europe.[253] This led to a strong Danish national awakening in Denmark and the desire to to protect "Danishness."[254] The so-called Gothic Revival was largely a response to the dislocations and traumas of the Industrial Revolution and the various political conflicts of the nineteenth century.[255] Elements of the Gothic Revival were used to awaken feelings of patriotic nationalism, looking back to the Middle Ages to find a sense of national identity or creative "genius."[256] This sense of national patriotism seems to have also extended to a restored interest in Danish saints and their cults. Jurgensen remarks, "At least it seems fairly clear that it was the nineteenth century that made these saints 'one of us' and used them to bind together a country struggling with economic and political problems."[257] Additionally, in 1846 King Christian VIII of Denmark (d. 1848) inaugurated the first railway line in Denmark to run between Roskilde and Copenhagen.[258] With the opening

[252] "Søren Abildgaard."

[253] Lars Bo Kaspersen, "The Creation of Modern Denmark – A Figurational Analysis." *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 45, no. 1 (171) (2020): 186.

[254] Kaspersen, "The Creation of Modern Denmark – A Figurational Analysis," 186.

[255] Lewis, *The Gothic Revival*, 7.

[256] Lewis, *The Gothic Revival,* 59.

[257] Jurgensen, "One of Us: Local Danish Saints", 245.

[258] Andreas Ebbesen Jensen, "Roskilde faldt fra magtens tinde." Kristeligt Dagblad. Accessed March 11, 2025. https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/historie/roskilde-faldt-fra-magtens-tinde.

of the railway Roskilde became an important stop in traffic travelling to and from Copenhagen, and led to a rise in tourism for the city. More guests began visiting Roskilde Cathedral to see the site where so many Danish kings and queens lay buried.[259]

The restoration work on Roskilde Cathedral was led by the churchwarden in collaboration with leading architects and art historians of the time.[260] Today, a majority of the sculptural elements of Margaret's funerary monument are reconstructions, although Etting claims the effigy (Figure 4.5) has remained mostly intact with only a few minor restorations.[261] As seen in Abilgaard's illustrations, the architectural mounting surrounding the effigy (Figure 4.2) is also a modern reconstruction.[262] Moltke states the reliefs and weeper statues were restored around 1912,[263] and Etting claims the sculptor's Carl Aarsleff (d. 1918) and F.G. Hertzog (dates unknown) helped in the restoration.[264]

During the reconstruction the figures, reliefs, and architectural mountings were recarved as far as possible according to the fragments that were left.[265] Fourteen architectural fragments and twelve figural fragments survive and are currently located in the Roskilde Cathedral Museum.[266] Multiple figural fragments show evidence of gilding, and remains of gilding are present on all the architectural fragments, as well as red and blue colouring.

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[259] Jensen, "Roskilde faldt fra magtens tinde."

[260] UNESCO World Heritage Centre, "Roskilde Cathedral." https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/695/

[261] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 159.

[262] Albrecht, "New Reflections on Queen Margrete's Tomb in Roskilde Cathedral and its Artist", 235.

[263] Moltke, *Roskilde Cathedral*, 84.

[264] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 160.

[265] Moltke, *Roskilde Cathedral*, 84.

[266] Albrecht, "New Reflections on Queen Margrete's Tomb in Roskilde Cathedral and its Artist", 235.

Several of the figures on Margaret's tomb bear resemblance to the fragments currently located in the Roskilde Cathedral Museum (Figure 4.6 - Figure 4.11). In her book, Etting guesses that a surviving fragment (Figure 4.12) depicts Christ on the Day of Judgement, assisted by his mother and St. John.[267] Side by side comparisons demonstrate the reconstructed figures are not in complete accordance with the original fifteenth century iconography.[268] During the restoration the sculptors relied to a great extent on the theories of art historians of the time, and contemporary ideals influenced the formation of the new figures.[269] Due to the loss of much original iconography, the connections drawn between the funerary monument, King Eric, and Queen Margaret in this chapter are bound to be speculative in nature. As a result, the tomb will also be examined with ideals and the cultural context of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in mind.

