

Nordic Students at Foreign Universities until 1660

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At the 18th Meeting of Nordic historians in Jyväskylä, Finland, 1981, one of the main themes was studies abroad by students from the Nordic countries. This resulted in reports, written by authors from the five Nordic countries (Denmark, Iceland, Finland, Norway and Sweden).¹ Due to the different state of research in the respective countries and to the authors' different background and interests, these reports came to vary considerably and are not easy to compare, the Danish and Swedish ones mainly dealing with the early modern period, the Norwegian mainly with the Middle Ages. Furthermore, the Danish, Finnish and Swedish reports were based upon extensive primary research, whereas the Norwegian and Icelandic ones were primarily analyses and summaries of previous work. Altogether, much valuable material and many interesting results concerning the various countries were brought forward, but no real synthesis was attempted. Such a synthesis would probably be premature at the present moment. It should, however, be possible to present some general remarks on the basis of the reports, which may lead to further, comparative research. This is the purpose of the present article.

The importance of the theme emerges from the following considerations. First, the studies abroad concern the cultural link between the Nordic Countries and the rest of Europe, the way in which scientific, legal, administrative, theological and other forms of learning were transmitted from the great European centres to this Northern edge of the continent, and ultimately the question of how the relative

¹ *Ur nordisk kulturhistoria. Universitetsbesöken i utlandet före 1660. 18. Nordiska Historikermötet, Jyväskylä 1981. Mötesrapport I (Studia historica Jyväskyläensia 22.1)*. Authors are: Vello Helk (Denmark, p. 27–66), Simo Heininen and Jussi Nuorteva (Finland, pp. 67–118), Jónas Gíslason (Iceland, pp. 119–41), Sverre Bagge (Introduction and Norway, pp. 9–14, 141–65) and Lars Niléhn (Introduction and Sweden, pp. 15–25, 167–209). References to the reports in the following are by name of author and page number. As the detailed information given in the present article is to a very great extent taken from these reports, page references are only occasionally given. — In some cases, the reports are based upon or serve as preliminary studies to more extensive work. See S. Heininen, *Die finnischen Studenten in Wittenberg 1531–1532* (Helsinki, 1980) and L. Niléhn, *Peregrinatio Academica. Det svenska samhället och de utrikes studieresorna under 1600-talet* (Lund, 1983) and "Sweden and Swedish Students Abroad: the 17th Century and its Background", in G. Rystad (ed.), *Europe and Scandinavia: The Process of European Integration in the 17th Century* (Lund, 1983).

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cultural unity of Europe was developed and preserved despite increasing political and—from the sixteenth century onwards—religious particularization. Second, the men who came home from foreign universities to a considerable extent came to form the governing elite of those countries. The university studies thus concern the question of how this governing elite was recruited and educated. These two problems are related to two different aspects of the function of the universities, namely transmission of the central values of the official culture of the periods in question, and education for specific professions. In practice it is not easy to distinguish between these two functions, neither is it possible to subsume all aspects of university education under them.² But such a general background is clearly necessary for an adequate understanding of our subject, and must be studied more directly in a future work of synthesis.

The Beginnings

The main “consumers” of university educated personnel were monarchy and Church, above all the latter. Consequently, our subject begins with the establishment and early development of these two institutions. The establishment of Christianity in the Nordic countries, which was completed by the early eleventh century in Denmark, Iceland and Norway, by the early twelfth in Sweden and still later in Finland, required a considerable number of men with some book learning. Ordinary priests were, however, not very well educated in the Middle Ages; universities did not exist to serve their needs, but rather to educate higher clergy and administrators. It was therefore the growth of a group of higher clergy, above all attached to the cathedral chapters, partly also to the monasteries, that gave the incentive to studies abroad. Another factor was also important. To a great extent, the schools and universities that grew up during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries owed their inspiration to the Gregorian reform and were supported by the papacy. Better education of the clergy was one of the items on the Gregorian reform program, and studies of philosophy, theology and above all Canon Law were intended to forge the spiritual arms of the reformed papacy.

In a Nordic context, the two factors are closely interrelated. Papal initiative is shown in a proposal of pope Gregory VII in 1079 to the kings of Denmark and Norway to send some highborn young men of these countries to the curia, so that they might be instructed in »the divine laws» and teach their fellow-countrymen when returning.³ We know nothing of the results of this, but the institutional development of the Danish and Norwegian Churches has probably been of greater importance. The first cathedral chapter, that of Lund (then in Denmark), was founded in 1085. In 1104 the Nordic countries came to form an independent Church province, headed by the archbishop of Lund. In 1152/53 the Norwegian province (also including Iceland) was founded, under the archbishop of Nidaros, and in 1164 that of Sweden (including Finland), headed by the archbishop of Uppsala. In-

² Cp. L. Stone, *The University in Society*, vol. 1 (Princeton, 1974), pp. v–vi.

³ *Latinske dokument til norsk historie*, edited by E. Vandvik nr. 2; Bagge p. 141. The letter is addressed to the king of Norway, but a similar letter to the king of Denmark is mentioned.

dependent Church provinces meant a closer contact with the papacy and promoted the growth of a higher clergy. The Norwegian cathedral chapters were thus organized together with the foundation of the Church province.

The consequences of this development may be illustrated through the careers of the two archbishops Eskil of Lund (c. 1100–81, archbishop 1139–77) and Øystein Erlandsson of Nidaros (archbishop 1161–88).⁴ Eskil was educated in Hildesheim in Germany, but had close connections with France, which he often visited. He was most closely attached to the Cistercian order with its centre in Clairvaux, an order which did not excel in learned studies. But he showed great interest in clerical education, improving and enriching the cathedral school of Lund. During his exile in the 1160s, he also visited the monastery of St. Victor in Paris, which was an important centre of learning. And above all, he maintained close connections with the papacy and tried to reform the Danish church according to the ideals of the Gregorian reform, a policy which brought him into conflict with the king. Archbishop Øystein visited St. Victor during his journey to receive the pallium in 1161, which may indicate that he had studied there before. His writings show him as a man of some learning, both in humanistic disciplines and Canon Law. Like Eskil, he tried to maintain and develop the contacts between his Church and the Papacy and to introduce the ideas of the Gregorian reform, and like Eskil, he came into conflict with the king and had to spend some years in exile. Øystein also seems to have had considerable influence upon the subsequent development of the education of the higher clergy of the country.

In the second half of the twelfth century, we have namely clear evidence of regular connections between the schools of Northern France, which were the main centres of the intellectual revival of this period, and both Denmark and Norway. Both Eskil's and Øystein's successors and their successors again were educated there. The learned literature in Latin that grew up in both countries during this period is further evidence of such a connection. Saxo Grammaticus, who belonged to the milieu around Archbishop Absalon of Lund (1177–1201) shows considerable classical learning in his *Gesta Danorum* (early thirteenth century) and may, like his master, have been educated in France. His somewhat earlier Norwegian contemporary, Theodoricus or Tore, who exhibits the same kind of learning, was most probably educated at St. Victor in Paris.⁵ Furthermore, extant sources from St. Victor and other centres in the Paris region clearly indicate that members of the higher clergy of Norway, in particular members of the cathedral chapter of Nidaros, regularly went there to study during this period. Admittedly, their number was not large, but they represented the very élite of the Norwegian Church at the time, and they were men with considerable influence both in the political and the cultural field. The second half of the twelfth century must therefore be considered the break-through for the studies abroad as far as the Norwegian clergy is concerned.

⁴ On Eskil, see H. Koch, *Den danske Kirkes historie*, vol. 1 (København, 1950), pp. 140–96 and *Danmarks historie*, vol. 1. (København, 1977), pp. 289–91, 293–98, 330–42 with references (by I. Skovgaard-Petersen). On Øystein, see K. Helle, *Norge blir en stat* (Bergen, 1974), pp. 57–69 with ref.

⁵ A. O. Johnsen, *Om Theodoricus* (Dissertation published by *Den norske videnskapsakademi* in Oslo, vol. 2, *Hist.-filos. kl.*, nr. 3, Oslo, 1939), pp. 29–60.

The period was also an important one for Denmark, although studies abroad represented less of a novelty in this country than in Norway.

Compared to Denmark and Norway, Sweden and especially Finland were lagging behind.⁶ The final suppression of pagan cults in Sweden did not take place till around 1100, and even later, Sweden must to some extent be considered a missionary country. Regular dioceses, as opposed to the missionary dioceses of the early period, were gradually established through the twelfth century. The first monasteries date from the mid-twelfth century, whereas cathedral chapters were not established till the mid-thirteenth. In Finland, Christianity was introduced through the Swedish conquest from the mid- or later half of the twelfth century. The first bishopric was established by the early thirteenth century. Consequently, studies abroad started rather late in these countries, on a more regular basis not until c. 1250 in Sweden and the early fourteenth century in Finland, although some Swedes entitled *magister*, probably indicating a university degree, may be found before that date.

By contrast, Iceland, the smallest and apparently the most isolated of the Nordic countries, shows a remarkable growth of learning from the eleventh century onwards, after the introduction of Christianity in the year 1000.⁷ Bishop Isleifur (d. 1080) of Skálholt and his son and successor Gissur (d. 1118) had both studied in Germany. Bishop Jón of Hólar (d. 1121) had studied in France, Italy, and other places, while bishop Þorlákr of Skálholt (d. 1193) had spent several years in Paris, possibly at St. Victor (1153–59). The bishops Isleifur and Jón founded schools in their respective dioceses, where the clergy were educated. By contemporary standards these schools seem to have been very good and may be considered the institutional foundation of the remarkable literary production of Iceland during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Iceland was a relatively rich country during this period, and the Icelanders were used to travelling, both to Norway and to other countries.

Concerning education, Iceland must thus, together with Denmark, be considered the most advanced of the Nordic countries during this early period. The society which brought forth this educational expansion, however, was significantly different from Denmark and Norway. Iceland was not ruled by a king, but by a powerful aristocracy, which dominated not only lay society, but also the Church. As there were no cathedral chapters, studies abroad were most probably financed from family or private fortunes. The clergy and above all the bishops were recruited from this aristocracy and continued to have strong connections with their families and acquaintances in lay society. In contrast to other countries, like Germany and France, this aristocratic predominance was no obstacle to the education of the clergy, the Icelandic aristocracy showing considerable interest in learning and education. But it certainly was an obstacle for two of the essential issues of the ecclesiastical reform program, namely celibacy and the abolishment of lay patron-

⁶ J. Rosén, *Svensk historia*, vol. 1 (Stockholm, 1962), pp. 92–102, 147–61.

⁷ See, in addition to Gislason, K. Maurer, *Altnordische Rechtsgeschichte*, vol. 2, (Kra., 1907, reprint. Osnabrück, 1966) pp. 296–328; *Saga íslands*, edited by S. Lindal, vol. 7 (Reykjavik, 1974), pp. 260–68.

ate of churches. Consequently, studies abroad received no particular stimulus from the reform movement. One might even think that the strong links that were established between the reform movement in Denmark and Norway and the schools of Northern France made the Icelanders more reluctant to leave their own schools to go abroad for study. But a source from c. 1200 clearly implies that studies abroad were quite normal at this time,⁸ although we do not know which centres of learning were most attractive to Icelandic students.

As far as studies abroad are concerned, we find a marked predominance of the western part of the Nordic countries. This probably corresponds to the relative importance of these countries in political, economic and cultural respects and above all to the way in which Christianity and ecclesiastical culture were spread northwards and eastwards from centres in England, Northern France and North-western Germany. Together with Eastern Europe, the Nordic countries gradually became integrated in Western Christendom. During this process, the eastern part of these countries grew in importance, as becomes clear from c. 1250 and above all in the later middle ages.

The High Middle Ages (c. 1200–1350)

During this period all the Nordic countries, except Finland, may be considered part of Western Christendom, not only in the sense that the people there had been converted to Christianity, but also in the sense that the ecclesiastical organization was or was becoming relatively well developed. During this same period, the most important of the centres of learning were established as independent institutions, which have been known to later generations under the name of universities. In contrast to the following period, however, names of students were not normally entered in matricula, and few other documents from the universities survive that may indicate the number of Nordic or other students receiving their education there. It is very difficult to form any clear idea of the total number of students from this fragmentary material. A few figures may, however, give us some hints as to their distribution between the countries. A calculation of persons entitled *magister*,⁹ in Danish, Norwegian and Swedish sources from the thirteenth century gives c. 75 persons from Denmark as compared to c. 20 from each of the two other countries.¹⁰ A relatively complete material from the University of Bologna, consisting of matricula and documents of business transactions gives 19 Danes, 11 Swedes and 6 Norwegians during the years 1285–1300.¹¹ And finally, scattered references from the University of Paris from the first half of the fourteenth century, together with the

⁸ *Biskupa sögur*, vol. 1, (København, 1858), p. 136, cp. Gislason, p. 122.

⁹ This presupposes that *magister* and the corresponding vernacular titles (*meistari* in Norway and Iceland) were exclusively used of graduates from universities. We cannot be quite sure of this, especially not for the earliest period, but there are indications that the word was normally used in this sense, cp. Bagge, op. cit., p. 147–48.

¹⁰ E. Jørgensen, "Nordiske Studierejser i Middelalderen", *Historisk Tidsskrift (Denmark)*, vol. 8:5, p. 340.

¹¹ Å. Sällström, *Bologna och Norden intill Avignonpåvedömetts tid (Bibliotheca Historica Lundensis, vol. 5, Lund, 1957)*, pp. 177–79.

matricula of the English nation, which are partly preserved from 1333, give 85 Swedes, 32 Danes and 1 Norwegian.¹²

In one sense, the Bologna material is the most representative, as it is fairly complete. On the other hand, the students are certainly not representative for the average medieval student, as the famous law faculty there attracted the very elite, who had gone through studies at the lower, *artes* faculty elsewhere and who were normally able to draw incomes from private fortunes or ecclesiastical benefices. The documents actually show most of the Nordic students to be very wealthy men indeed.¹³ By contrast, Paris is representative in the sense that most Nordic students probably went there, but only a relatively small proportion of them are mentioned in the material. The references in the sources of the respective countries are difficult to evaluate without a closer examination with regard to representativity.

What may be fairly safely inferred from these sources is that Denmark was the leading country during most of the period, but that there was a steep rise in the number of Swedish students, probably from the late thirteenth century. The high number of Swedes as compared to Danes in the Paris material is astonishing and might suggest that the Swedes for some reason or other are overrepresented. If there is a real Swedish predominance in Paris, two explanations suggest themselves, either the political crisis of the early fourteenth century in Denmark, which may have made it difficult to finance studies abroad, or that Danish students may have preferred other universities. The former explanation is the more likely one, as the University of Paris seems to have been by far the most important in attracting foreign students during this period. But we know of some Nordic students at Oxford and Cambridge at the time,¹⁴ and Danish and Norwegian students would certainly be more likely to go there than Swedish ones. Orléans replaced Bologna as the centre of legal studies for Nordic students after 1300, but there seems to be no particular reason for the Swedes to prefer Paris to Orléans, the less so as the law faculty in Paris was insignificant, so that most *artes* graduates who wanted to study law went to Orléans.