The relocation of Margaret's deceased body disregarded her personal agency and was a violation of her physical body. As an adult Margaret gained political power through unfortunate circumstances, yet as a child she had little agency or ability to make her own decisions. After death, both her physical and political bodies were once again used as a commodity in political rhetoric. Due to Queen Margaret's successful political career and Eric's disappointing succession, I hypothesize Eric had several motives for commissioning the tomb for his adoptive aunt. When Queen Margaret proclaimed Eric as her heir she brought him into the royal line of succession. Without her Eric would not have become king, nor would he have married Philippa of England. It is not surprising he would want to honor Queen Margaret in a grand way, as many others before and after

[267] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 160.

[268] Albrecht, "New Reflections on Queen Margrete's Tomb in Roskilde Cathedral and its Artist", 235.

[269] Etting, "Mistress and Master of the North", 419.

him. However, I do think the tomb was intended to be more than just a loving familial gesture. This is not a singular occurrence, as throughout history funerary monuments have acted as a way to preserve and exploit the memory of esteemed members of society.[270] Since Eric proved to be an inadequate ruler without Queen Margaret's guidance, it is likely he wanted to create a monument that promoted his legitimacy as King and emphasized his close relationship with Queen Margaret.

In *Memory and the Medieval Tomb,* Valdez del Alamo and Pendergast outline some of the devices commemorative monuments employ, such as "the kinetic relationship between the funerary monument and its visitors, often manifested in ritual acts involving movement around or in the monument."[271] Margaret's new funerary monument was placed in front of the High Altar in a place of importance and high visibility within the cathedral (Figure 4.13).[272] The funerary monument was able to be viewed at differing degrees of closeness and from the multiple levels of the cathedral. With this location, Eric was able to manipulate the viewer's experience and their interaction with the monument. Another device outlined by Valdez del Alamo and Pendergast are "strategically placed figurations or inscriptions which contextualize the site."[273] Margaret's funerary monument includes a latin inscription in gilded lettering (Figure 4.14) running around the edge of the lid that reads:

> In the year of the Lord 1412 on the day of the holy apostles Simon and Judas, the highly renowned princess and lady, Margrete, former queen of the kingdoms of

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[270] Nigel Llewellyn, "The Body Body: Monuments to the Dead, for the Living" in *Renaissance Bodies: The Human Figure in English Culture, c. 1540-1660*. (Critical Views. London: Reaktion Books, 1990), 222.

[271] Valdez del Alamo and Pendergast, *Memory and the Medieval Tomb,* 1.

[272] Moltke, *Roskilde Cathedral*, 84.

[273] Valdez del Alamo and Pendergast, *Memory and the Medieval Tomb,* 1.

> Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, died and the following year on the fourth of July she was buried here. Since all posterity will not be able to honor her as she deserves, this monument has been erected to her memory at the expense of the high princes now reigning, King Erik, in the year 1423.[274]

The inclusion of an inscription bearing the patron's name is not an unusual practice and numerous examples exist. During the mid fourteenth century Blanche of Navarre (d. 1398) signed her name on the funerary monuments of her late husband, Philip VI, and her mother Jeanne.[275] Blanche's signature was a public act to exhibit her memorialization. As Keane highlights, by signing her name on the two funerary monuments Blanche sustained her high status from her association with her husband and mother – the king of France and the queen of Navarre – and these inscriptions reminded the viewer of her influential relatives.[276] In the same fashion, by signing his name to the funerary monument Eric's name became visibly connected to Margaret's.

Another example of a strategically placed inscription is located at Westminster Abbey. This is, of course, the tomb of Elizabeth I commissioned by James I (d. 1625). There are striking similarities between Eric of Pomerania and James I: their attainment of power through a powerful woman, the establishment of a dynasty during their reign, and their approach to the treatment and commemoration of the powerful queen that preceded them. One such similarity is the fact that both men relocated the queen's body against her will to be used for their own political gain.[277] After relocating the bodies, both men commissioned extravagant funerary monuments for the deceased queens. Although

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[274] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 159.

[275] Keane, *Material Culture and Queenship in 14th-Century France*, 50.

[276] Keane, *Material Culture and Queenship in 14th-Century France*, 50.

[277] James I removed Elizabeth's body from its original placement in the vault under Henry VII's tomb. After his own death James I took her place and was laid in the vault beneath Henry VII's tomb.