Whether or not the Swedes surpassed the Danes during the early fourteenth century, there can be no doubt as to the importance of Sweden during this period. By contrast, the number of Norwegians seems to have declined. The distribution of students between the three countries in the Bologna material corresponds approximately to their population, the Norwegian population being half the Swedish and one third of the Danish one, while the Paris material indicates an absolute decline in Norwegians. This is, however, not confirmed by an examination of the Norwegian sources (see pp. 8 f.), but there must clearly have been a relative decline. This conclusion is also confirmed by qualitative evidence. Two Swedish and one Danish colleges but no Norwegian one were founded at the university of Paris in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth centuries. Secondly, in several dioceses of Sweden, Finland and Denmark studies abroad were financed through a part of the tithe from

¹² Jørgensen, *op. cit.*, p. 351.

¹³ Sällström, *op. cit.*, pp. 260–66.

¹⁴ Bagge, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

the second half of the thirteenth century, whereas a similar arrangement was not attempted in Norway till 1436. Admittedly, the Norwegian sources indicate that the bishops and chapters gave financial support in this country too,¹⁵ but this seems to have been less regular. And finally, both in the late thirteenth century and later, there were Swedes and Danes, but no Norwegians who won academic distinction and held prominent positions at the universities.¹⁶ Of course these were only a small minority, but they may be regarded as the top of the iceberg and together with the evidence of the Paris material, indicate that the Swedes and Danes were also more numerous than the Norwegians.

The growing importance of the eastern part of the Nordic countries also emerges from an examination of the two smallest of them, Finland and Iceland. The first Paris students from Finland are found in the early fourteenth century, a fact that points to the development of this country in the later middle ages. By contrast, no students from Iceland are found in the sources from Paris and Bologna, but Icelandic sources give some examples of Icelanders having studied abroad during the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Though the sources are too fragmentary to give any indication of absolute numbers, it seems reasonable to assume that the number of Icelandic students declined during this period. The sea connections between Iceland and other countries became more precarious, and especially after 1262, when the country submitted to the Norwegian king, its Church came under stronger Norwegian influence. Several Norwegians were appointed bishops there from the early fourteenth century, and may not have been very interested in promoting the education of the national clergy. But the cathedral schools still seem to have been good in the thirteenth century. According to the saga of bishop Laurentius, the education which Laurentius had received at Skálholt was sufficient for him to be offered an appointment both at the royal and the archiepiscopal court when he came to Norway in 1294.¹⁷

Any attempt to explain the development indicated above must start from the fact that university education was very expensive. Admittedly, the expenses varied according to the status and standard of living of the students, and it was possible for poor students to be exempted from fees and manage on a small income. But some sort of support was necessary, and ultimately, the student population as a whole was part of a non-working population that depended upon an economic surplus produced by the peasants. Consequently, the relative wealth of the countries in question is a crucial factor—or more correctly: the part of that wealth controlled by the non-producing classes. This is important in two respects, namely in giving the necessary financial support for the students and in creating the number of posts (administrative, scholarly etc.) necessary to make people willing to undertake the expenses and privations necessary for an academic study.

¹⁵ The most usual way was probably to allow clerics to keep the income from their benefices while abroad, according to the provisions of Canon Law, cp. Bagge, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

¹⁶ In addition to the reports, see E. Jørgensen, *op. cit.* pp. 348–50, 358–59 and S. Lindroth, *Svensk lärdomshistoria*, vol. 1., (Stockholm, 1975), pp. 53–115.

¹⁷ *Laurentius saga biskups*, edited by A. Björnsson (*Rit handritastofnunar Íslands*, vol.3, Reykjavik, 1969), pp. 14–15.

From this point of view, the leading position of Denmark during the whole or most of the period may be explained by its wealth in people and agricultural land and the way in which these resources were controlled by monarchy, Church and nobility. In a similar way, the rise of Sweden may be explained by an increasing exploitation of its rich agricultural resources and above all by the fact that the upper strata of society assured their control over these resources during the second half of the thirteenth century.¹⁸ A similar explanation may apply to Finland, although the sources from this country are extremely meagre. It is difficult to tell whether Iceland grew poorer during this period, but in the case of this country, political factors may perhaps have been as important as a possible economic decline.

As for Norway, this country was both poorer than Denmark and Sweden and the upper strata of society probably controlled a relatively smaller part of its resources.¹⁹ On the other hand, the Church, which is the most important institution in this context, was relatively richer than that of Denmark and Sweden. When the number of Norwegian students c. 1300 was still relatively low, the explanation may, however, be sought in the distribution of ecclesiastical wealth. There are namely some indications that the local churches were relatively more wealthy in Norway than in the other countries and above all that the central ecclesiastical institutions appropriated less of their resources, so that it was less easy to use the wealth of the Church to finance such things as studies abroad (cp. above p. 7). Furthermore, the wealth of the aristocracy is not without importance in our context. Particularly in Sweden, but also to some extent in Denmark, there seems to have been a close connection between the higher clergy and the aristocracy, the leading families selecting one or more of their members to make careers in the Church and giving them the education to do so.²⁰

At the present state of research, these explanations are only vague hints. Further research is necessary, both to explain the distribution of students between the countries, and to give a clearer picture of the function and importance of university education within the respective countries. The Norwegian material, which has been subject to the most detailed examinations so far, may give some clues in this direction.

All together, we know of 81 Norwegians who had studied abroad during the period 1200–1350, 34 before 1300, 47 after. The great majority of these were in some way or other attached to the cathedral chapters, most as canons. Most non-canons either held lower posts within the chapter or in the bishop's service or were parish priests in the cities, which makes it likely that most university educated clerics would sooner or later end up as canons. The evidence also suggests that the cathedral chapters normally had some university educated members. To arrive at an idea of the percentage of university educated canons is extremely difficult, but

¹⁸ Rosén, *op. cit.*, pp. 115–77.

¹⁹ "Jordejendom" *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder*, vol. 7 (Oslo, 1962), col. 654–77 (by P. Rasmussen, G. Hafstrøm, J. Rosén, A.M. Soininen, H. Bjørkvik and M.M. Laruson). On the low taxes of Norway, compared to those of Sweden and Denmark, see Helle, *op. cit.*, pp. 196–97.

²⁰ See individual examples in Sällström, *op. cit.*, pp. 211–30 and *Den nordiske Adel i Senmiddelalderen* (*Rapporter til det Nordiske Historikermøde i København*, 1971) pp. 90–91 (by Kjell-Gunnar Lundholm).

the following calculation may give some indication: 17 canons held a masters degree in the period 1300–50. As only a small proportion of students — 5–12% have been suggested²¹ — actually took a masters degree, this is only a fragment of the real number. If we suppose that these canons represent 5% of the total number of former students, this number is 340, if they represent 12%, the number becomes 140. There were probably c. 70 canons at the Norwegian chapters at the time. If they held their offices for a period of ten years on the average, we arrive at a total number of 350 canons in the period. That is to say that at least half of all the canons had studied abroad. Many uncertainties attach to this calculation, and it is not intended as more than an example. But it points to the conclusion that it must have been quite normal for Norwegian canons of this period to have studied abroad. Other evidence points in the same direction. A considerable number of bishops had university education, in the period 1305–69 all of them had. A letter from the chapter of Bergen from 1309 states that three of its twelve members were studying abroad at that particular time, two in France and one in England.²² Members of the Norwegian cathedral chapters thus seem to have been well educated, and a considerable number of them to have behind them studies at foreign universities. On the other hand, with some notable exceptions (below pp. 10f.) university education was restricted to the small elite who belonged to these institutions. In this respect, the contrast between Norway and a country with its own universities, as England, becomes evident.²³ Most university students in England did not rise above relatively modest benefices. Those who advanced to bishops and even to canons were to a considerable extent graduates from one of the higher faculties, most often masters of canon law. By contrast few Norwegians seem to have had such degrees.²⁴ The prospects which such a degree offered may perhaps be illustrated through the career of Pål Bårdsson, canon of Bergen, who returned from Orléans as *dr. utriusque iuris* in 1326: three canonries in addition to his original one, several other benefices, appointment to royal chancellor and dean of the royal chapel of St. Mary's in Oslo in 1327 and to archbishop in 1333.

It is of course extremely unlikely for university education to have been as common in any of the Nordic countries as in England and or France. But was it relatively more common in Denmark and Sweden than in Norway? If the figures from Paris from the first half of the fourteenth century give anything approaching the correct distribution between the countries, it seems fairly certain that it was. As the number of canonries was not very much higher in Denmark and Sweden than in Norway, 160–70 and 80 respectively, against 70 in Norway, this should indicate either that a very high proportion of Swedish and Danish canons were university educated or that a considerable number of university educated clerics had to be content with lower positions in the Church, or, most probably, both. The further consequences of

²¹ K. Kumlien, "Svenskarna vid utländska universitet under medeltiden", *Historiska studier tillägnade S. Tunberg* (Stockholm, 1942), p. 161; G. Ritter, *Die Heidelberger Universität*, vol. 1 (Heidelberg, 1936), pp. 126 ff.

²² *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*, vol. 6, nr. 72; Bagge, op. cit., p. 149.

²³ Aston, Duncan and Evans, "The Medieval Alumni of the University of Cambridge", *Past and Present*, vol. 86 (1980), p. 67.

²⁴ A list is given in O. Kolsrud, *Presteudanningi i Noreg* (*Norvegia Sacra*, vol. 21, Oslo, 1962), pp. 50–52.

this remain to be worked out. Was there e.g. a tendency towards overproduction of students during the first half of the fourteenth century? Was there an increasing number of poor students, who could only aspire to humble positions within the educated elite, as was the case in the later middle ages (p. 15)? And did the number of such positions multiply or the qualification needed to obtain them rise?

Although the most important milieus, the cathedral chapters were not the only institutions to recruit students. It is uncertain to what extent numbers of the traditional religious orders received university education. Members of the mendicant orders were, however, as in other countries, often very well educated. The chapter of the province of Dacia (the Nordic countries) of the Dominical order in 1291, the minutes of which are extant, sent members of the order to study at various universities and as teachers to various houses. Several Danes and Swedes, but no Norwegians are mentioned here.²⁵ Mendicants with the titles of *lector* are, however, mentioned in Norwegian sources of the early fourteenth century.

As is to be expected in this period, most students seem to have aimed at a career in the Church. But though of secondary importance, the monarchy was not insignificant in this respect. Again, the Bologna material gives important clues. All or almost all of the Danish and Swedish students mentioned there were clerics, most of whom were promoted to ecclesiastical dignities after their return, although some of them also served the king. Of the six Norwegians, however, two were laymen, one of whom, Bjarne Lodinsson, was one of the most prominent politicians of the time, having served as a member of the regency during the king's minority in the early 1280s. The other, most probably Bjarne Audunsson, his companion, became a prominent member of the king's council during the first decades of the fourteenth century, serving as the Keeper of the Seal 1311–14. Although the majority of students undoubtedly were clerics even in Norway, other educated laymen are to be found in the king's service. The most likely explanation to this is that the Norwegian aristocracy was less wealthy and more dependent upon the king's service than its counterparts in Sweden and Denmark. During most of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries this service was above all administrative service. Although the king's servants were normally recruited from the upper strata of society, the king had considerable choice, and it was therefore necessary to qualify to be elected. The intellectual and cultural traditions of the royal court may have worked in the same direction.

By contrast, wealth and social standing counted for more in promotion to the key positions in the local administration in Denmark and Sweden, and the aristocracy as a whole had much greater privileges than in Norway. Its individual members more often asserted themselves by forming alliances or leagues to defend or widen their privileges, often in violent opposition to the king. As to education, they seem to have conformed more to the normal pattern of aristocratic families in Central Europe, at least in the earlier part of the middle ages, that only the members

²⁵ *Kirkehistoriske Samlinger*, vol. 1, (København, 1849–52), pp. 559–62; J. Gallén, *La province de Dacie de l'ordre des frères prêcheurs (Institutum historicum ff. praedicatorum Romae ad S. Sabinae, Diss Hist., vol. 12)*, pp. 217–25.

destined to an ecclesiastical career received university or higher education.

Not only were there men with university education in the Norwegian king's service, but the monarchy also actively promoted university studies. Håkon V (1299–1319) left 300 marks of silver in his testament to his chapel, St. Mary's in Oslo, to student clerics.²⁶ His and his predecessors' political and economic investment in building up a royal clergy under the king's direct control,²⁷ is also evidence of the importance which they attached to recruiting personnel to the royal bureaucracy. A similar development of the royal bureaucracy took place in Denmark and Sweden as in Norway. It is, however, less appropriate to regard the monarchy as an independent factor in recruiting university educated personnel in Sweden and Denmark. Most of these men seem to have been clerics, holding ordinary ecclesiastical benefices, mainly at the cathedral chapters. But the king controlled a sufficient number of such benefices for us to be able to speak of a royal clergy in a similar way as in Norway.²⁸

In evaluating the importance of the university studies during this period, we must have in mind the function of the medieval universities, which lies more in the direction of cultural assimilation than in giving specialized professional education. Most students aimed at a career in the ecclesiastical or royal bureaucracy, but the studies at the *artes* faculty to which most of them confined themselves, were only moderately relevant for this purpose. The students must have received a thorough knowledge of Latin, but this was attainable at home as well. Their training in logic and argumentation may have been useful in practical contexts e.g. in lawsuits and negotiations. Otherwise, the science and philosophy of which most of the curriculum consisted, were hardly relevant for any practical purpose. Furthermore, as only a minority of the students took a degree, there was no control that the students had received an adequate education. And finally, very few well-defined professions existed with exact demands as to a particular education for their practitioners.

Consequently, the importance of the university studies must above all be sought in the way in which the Nordic countries were linked to a common European culture, directly, through transmission of books and learning from the universities, and indirectly through personal contacts and experience from other countries. University education of the higher clergy was one of several means through which the Nordic churches were linked to the Universal Church. In a similar way, but to a lesser extent, it may have influenced political thought and practice, administrative routines and general culture at the Nordic courts. Much remains to be done in this field, but it seems clear that Denmark and Sweden were more affected by this common culture than Norway. While some Swedes and Danes wrote scholarly works, either at home or abroad, Norwegian literary production of the thirteenth century was more influenced by chivalrous culture and local, Norwegian-Icelandic

²⁶ *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*, vol. 4, nr. 128.

²⁷ S. Bagge. *Den kongelige kapellgeistlighet 1150–1319*, (Bergen, 1976), pp. 89–101 and *passim*.

²⁸ "Kapellgeistlighet", *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder*, vol. 8, col. 256–64 (by L. Hamre, T. Dahlerup and G. Inger); H. Schück, "Kansler och capella regis under folkungatiden", *Historisk Tidskrift (Sweden)*, (1963), pp. 133–87.

traditions than by strictly academic learning.²⁹ Latin was also in much wider use as a literary and administrative language in Denmark and Sweden than in Norway.