Elizabeth did not declare James as her heir, her status as the Virgin Queen enabled his path to power which is highlighted in the latin inscription on Elizabeth I's tomb:

> To the eternal memory of Elizabeth queen of England, France and Ireland, daughter of King Henry VIII, grand-daughter of King Henry VII, great-grand-daughter to King Edward IV. Mother of her country, a nursing-mother to religion and all liberal sciences, skilled in many languages, adorned with excellent endowments both of body and mind, and excellent for princely virtues beyond her sex. James, king of Great Britain, France and Ireland, hath devoutly and justly erected this monument to her whose virtues and kingdoms he inherits.[278]

In discussion of James I's patronage of Elizabeth I's tomb, Llewellyn proposes the need for monuments is greater at the establishment of the dynasty.[279] This argument can be applied two centuries earlier with the establishment of the Kalmar Union and Eric's commission of Margaret's grand funerary monument. In a similar way to James I, Eric marked the beginning of a new dynasty through the placement and visual references of Margaret's funerary monument. Although Margaret's tomb was relocated, the materials used in its construction closely mirror those of her royal predecessors. This choice works to emphasize dynastic continuity with Eric's preceding lineage and claim to the throne.

The tumba, or base, of Queen Margaret's funerary monument is of blue-black limestone sourced from Scania with the additional ornamentation completed in alabaster.[280] This choice of material appears consistent with the tombs of her father, Valdemar, and her brother, Christopher. Valdemar's tomb features a similar black stone base but the current tomb lacks an effigy (Figure 4.15). However, traces of former embellishments remain, with numerous holes in the stone that may indicate prior

[278] Westminster Abbey. "Elizabeth I." https://www.westminster-abbey.org/abbey-commemorations/royals/elizabeth-i/.

[279] Llewellyn, "The Body Body: Monuments to the Dead, for the Living", 225.

[280] UNESCO World Heritage Site, "Guide to Roskilde Cathedral"

attachment points, and faint outlines of lost decorations are still visible. Christopher's tomb, also constructed on a black stone base, is located in Roskilde Cathedral (Figure 4.16). It includes an alabaster effigy of a young knight in full armor, adorned with jewels and surrounded by the heraldic shields of Denmark, Halland, and Lolland. Likely part of the nineteenth century restoration project, the monument seen today was pieced together by the sculptor Vilhelm Bissen in 1879 from fragments following the tomb's destruction during the Reformation.[281] The repeated use of the blue-black stone as a base and alabaster for ornamentation serves to visually and symbolically reinforce Margaret's familial and dynastic continuity.

In contrast to the stylistic and material cohesion found in the tombs of Margaret, Valdemar, and Christopher, Eric of Pomerania's own tomb is made of a more neutral stone (Figure 4.17). All decorative elements, including the heraldic shields of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, are carved directly into the lid. Heraldic imagery plays a central role on both Christopher's and Eric's tomb – a notable departure from the iconographic choices present on Margaret's monument which are discussed in detail later in this chapter.

The Unknown Artist

The relocation of Margaret's body and entombment ceremony was held one year after her death on July 4th 1413, yet the new funerary monument was not completed until 1423. There is a great amount of contradicting information surrounding the artist and creation of Queen Margaret's tomb and there have been two fundamentally different beliefs held about its creator. It was once believed the monument was exported from the

[281] "Christopher, Duke of Lolland." In *Wikipedia*, March 12, 2025. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Christopher,_Duke_of_Lolland&oldid=1280143602.

French-Flemish area.[282] This argument firstly refers to the typological similarity between Margaret's tomb and French tombs, and secondly was based on the assumption that the tumba was carved in Belgian marble – which has since been disproven.[283] Presently, most scholars believe the artist was the German sculptor Johannes Junge. Documented as being an active artist from the years of 1406 to 1428 in the city of Lübeck in northern Germany, Junge is considered by Müller as the outstanding master in Lübeck during this time.[284] During this time Lübeck was a cultural powerhouse of the medieval Baltic with many of the city's celebrated artists furnishing a large percentage of major churches in Denmark and Sweden.[285]

One of the arguments for Junge being the artist of the monument is based on a document from Lübeck in 1446, *"eines grabes weghen, das ir vatter in Dennemark hatte gemacht*' in which Johannes Junge's sons sue the town council in Lübeck on account of a tomb their father made in Denmark.[286] However, this note should also be examined with skepticism in regards to Margaret's tomb, as it does not mention the place nor the owner of the tomb. With no written evidence available, many researchers have reverted to connoisseurship and instances of stylistic similarities to support their claim of Junge as the tomb's artist. Using the Pietá for the church of Sønder-Ashlev on Falster and the Virgin from Niendorf (Figure 4.18) as a comparison to the tomb, Müller states "It [the Pietá] is a work of balanced harmony and serves to show how much beauty of detail has

[282] Albrecht, "New Reflections on Queen Margrete's Tomb in Roskilde Cathedral and its Artist", 235.

[283] Albrecht, "New Reflections on Queen Margrete's Tomb in Roskilde Cathedral and its Artist", 235.

[284] Müller, *Sculpture in the Netherlands, Germany, France, and Spain*, 28.

[285] Toman, Rolf, and Achim Bednorz, eds. *The Art of Gothic: Architecture, Sculpture, Painting,* 236.

[286] Albrecht, "New Reflections on Queen Margrete's Tomb in Roskilde Cathedral and its Artist", 235-236.

been lost to us in the tomb of Queen Margaret through crude alterations."[287] A large number of wood and stone works are attributed to Junge on grounds of style, but none of these claims can be proven.[288]

One of the main pieces of evidence used in the Junge argument is a surviving bust (Figure 4.19) located at the Museum of St. Anna in Lübeck, despite its unknown origin. It has been suggested that this bust is an unfinished preliminary work of the queen's effigy, and remained unfinished because of a flaw in the material.[289] When comparing the two sculptures it is clear why many believe the Lübeck bust is a preliminary work. However, in her book Etting disagrees with this claim.[290] She states although the hairstyles are similar, it was an international fashion at the time and would have been quite common.[291] She also argues the Lübeck bust portrays a much younger woman whose general features are different. Etting argues that Junge was not the sculptor and the artist remains unknown.[292] Overall, there is not enough surviving evidence to definitively prove the artist of Margaret's funerary monument.

The Funerary Monument

Despite the disrepair of the other alabaster sculptural works, the effigy has remained mostly intact and received only a few minor restorations, although the crown placed on the queen's head is not original and is dated to the sixteenth century.[293] As is

[287] Müller, *Sculpture in the Netherlands, Germany, France, and Spain*, 28.

[288] Albrecht, "New Reflections on Queen Margrete's Tomb in Roskilde Cathedral and its Artist", 236.

[289] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 160. For the argument about the flaw in the material, see Albrecht, "New Reflections on Queen Margrete's Tomb in Roskilde Cathedral and its Artist", 236.

[290] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 159.

[291] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 160.

[292] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 159.

[293] Etting, *Queen Margrete I,* 159.

typical of the time, the statue of the queen is undeniably a highly-idealized depiction. The face of the statue depicts a regal young adult woman, although the queen was around 60 years old at the time of her death. Effigies often functioned culturally as a permanent replacement for the decaying and vulnerable corporeal and political bodies of the royal dead.[294] Perhaps more important than depicting Queen Margaret's exact likeness at the time of her death was to depict a portrait of a Queen whose power is youthful and everlasting.

The additional ornamentations currently featured on the lid of the monument are later additions (Figure 4.2). During the restoration in the early twentieth century sculptors added the lower console at the queen's feet – something not original to the Gothic period.[295] Often there were dogs or other fidelity symbols placed at the feet of female effigies, and angels at the heads.[296] In a drawing dated to 1670 it appears there are no symbols or architectural mounts at the queen's feet (Figure 4.20). However, in the eighteenth century drawing by Abildgaard (Figure 4.3 & Figure 4.4) it seems there was a skull and crossbones placed on a pillow at the Queen's feet. It is not clear whether this was an artistic liberty taken by Abildgaard, or if at the time the skull and crossbones were placed on the lid as an addition.

One of the key features of Margaret's tomb are the two registers of figures located on the long sides of the tomb (Figure 4.21 & Figure 4.22). This artistic choice can, perhaps, be associated with the English "kinship" style tomb. As Morganstern discusses, the treatment of tombs expressing kinship have largely been limited to monographic or

[294] Llewellyn, "The Body Body: Monuments to the Dead, for the Living", 223.

[295] Moltke, *Roskilde Cathedral*, 84.

[296] Morganstern and Goodall, *Gothic Tombs of Kinship*, 3.

regional studies with little or no awareness of their wide geographic appearance. Only a fraction of those outside territorial and artistic borders survive in substance or in production are sufficiently preserved or recorded to allow a complete reconstruction of their original programs.[297] The marriage of Eric and Philippa of England forged a union between the Kalmar Union and England. After the ceremony Philippa spent many years in Scandinavia before the commission of the funerary monument. It is possible to theorize Philippa's cultural influence may have been a factor in some of the choices within the creation of Margaret's funerary monument – particularly on the unusually extravagant ornamentation of the monument.