The university studies which came nearest to giving professional education were law and medicine. Persons with medical education, probably from universities, are occasionally mentioned in Nordic sources of the period,³⁰ but the number of Nordic students in this field seems to have been small. Law, however, was an important subject and the field where the influence from the universities is most apparent. In all the three countries, an extensive revision of the traditional laws took place in the period c. 1240–1350, and the influence from Roman and above all Canon Law is evident both in the systematic arrangement of subject-matter and in many points of detail. A more detailed investigation of the considerable ecclesiastical material in the form of statutes, synodal letters and lawsuits conducted before courts Christian may throw more light upon the amount of legal learning of the higher clergy.

As to the way in which university education affected the formation of the political elite, the central question must be that of social mobility. With the rather loose connection between education and profession in this society, one is hardly inclined towards overestimating its effect, but rather to regard studies at universities as one of the means through which persons already destined for membership in the elite acquired its common culture. Such a view is, however, an oversimplification. Medieval men probably attached considerable practical importance to university education, and secular and ecclesiastical authorities often sought personnel with such education for particular tasks, e.g. in the legal or diplomatic field. Furthermore, the most widespread opinion is that students were mostly recruited from »the middle class», bourgeoisie or lower nobility.³¹ This implies that university education must have led to some degree of social mobility, as such education was undoubtedly an asset for persons seeking higher office in the Church. The same applies to royal bureaucracy, above all in France. It will probably be difficult to reach any definitive answers to this question as far as the Nordic countries are concerned, but some remarks may be attempted. Students of the period, especially the Swedish ones, often belonged to the aristocracy. The relative number of poor students from the Nordic countries is lower than the average for this and the following period.³² The most likely explanation to this is that the distance to the universities created greater difficulties for students without wealth or ecclesiastical patronage and consequently that university education did not very much modify the social recruitment to the elite. However, it remains uncertain to what extent the Church supported talented young men without fortune. More detailed biographical studies may perhaps give some clues to this, although we are hardly likely to learn very much about the considerations that led ecclesiastical authorities to send young clerics to universities. After their return, former students must have had good chances of making a career. University studies illustrate the importance of merit in

²⁹ *Danmarks Historie*, vol. 1 (København, 1977), pp. 380–82, 437–38; Lindroth, *op. cit.*, 63–102; L. Holm-Olsen, *Norges litteraturhistorie*, vol. 1 (Oslo, 1974), *passim*.

³⁰ See articles by J. Kousgård Sørensen and V. Möller-Christensen in *Kulturhistorisk leksikon*, vol. 11, col. 76–85.

³¹ A. Cobban, *The Medieval Universities*, (London, 1975), pp. 167–69.

³² E. Mornet, "Pauperes scolares", *Le Moyen Age*, vol. 1 (1978), pp. 78–102.

making a career, but we cannot tell to what extent they modified the social composition of the elite.

The Late Middle Ages (c. 1350–1530)

The most obvious difference between the Late Middle Ages and the preceding period is the emergence of universities east of the Rhine, to which most Nordic students went instead of Paris. As the result of this, the links between the Nordic countries and North Germany, which were already strong in the economic field, were extended to the cultural field as well. The reason for this must be sought on the one hand in the new opportunities which the founding of these universities offered to students seeking education closer to their homeland, and on the other in the dangers and difficulties confronting travellers to France during the Hundred Years War and, connected with this, the decline of the University in Paris as an academic institution. In the beginning, during the second half on the fourteenth century, it was the oldest of the eastern universities, Prague (founded 1347/48), that replaced Paris. During the religious and national conflicts between Germans and Czechs from the end of the century, the Nordic students followed the Germans in leaving the university to go to the newly founded German university at Leipzig (1409). From c. 1400, the North German universities, above all Rostock (founded 1419) attracted most of the Nordic students. The immediate importance of this change should not be overrated. Most of the German universities were founded after the model of Paris, and seem to have offered much the same sort of teaching.

Although one should expect the number of students to have declined in the years following the Black Death, the many new foundations of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century indicate that this cannot have been of long duration. During the fifteenth century, there was a considerable growth at least in some countries,³³ culminating in the early sixteenth century, after which the Reformation caused a temporary decline. In a general way, the Nordic countries fall in with this trend, although there have been local variations due to political and other conditions in each particular country.

As most of the new universities east of the Rhine kept matricula, of which a large number have survived, the sources are markedly better for this period than for the preceding one, though the matricula are not complete and identification of students and their nationalities is often difficult. The total number of Nordic students at universities in Germany, the Netherlands and Eastern Europe that emerges from an analysis of this material are 2146 Danes, 724 Swedes, 219 Norwegians and 97 Finns.³⁴ In addition, 31 Danes, 31 Swedes, 1 Norwegian and 18 Finns are known to have studied in Paris 1350–1450. Except for the Finns, the number of Nordic students in Paris was insignificant after 1450.³⁵ The matricula of the second most

³³ For Germany, see Niléhn p. 15, for England, Aston et al., *op. cit.*, p. 85–86.

³⁴ Kolsrud, *op. cit.*, p. 45. To this number must be added a few students in Cologne and possibly some in Louvain.

³⁵ Heininen and Nuorteva, pp. 68–69.

important French university, Orléans, are preserved from 1444, but no Nordic students are mentioned here before 1546. The numbers quoted above, although far from complete, should give a fairly good indication of the distribution between the countries. We see then that the gap between the large and the small nations in the academic field, which was beginning to emerge in the previous period, has widened. The Icelanders have completely disappeared and the number of Norwegian students is only $\frac{1}{10}$ of the Danish one and less than $\frac{1}{3}$ of the Swedish, that is to say in all probability considerably less than in the period before. The only exception to this is Finland, whose number of students has increased markedly.

The predominance of Denmark and Sweden is also illustrated through the fact that these countries both founded their own universities, Sweden in Uppsala in 1477, Denmark in Copenhagen in 1479. Though their number of students was probably small, the founding of the two universities is an important indication of the spread of the university movement and of the prominence of the two leading countries in the North.

It is of course difficult to compare the number of students during this period to that of the preceding one, but both the increasing number of universities near at hand and better opportunities for university educated personnel (p. 15) may indicate that it has been higher, at least relatively, when the population decline after the Black Death is taken into account.

The better sources of this period also allow us to form a clearer impression of the social background of the students. Ellen Jørgensen distinguishes between three groups, noble students, poor students and students from the bourgeoisie.³⁶ This latter group, »the middle class», must also include clergy depending upon ecclesiastical institutions for their support and persons with their family background in the lower nobility, in lay administrative personnel in the service of king, nobles or bishops or in the upper peasantry. As in the following period (pp. 20 f.) there is a marked difference between top and bottom of the social pyramid. Noble students often took higher degrees or indulged in going from university to university to see different countries and places. After their return, they normally held high office in the Church as canons and later often as prelates or bishops. By contrast, the poor students had seldom the opportunity to take a degree, were probably often dependent upon by their social superiors e.g. as followers (*famuli*) of noble students and had to confine themselves to quite modest positions in the Church, as curates in the villages, as private scribes or clerks in the cities or in the service of others or as teachers in the grammar schools that grew up during this period.

The relative numerical strength of these groups is difficult to tell. E. Mornet points to a decline in the number of poor students all over Europe during the later middle ages and to increasing aristocratic recruitment to the higher clergy in the Nordic countries, which, together with the fact that the number of poor students from the Nordic countries was already low, should indicate less social mobility than in the preceding period.³⁷ Closer examination of the Nordic material is no doubt

³⁶ E. Jørgensen, *Historisk Tidsskrift*, (Denmark), vol. 6 (1915–17), pp. 203–14.