In England surviving examples of kinship tombs typically consist of figures representing the family members of the deceased.[298] These family members often had an inscription, heraldic shield or dress that identified them. Representing the lineage of the tomb's occupant was of paramount importance, alongside celebrating the capacity to exploit the connection queens acquired throughout their lives.[299] As Parsons discusses, the consciousness of ancestry and kin implied by tombs of English queens emphasises the nobility of a queen's descent, her chief qualifications as a royal wife and mother, and the importance of the international connections her marriage brought the king.[300]

Eric exploited the connections Margaret acquired during her life, although in a different context than the English tombs. It may be argued Eric was left with little choice

[297] Morganstern and Goodall, *Gothic Tombs of Kinship*, 6.

[298] Morganstern and Goodall, *Gothic Tombs of Kinship*, 6.

[299] Morganstern and Goodall, *Gothic Tombs of Kinship*, 6., Parsons, "'Never was a body buried in England with such solemnity and honour", 329.

[300] In particular Parsons discusses the tomb of Eleanor of Castile and Philippa of Hainault. See Parsons, "'Never was a body buried in England with such solemnity and honour", 328.

but to use religious figures, as Margaret's lineage ended with Olaf. However it is intriguing that both her brother Christopher and King Eric's tombs feature their heraldic shields so prominently, while the current iconography of Margaret's tomb focuses more on religious connections. Here it is important to once again note the possible disparity between the original and restored iconography of the tomb. The surviving fifteenth century fragments lack identifying symbols or inscriptions, therefore it is possible the original tomb had a traditional "kinship" approach or more prominently featured the heraldic emblems of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. Nevertheless, the current figures offer a view into the restoration efforts of the early twentieth century. Rather than represent dynastic or familial connections, the iconography of the tomb now emphasizes the interwoven religious beliefs and political culture of the Kalmar Union.

The long sides of the monument are decorated with two registers of figures that can then be sorted into three categories; bishops, heraldic shield bearers, and apostles and saints. The bishops are easily identifiable, as they are depicted wearing a mitre and holding a crosier. These four figures are located in the middle of the bottom register on both sides of the tomb (Figure 4.21 & Figure 4.22), with an additional depiction of an unidentified pope that may also be sorted into this category (Figure 4.23). These symbolic figures were likely an effort to link Margaret with ecclesiastical authority.

The heraldic shield bearers are also located on the lower register and flank the bishops. These figures are men depicted in stereotypical fifteenth century hair and clothing and each hold a symbolic shield relating to the Roman Catholic Church. Well known iconography is included on the shields, including the lamb with a cross and flag (Figure 4.24) – known as the lamb of god or the paschal lamb. Another recognizable

symbol located on three of the shields are Saint Peter's keys, or the keys of heaven (Figure 4.25). These overlapping keys are often used in relation to the papacy. Multiple variations of this symbol may have been included on the tomb to illuminate Margaret's close relationship with the seat of the Catholic Church during her reign.

The upper register is dedicated almost fully to figures of the apostles and saints, once again showcasing the important connection between political rulers and saints in Scandinavia. These figures hold iconographic objects that help identify them. Saint Peter (Figure 4.26) is depicted holding a book and key that symbolizes his special status among the apostles.[301] On the opposite side of the tomb is most likely Saint Olaf (Figure 4.27), as the figure is holding the typical medieval iconography of Saint Olaf, an axe. This figure is presumably a reference to Queen Margaret's young son of the same name. As Saint Olaf is the patron saint of Norway, his inclusion could also be a way to strategically connect Margaret's rule to the country of Norway which Denmark lost control of during the Napoleonic wars in 1814. In conclusion, the intention behind selecting bishops, certain heraldic symbols, and saints to be portrayed on the tomb likely had significant connections to the political activity of both Queen Margaret and Denmark in the early twentieth century.

Reliefs on the short end of the tomb depict stories from the Life of the Virgin and the Crucifixion.[302] The iconography of these scenes emphasize the Virgin Mary, as she plays a major role in seven of the eight scenes that appear on the funerary monument. These scenes were likely employed to create a visible connection between the earthly

[301] Sands, "Saints and Politics During the Kalmar Union Period", 150.