³⁷ Mornet, *op.cit.*, pp. 86–93.

necessary to test this hypothesis, but some modifications may already be suggested. The aristocratic character of the Church seems most marked in Sweden. The Norwegian higher clergy was never to any great extent recruited from the nobility (below p. 16). As for Denmark, all bishops were recruited from the high nobility on the eve of the Reformation, but this was a quite recent development, in sharp contrast to the situation prevailing during most of the fifteenth century, when most bishops came from the »middle class» i.e. lower nobility or non-nobles, some even having started their career as poor students.³⁸ Furthermore, the relatively high number of students, above all in Denmark, the fact that some university candidates did not rise higher than to quite humble posts and the existence of universities near at hand may indicate a tendency towards "democratization" of university education, even if there was a decrease in the number of really poor students. As becomes evident in the following period (pp. 25 f.) a growing number of noble students is not incompatible with "democratization" in this sense.

As in the preceding period, most students no doubt entered the service of the Church. But it is reasonable to assume that the importance of the monarchy was growing, above all in Denmark. Increasing centralization in the period of the Nordic unions led to growth in the central administration, which was often recruited from non-nobles, as a counterweight against powerful magnates. Educated personnel there were mostly clerics, but laymen became more numerous from the fifteenth century onwards.³⁹

The decline of Norway and Iceland is no doubt connected with the general economic and political decline of these countries, which in Norway's case is commonly explained by the Black Death and the subsequent epidemics from 1349 onwards. No entirely satisfactory explanation has, however, been brought forward as to why the population of Norway and possibly Iceland was more exposed to these epidemics than that of the other Nordic countries.⁴⁰ But it seems likely that, even with the same demographic decline in all countries, the upper strata of society would be more affected by the crisis in Norway than in Denmark and Sweden, probably including the southwestern part of Finland. With the extremely scattered agricultural land and population in Norway it would seem very difficult to retain a high level of economic extraction from the peasants to these classes by other means than through scarcity of agricultural land. When land was abundant, prices and leases were bound to drop drastically. By contrast, the landowners in Sweden and Denmark, whose possessions were concentrated in large and densely populated agricultural areas, might to some extent counteract this drop, either by administrative or even military means, or by making direct use of the land, e.g. to breed cattle.

The general decline of Norway, or rather of the upper strata of Norwegian society, may possibly be the whole explanation of the decline in the number of students. But it is commonly agreed that the Church as a whole fared better than lay society, even

³⁸ T. Dahlerup, in *Den nordiske adel* pp. 52–54; K-G. Lindholm, *ibid.*, pp. 90–91.

³⁹ Mornet, *op. cit.*, p. 91; H. Nielsen, "Kansli", *Kulturhistorisk leksikon*, vol. 8, col. 239–41.

⁴⁰ For a general discussion of the crisis of the late middle ages, see *Desertion and Land Colonization in the Nordic Countries c. 1300–1600* (Stockholm, 1981).

increasing its relative importance as a landowner from holding c. 40% of the value of the land c. 1300 to 48% c. 1500. The growing importance of the Church is also reflected in the rising number of students after the period of decline in the second half of the fourteenth century: only an insignificant number 1350–1400, 35 in the period 1400–1450, 106 1450–1500 and 67 1500–37. If we try to make a similar calculation as that for the high middle ages, using the period 1450–1536, when the number of students was relatively high, we arrive at the conclusion that 7 students immatriculated each year were necessary to fill all the canonries with university educated personnel.⁴¹ The actual number was two. The number is thus somewhat lower than the lower estimate for the period 1300–50 (p. 9). As both figures are uncertain, there is no reason to attach any great importance to this difference. We have to confine ourselves to the conclusion that university education must have been fairly common among canons around 1500, as it was 200 years before. The bishops of the period also seem to have had approximately the same standard of education as those of the early fourteenth century, in contrast to those of the period 1350–1450, only two of whom had a degree.

Although the Norwegian Church may well have lagged behind the Danish and Swedish ones regarding the educational standard of its servants, the most important reason for the low number of Norwegian students is probably not ecclesiastical poverty, but the decline of the monarchy and the nobility. The Norwegian monarchy, which in the previous period had been a relatively more important “consumer” of university educated personnel than the Danish and Swedish ones, now lost most of its importance, due to its poverty and to the fact that the king and the central administration moved to Denmark. The nobility was severely hit by the economic crisis, and the few wealthy noble families that remained did not seek careers for their sons in the Church and accordingly were of no importance for financing university studies.

The lack of noble patronage is probably shown in the fact that Norwegian students neither seem to have travelled from university to university, nor to have distinguished themselves in the academic field, as did some of their Danish, Swedish and even Finnish counterparts. Apparently, they sought the minimum of education required to make a decent ecclesiastical career at home, mostly at the rather mediocre University of Rostock. They also appear to have been extremely dependent upon ecclesiastical patronage, many of them holding benefices while studying. The best evidence of this is the fact that almost all the Norwegian students at the time of the Reformation went to the Catholic universities of Cologne and Louvain, while all the other countries, except Iceland, had students at Protestant universities. The typical Norwegian student of the later middle ages thus seems to have been of »middle class» origin, received financial support from the Church and have ended his career in a fairly comfortable position in the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Although the number of Finns is still lower than that of Norwegians, it is

⁴¹ The real number is of course considerably higher, as many students died before they could start their career, but this may to some extent be counteracted by the decline in the number of canons after the Black Death.

remarkably high considering the fact that Finland had only one diocese, while Norway had five. The members of the cathedral chapter of Turku (then Åbo) were very well educated, about half of them having university degrees, and several Finns distinguished themselves during their period at the university. The fact that the Finns continued to go to Paris after the other Nordic students had shifted to German universities, may be taken as further evidence of the chapter of Turku's character of an elite institution of a somewhat conservative stamp. On the other hand, Finnish students also went to Wittenberg at the time of the Reformation and returned to introduce the new ideas to their home-country. Although the Reformation itself, as in Norway, was carried out at the king's command, the leaders of the new Church were members of the old elite, educated at Wittenberg, while most bishops that were appointed in Norway in the period immediately after the Reformation were Danish.

The social background of the Finnish intellectual elite was a strong aristocracy in the west, around Turku. A comparison from the fifteenth century, admittedly based on a rather meagre material, shows the chapter of Turku to be by far the most aristocratic of the Swedish cathedral chapters.⁴² While the country as a whole was probably more backwards and less integrated in Western Christendom than Norway, this region was an important part of the kingdom of Sweden.

The Early Modern Period (c. 1530–1660)

The reformation led to a temporary decline in the number of students over most of Europe. The reason for this is to be sought in the disorder and uncertainties resulting from the religious conflicts, and at least in some Protestant countries, in the problem of financing the studies after the Church had lost much of its wealth and had been subjected to the State. The following period, however, saw a conspicuous rise in the number of students, to the extent that a »student explosion» may be said to have taken place in the period from the mid-sixteenth till the mid-seventeenth century.⁴³ This is a common European phenomenon, but it is most marked in Protestant countries, and is thus partly to be explained by the Reformation itself. Through Protestantism a new concept of the clergy was introduced. The Protestant clergyman was above all a teacher, whereas the Catholic priest had as his primary duty to administer the sacraments. Consequently, the education of the clergy became more important in the Protestant countries—although it improved in Catholic countries too—and this education began to an increasing degree to take place at the universities. With higher standards of education, the wealth and social standing of the lower clergy also rose. On the other hand, the wealth and influence of the higher clergy, above all the bishops, fell drastically, and a career in the Church was no longer an attractive one to members of the nobility.