[302] F.-J. Sladeczek, "Junge, Johannes." *Grove Art Online.* 2003; Accessed 7 Mar. 2024.

Queen Margaret and the Queen of Heaven,[303] and highlight Margaret's deep personal devotion to the Virgin. Additionally, the inclusion of stories from the Virgin's life may have been an acknowledgement of the loss of Olaf, drawing a connection between Queen Margaret and the Virgin Mary as mothers who lost their sons.

There are eight reliefs in total with four scenes represented on each side. The end of the tomb where the head of the effigy lays depicts scenes from the life of Jesus (Figure 4.28). Moving in a clockwise motion from the top left relief, I have identified the relief scenes to be The Annunciation, The Presentation of Jesus at the Temple, Jesus Carrying the Cross, and The Agony in the Garden. Two of the scenes could have applications to Margaret's life, particularly those that include the Virgin Mary. The Annunciation is the moment Mary discovers she will bear a child and become a mother. This scene is likely an allusion to Margaret's own status as a mother and perhaps her known association with safe childbearing. The Presentation of Jesus at the Temple is when Mary and Joseph present their firstborn son to God, and could be viewed as a reference to Margaret presenting her own first born son to the Danish national assembly to have Olaf elected as Denmark's heir.

On the opposite end of the tomb are four more reliefs that depict scenes from the Life of the Virgin (Figure 4.29). Once again moving in a clockwise motion, I have identified the scenes to be The Last Judgment, The Coronation of Mary, The Dormition of Mary, and The Women at the Tomb. The scenes of the Coronation and the Dormition are of particular importance in relation to Queen Margaret. The specific iconographic

[303] The image of Virgin Mary as Queen of Heaven began to appear as early as the 4th century in theological text, but it was much later – around the 10th century – that artistic representations of the Virgin as Queen became general. José María Salvador-González, "The Iconographic Type of the Coronation of the Virgin in the Renaissance Italian Painting in the Light of the Medieval Theology", 1.

type of the Coronation of the Virgin Mary did not begin to spread until the twelfth century,[304] but became an important iconographic scene during the Middle Ages. This scene recognized the Virgin's status as the Queen of Heaven and elevated Mary as the chief intercessor of the catholic church. As discussed in Chapter Two, one of the major manifestations of a queen's influence was her power of intercession. There have been numerous studies noting the connections made between medieval queenship and female biblical figures such as Judith, Esther, and especially the Virgin Mary.[305] In particular, the queen's power of intercession was often linked to Marian imagery to seek or extol queenly mediation.[306] The Death of the Virgin is, of course, an acknowledgement of Margaret's death on earth. The scenes of Coronation and the Dormition work in tandem to depict the Virgin's earthly departure and entrance into heaven, emphasizing Margaret's earthly piety and hope to one day be resurrected.

Queen Margaret's funerary monument serves as both a memorial to her reign and a reflection of the evolving political and religious landscape of Scandinavia. By examining the funerary monument we gain insight into the interplay between memory, agency, and political symbolism. The monument not only served as a tribute to Margaret's legacy but also as a strategic tool for Eric of Pomerania to align himself with her political prowess. The evolution of the tomb's iconography from its original medieval form to its later restorations reflects shifting cultural and national identities, demonstrating how monuments can function as living artifacts. Queen Margaret's

[304] Salvador-González, "The Iconographic Type of the Coronation of the Virgin in the Renaissance Italian Painting in the Light of the Medieval Theology", 1.

[305] Rohr and Benz, *Queenship, Gender, and Reputation*, xxv.

[306] Parsons, "'Never was a body buried in England with such solemnity and honour", 333-334.

memory was continually reshaped to serve contemporary political and ideological needs and her funerary monument illustrates how memory can be preserved, manipulated, and reinterpreted across centuries.

## Conclusion

The intention of this project has been to introduce Queen Margaret into the broader discourse of late medieval queenship and offer new insights into the objects that serve as tangible connections to a ruling queen who has often been overlooked. I hope that through the exploration of the Golden Gown and her funerary monument I have demonstrated that the material objects associated with Queen Margaret played an instrumental role in shaping and preserving her posthumous image and that her legacy extends far beyond her political achievements. Through centuries of myth-making, reverence, and even political appropriation, the Golden Gown and funerary monument evolved into symbols of Margaret's royal authority, spiritual influence, and connection to the sacred. Each chapter was informed by existing studies to contribute to a more nuanced interpretation of Queen Margaret's Golden Gown and funerary monument.

The first chapter lays the foundation for understanding Queen Margaret's rise to power by examining the political instability, cultural shifts, and religious influences that shaped medieval Scandinavia. It explores the shifts in power driven by dynastic marriages and civil wars which left Scandinavia fragmented and vulnerable to external influence. The chapter also discusses the evolving nature of queenship, exploring how queens adapted to their political environments and leveraged their roles as wives, mothers, and widows to assert influence. Lastly, the first chapter examines how the veneration of saints served crucial roles in both spiritual and political functions. The cult of saints and their images became powerful symbols often manipulated by rulers to strengthen their claim to power

The second chapter offers an overview of Queen Margaret's life, as she goes from a young princess to the ruler of the unified realms of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. The chapter works to contextualize her early life, her role as wife and mother, and her unexpected path to power following the deaths of key male relatives. The chapter examines her diplomatic skill, particularly within the creation of the Kalmar Union in 1397. This chapter also considers how Queen Margaret was perceived by her subjects and subsequent generations by analyzing contemporary and posthumous written portrayals of the Queen.

The third chapter delves into the transformation of objects associated with Queen Margaret into relics of power, in particular the Golden Gown. The chapter explores the historical and cultural context of the gown's production, analyzing its extravagant materials, intricate design, and symbolic motifs. The chapter also investigates the transformation of the gown into a relic, particularly its connections to myths of healing, childbirth, and fertility. This chapter highlights the way tangible artifacts can be imbued with layers of meaning that transcend their original function.

The final chapter examines Queen Margaret's funerary monument to illuminate the interwoven relationship between religious rhetoric and dynastic propaganda. The chapter discusses how the evolution of the tomb's iconography from its original medieval form to later restorations reflects shifting cultural and national identities within Scandinavia. Queen Margaret's funerary monument illustrates how her memory was continually reshaped to serve contemporary political and ideological needs and exemplifies how memory can be preserved, manipulated, and reinterpreted across centuries.

An extension of this project would involve incorporating additional source material on Queen Margaret from non-English texts. These sources could provide valuable perspectives and insights that may not be fully represented in English-language scholarship. One of my primary concerns while developing this thesis was the potential risk of overlooking significant studies published in other languages, which could result in a narrower or unintentionally biased interpretation of Queen Margaret and the objects associated with her. Consequently, a key limitation of this research was its reliance on English translations found in books and articles, as well as the occasional use of automated translation. However, the use of automated translation was intentionally minimized due to concerns about potential inaccuracies and the loss of nuance in interpretation.

In continuing this research I would also further investigate the broader environment in which these objects were displayed and how their settings shaped their evolving narratives. This would include a deeper analysis of how the expansion and reconstruction of the monuments, imagery, and architecture of Roskilde Cathedral influenced the perception of Queen Margaret's funerary monument. This type of research could include a site visit to Roskilde Cathedral to provide valuable insight into how the layers of iconography and historical reconstructions affect the viewer's interaction with Queen Margaret's tomb. Additionally, viewing the surviving fragments of the monument housed in the Roskilde Cathedral Museum would enhance my research. Viewing the fragments in person would allow for a more detailed comparison between the original iconography and later restorations, something that current photographs and scans fail to fully capture. Likewise, examining the Golden Gown at Uppsala Cathedral and the

reconstructed version at the Historical Museum in Stockholm in person would be invaluable. Observing the dress firsthand would provide a richer understanding of the intricate detailing of the gown which is often lost in photographs. These visits would significantly contribute to a more nuanced interpretation of the gown and funerary monument as symbolic objects.

Moving forward I would also explore depictions of Queen Margaret in contemporary media. In particular, a twenty-first century equestrian statue of Margaret stands in the town of Københavnsvej, Denmark. Originally commissioned by the city of Roskilde in the 1890s, the statue was designed by Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen but was not completed due to lack of funding.[307] It was not until 2006 that the statue was crafted based on a plaster model that had been preserved in the storage of the Roskilde Museum. This monument could be an extension into the research of the growing interest in Queen Margaret that emerged in the late nineteenth century. However, my primary interest is the portrayal of Queen Margaret in the historically male-dominated iconography of equestrian statues. The adoption of masculine visual language is particularly compelling given that the original sculptor was a woman. Examining this monument could provide further insight into the ever evolving narrative of Queen Margaret's authority and legacy.