In spite of this, members of this class went to the universities in increasing numbers. This has to do with what is the second explanation of the student

⁴² Lundholm, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

⁴³ Figures for Germany and Leiden in Niléhn pp. 17–19; for Oxford and Cambridge in Stone, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

explosion, namely the growth of the early modern state. The state replaced the Church as the most important consumer of university educated personnel, and the state needed an increasing number of such personnel in its growing bureaucracy. Birth and upbringing in noble environments were no longer sufficient to qualify the nobility to take part in the rule of the country, a more intellectual education was considered necessary. These demands on members of the nobility were expressed in the new, humanistic ideal of the educated nobleman, the *homo universale*, which was originally stated in Italy in the early fifteenth century and which spread to the rest of Europe during the following century. This ideal combined the traditional aristocratic virtues, courage, generosity, skill in fighting etc. with the ideal of the scholar, fostered by the universities. Whereas the medieval universities primarily seem to have attracted students from the »middle class» and members of the higher nobility only as a step in an ecclesiastical career, the universities now to an increasing degree began to attract the nobility as a whole. On the other hand, the contrast between this period and the preceding one should not be overrated. As far back as the late thirteenth century, we find members of the aristocracy at the university (above p. 10), and it may well be that further biographical studies of students of the later middle ages will reveal similar examples. And secondly, although the nobility went to universities in the early modern period, their studies differed markedly from those of members of the lower classes in aiming less at degrees and professional education, the line between university education and the aristocratic »grand tour» often being hard to draw.

The student explosion also took place in the Nordic countries. After a crisis at the period of the Reformation (1528 in Sweden-Finland, 1536–37 in Denmark-Norway, 1550 in Iceland), with a low number of students and both the national universities closing down, there was a sharp rise in the number of students from the 1560s onwards. The number of Danish students, including Norwegians, at the twenty most important universities in the period 1541–1660 was 3,567, of whom 498 were Norwegians and 9 Icelanders.⁴⁴ The number of Swedish (including Finnish) immatriculations at German and Dutch Protestant universities was 2,396 during the same period, that is to say that the number of individuals is considerably lower. For the whole of the seventeenth century, the number of immatriculations was 3,520, the number of students 2,312.⁴⁵ To this must be added an unknown number of students at universities outside this region. The number of students is thus considerably higher for this period than for the much longer period 1350–1536. Furthermore, to this number must be added a number of students at the two national universities, Copenhagen and Uppsala, which at least in the case of the former, was considerably higher than during the period before.

As for the smaller countries, the number of Icelanders is still insignificant. The number of Norwegians has, however, increased, both absolutely and in relation to the other countries. The number of Finns is much lower, 123 for the period 1531–1640. To this number must be added the 19 Finns who studied at Catholic

⁴⁴ Helk, op. cit., p. 38, Table 2.

⁴⁵ Niléhn, op. cit., p. 177, Table 3 and p. 189.

universities, or Jesuit schools, most of them in the period 1575–1600 (below) and the students at universities within the Swedish kingdom (p. 24). From a constitutional point of view, Norway and Finland were in the same position in this period as parts of larger political unities, Denmark and Sweden respectively, Norwegian independence having been formally abolished in 1536. Though this was not completely put into practice, Danish influence increased considerably, and a large number of the Norwegian students in question were probably sons of Danish clergymen or civil servants in Norway. Danes were also normally appointed to the chief administrative posts in Norway in the period. By contrast, a very high percentage of Finnish students, particularly in the sixteenth century, belonged to ancient noble families of the country. As a consequence of the religious and political controversies of the late sixteenth century, the Finnish nobility suffered a severe setback,⁴⁶ and the Swedish influence increased after the turn of the century. The Finnish upper classes were, however, both culturally and politically still important enough for a Finnish university to be established in Turku in 1640, while Norway had to wait till 1813 for her own university.

The conversion of the Nordic countries to the Reformation obviously meant that most students from these countries went to Lutheran universities. As the North German universities were already by far the most important, this did not imply any great change from the previous period. But confessional considerations did have considerable influence upon official policy in this field. Above all in the years around 1600, the Swedish and Danish governments took steps to prevent »contamination» from non-Lutheran universities. The greatest danger in this respect came from the Jesuit mission in the Baltic region in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The Jesuits founded schools in Olmütz, Wilna and Braunsberg, where teaching was free and scholarly standards high, in order to attract students and win them to Catholicism. These schools formed the bases for attempts to reintroduce Catholicism to Sweden and Finland in the years around 1580 and later under the Catholic king Sigismund, under whom Sweden was in personal union with Poland (1592–98). During this period a considerable number of Swedes and Finns went to these schools for study. But after the deposition of king Sigismund and the Protestant reaction that followed, the recruitment of students to them almost stopped. The Jesuit schools were popular with Danish students as well, but very few of them appear to have been attracted by Catholicism. Still, the Danish king found them sufficiently dangerous to decree that no one who had studied there should be promoted to any office in the Church (1604) and later even to forbid studies at Königsberg, for fear that students might go secretly from there to Braunsberg (1624). After this, the number of Danish students at these institutions appears to *have dropped*.

The four most important universities for Denmark (including Iceland and Norway) and Sweden (including Finland) respectively were the following:⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Heininen and Nuorteva, *op. cit.*, p. 88; Rosén, *op. cit.*, p. 485.

⁴⁷ Helk, *op. cit.*, p. 37, Table 1; Niléhn, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

<i>Denmark</i> (imm. 1541–1660)		<i>Sweden</i> (students 1600–99)	
Rostock	1252	Leiden	683
Wittenberg	936	Greifswald	547
Leiden	573	Wittenberg	513
Padova	350	Rostock	463

The figures are not strictly comparable. The Danish report gives numbers of immatriculations, the number of students being considerably lower. For both countries, the period with the highest number of students, the first half of the seventeenth century, is covered, but since the periods are not completely identical, differences in the general popularity of the universities in question may be reflected in the numbers given here. And finally, the Swedish report confines itself entirely to German and Dutch universities. This has probably led to some under-registration, if not of students (p. 18), at least of immatriculations, as many of the noble students in Leiden no doubt continued their journeys to French and Italian universities.⁴⁸

In spite of these reservations, the figures in question do suggest approximately the same pattern for both countries. A closer analysis of the three universities most popular with Swedish students in the Swedish report points in this direction. Here Leiden emerges as the university of the nobles and the civil servants, 29% of the Swedes there belonging to the nobility, in addition to 10% from recently ennobled families, whereas the corresponding numbers for Wittenberg and Greifswald are 4,3% and 2,3% and 3,9% and 8,7% respectively. By contrast nearly 30% of the students at Wittenberg and nearly 25% of those at Greifswald come from clerical families, against c. 15% at Leiden. Their careers show a similar pattern, 46,9% of the students from Leiden ending up as civil servants or military officers, against 16,3% from Wittenberg and 13,2% from Greifswald, while 45,8% from Wittenberg and 35,4% from Greifswald enter the service of the Church.