[307] Equestrian statues. "Equestrian Statue of Margrete I in Roskilde Denmark," April 21, 2016. https://equestrianstatue.org/margrete-i/.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 0.1 – The Golden Gown, c. 1403-1439, gold brocade on a red silk ground fabric, Uppsala Cathedral, Sweden. Image: Agnes Geijer, Anne Marie Franzén, and Margareta Nockert, The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral.

Figure 0.2 – Reconstructed Fabric of the Golden Gown, c. 2000. Image: Lynn Meyer https://www.virtue.to/articles/margaret.html

Figure 0.3 – Unknown Artist, Tomb of Queen Margaret I, c. 1423 (reconstruction c. 1912), alabaster and limestone. Image: Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Queen_Margaret_I_of_Scandinavia_grave_at_Roskilde#/media/File:Sarcophagus_of_Margrete_I,_Roskilde_cathedral.jpg

Figure 1.1 – Map of Scandinavia around 1400. Image: Vivian Etting, *Queen Margrete I, (1353-1412), and the Founding of the Nordic Union,* Figure 17.

Figure 1.2 – The Scandinavian Royal Families c. 1319-1450.

Figure 2.1 – Letter from Queen Margaret to her Husband King Haakon of Norway, c. 1370. Image: Vivian Etting, *Queen Margrete I, (1353-1412), and the Founding of the Nordic Union,* Figure 13. (Photo credits to The State Archives, Oslo).

Figure 2.2 – Letter announcing the election of Queen Margaret as the "almighty lady and husband and guarding for the whole kingdom of Denmark", issued on August 10th 1387, Lund, Sweden. Image: Vivian Etting, *Queen Margrete I, (1353-1412), and the Founding of the Nordic Union,* Plate 7. (Photo credits to The State Archives, Denmark.)

Figure 2.3 – Letter from Queen Margaret to King Eric, c. 1405. Image: Vivian Etting, *Queen Margrete I, (1353-1412), and the Founding of the Nordic Union,* Figure 30. (Photo credits to The State Archives, Denmark.)

Figure 2.4 – Coronation Letter of King Eric of Pomerania, issued on July 13th 1397, parchment, Kalmar, Sweden. Image: Vivian Etting, *Queen Margrete I, (1353-1412), and the Founding of the Nordic Union,* Plate 11. (Photo credits to The State Archives, Denmark.)

Figure 2.5 – Draft for the union between Nordic countries, c. 1397, paper, Kalmar, Sweden. Image: Vivian Etting, *Queen Margrete I, (1353-1412), and the Founding of the Nordic Union,* Figure 16. (Photo credits to The State Archives, Denmark.)

Figure 2.6 – North Wall of Chancel (detail), c. 1437, mural, Tensta, Sweden. Image: Tracey Sands, “Saints and Politics During the Kalmar Union Period.”

Figure 2.7 – Workshop of  Queen Mary Master, Alphonso Psalter (fol. 2v), c. 1302–1316, illumination. Image: Index of Medieval Art. https://theindex.princeton.edu/s/view/ViewWorkOfArt.action?id=59B471FF-B0FC-49D3-A40F-2592C0A6C4F4

Figure 2.8 – Book of Hours (fol. 32v), ca. 1460–1460, illumination. Image: Index of Medieval Art. https://theindex.princeton.edu/s/view/ViewWorkOfArt.action?id=8EF281C4-5FAB-49F8-9EAF-50A22324B89F

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https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Queen_Margaret_I_of_Scandinavia_grave_at_Roskilde#/media/File:Tomb_of_Queen_Margrete_from_1423,_Roskilde_Cathedral_(4)_(36231335322).jpg

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https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Queen_Margaret_I_of_Scandinavia_grave_at_Roskilde#/media/File:Roskilde_Dom07.jpg
https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo-sarcophagus-of-queen-margrethe-i-the-founder-and-first-ruler-of-kingdoms-176521938.html?imageid=DB1A0023-0CC2-4EEE-B0C3-7704AF0706A2&p=397302&pn=1&searchId=bc07d57c90cd38769587a6480a293e33&searchtype=0

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