As may already be inferred from these numbers, Leiden was an important university with a high international reputation, above all renowned for its teaching of science, medicine and the classics, besides being the natural starting-point for travels to France, England and to some extent Italy. In addition, it came partly to replace German universities after the outbreak of the Thirty Years War. Leiden also had outstanding teachers of theology, but this was of course not very attractive to students from Lutheran countries. Of the two most important German universities, Wittenberg during most of the period was the centre of Lutheran orthodoxy and held a high reputation for its theological teaching, whereas Greifswald was a purely local university of low scholarly standard, owing its attraction to the Swedes to its proximity to Sweden and, during the Thirty Years War, to its sheltered position. This difference between the two universities is partly reflected in the background and career of their students, a relatively higher number of the students of Wittenberg coming from the »middle class» (clergy, bourgeoisie etc.) and ending their careers in relatively comfortable positions, whereas the number of students at

⁴⁸Nonetheless, the number of Swedish students at French and Italian universities really seems to have been lower than that of Danish (information from Dr. Niléhn, letter July 1983).

Greifswald whose origin and career are unknown is astonishingly high, c. 50%.

Although we lack similar statistics from Denmark, it seems reasonable to assume the same pattern there. For geographical reasons, Greifswald was not attractive to Danish students, Rostock, which was the same sort of university, though slightly better, taking its place. Wittenberg, "Lutheran Rome", quite naturally held the same importance to the Danes as to the Swedes. Leiden seems to have been considerably less important. One might suspect this to be due to the fact that the Danish statistics end in 1660, but there was a sharp decline in the number of students here after this date, so this is hardly the most probable explanation. The relatively low number of Danes at Leiden has therefore been compensated by the high number at Padova in addition to other French and Italian universities.

The main difference between Denmark and Sweden lies in the considerably higher overall number of students in Denmark. As the population of the two countries was approximately the same at this time, this means that a relatively higher number of Danes than of Swedes went to universities, particularly in the period before c. 1600. Students at the national universities do not figure in these statistics, but we may safely rule out the possibility that the lower number of Swedes at foreign universities was compensated by a higher number at home. Quite the contrary: Whereas Copenhagen recovered shortly after the Reformation and was in regular activity in the following period, and even had some quite distinguished teachers, Uppsala was closed during long periods of the sixteenth century and had a insignificant number of students until the 1620s.⁴⁹

The reason for this difference is partly to be sought in Denmark's traditional prominence as the great power of the North, which extended even to the cultural field. In addition, more specific reasons may be adduced, the most important of which is probably the education of the clergy, which in Denmark was attached to the universities already in 1569. This above all favoured the University of Copenhagen but many students from Copenhagen continued their studies at other universities, and from some parts of Denmark one might as well go abroad as to Copenhagen. University students were further encouraged by relatively generous financial support from the king or other sources.⁵⁰

The Reformation obviously led to radical changes in the study of theology: a new doctrine was substituted for the old one, and the study of theology was no longer a speciality for a small elite, but became a common academic subject. Apart from this, however, most of the Protestant and above all the Lutheran universities were remarkably conservative. As in the Middle Ages, the study of *artes* was compulsory for future students of theology, and as in the Middle Ages, Aristotle was still the great authority in philosophy and the sciences. Renaissance humanism and the more practical ideas of ramism were of slight importance in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,⁵¹ with the sole exception that languages, Greek and Hebrew,

⁴⁹ On the reconstruction of the University of Copenhagen after the Reformation, see e.g. *Københavns Universitets historie*, vol. 5., p. 14 ff. (by N. K. Andersen). On Uppsala, see Lindroth, op. cit., vol. 1., pp. 222–29, 340–46, vol. 2, pp. 16–47.

⁵⁰ Helk, op. cit., 48–49.

⁵¹ Niléhn, op. cit., p. 21 with ref.

became more prominent, in addition to traditional Latin, the primacy of which was as unquestioned as in the Middle Ages.⁵² The medieval tradition also continued in another important respect: What was made compulsory in Denmark in 1569, was not a university degree or the study of any particular subject, but simply a period at the university, control of the candidate's learning and orthodoxy being reserved for the local bishop's examination. The university did accordingly not yet give a strictly professional education, neither was it entrusted with the responsibility for controlling its candidates. But some duties of the latter kind were left to it in 1573, when the professors of theology in Copenhagen were ordered to examine candidates returning from abroad. And from the large number of students at foreign universities and probably also at Copenhagen, it seems reasonable to conclude that theological studies were gradually becoming a normal part of a future clergyman's career. In 1629 examination by three professors became a necessary precondition for anyone to be appointed to an office in the Church.⁵³ The examination by the bishop was still retained, by the relative importance of the university had clearly increased. Though there was still not a question of a degree in the modern sense, the combination of education and control implied a much more direct connection between the university and a particular profession. The clergy had become the first bureaucratic profession in the modern sense, and the universities were now giving professional education. While the medieval, Catholic priest was above all distinguished from the laity through his ordination and his power to administer the sacraments, the Danish Lutheran pastor of the seventeenth century was distinguished through his theological studies at the university.

In contrast to Denmark, clerical education in Sweden was in a bad state for a long time after the Reformation. When it was reorganized to serve the needs of the new Church, it followed more closely the medieval tradition, in being attached to the dioceses, either to the cathedral chapters or to the grammar schools, the latter model becoming established for the whole country in 1604. The main subject at the grammar schools was Latin and the schools were not intended only for the clergy, religious education only playing a minor role. But a step towards a more professional education of this group was taken when lecturers in theology were attached to these schools in 1604 in order to teach the future pastors.⁵⁴ Clerical education was not transferred to the universities until the 1650s.⁵⁵ The importance of this difference for clerical education remains to be studied. But the difference itself probably has something to do with the relative independence of the Swedish bishops vis-a-vis the monarchy during the first half of the seventeenth century.⁵⁶ While the dioceses remained the central ecclesiastical institution in Sweden, an important part of its function was in Denmark taken over by the university. Admittedly, the king's own Copenhagen university, held no monopoly in this respect, but it did have an impor-

⁵² Lindroth, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 212–15, 265–72, vol. 2, pp. 179–223.

⁵³ *Københavns Universitets historie*, vol. 5, pp. 152–56; (by J. Glebe-Møller); Kolsrud, *op. cit.*, pp. 130–34.

⁵⁴ Lindroth, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 208–15.

⁵⁵ Niléhn, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

⁵⁶ Lindroth, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 79–93.

tant control function over students from other universities.

If we try to trace the distribution of students at the different universities over time, which is well set out in the Danish report, we meet with the apparent paradox that the number of students at non-Lutheran universities is significantly higher after 1600 than before and reaches maximum in the most strictly orthodox period from the 1620s onwards. The explanation to this lies in the increasing number of nobles seeking higher education⁵⁷ and more generally in a relatively higher number of students aiming at a secular career. In Denmark, the nobility constitutes 20% of the students for the period as a whole, but the percentage is lower for the sixteenth century, then rises after 1600 and reaches a climax of 26.65% in the 1620s. And while the total number of students is at the highest in the 1590s, the number of noble students reaches a maximum in the period 1611–20.⁵⁸ Comparable numbers from Sweden are not available, but the Swedish report seems to suggest approximately the same development there.⁵⁹ C. 40% of the students became clergymen in the sixteenth century, compared to 25% in the seventeenth. The overall number of noble students at the three universities mentioned above (p. 20), including recently ennobled families, is c. 20% for the seventeenth century as a whole. As this number dropped considerably towards the end of the seventeenth century, the percentage must have been at least as high as in Denmark in the earlier part of this period. These figures are confirmed by studies of the aristocracy and the administrative personnel of the period. From the 1580s onwards, the Danish government attached increasing importance to education when recruiting its personnel. Nearly all members of the Council (*Rigsraad*) under Christian IV (1588–1648) had travels abroad behind them, in most cases to universities. For approximately the same period, 77% of the secretaries of Chancery—posts held by young nobles at the start of their career—had studied abroad, a fact which singles this group out as an elite compared to other young nobles.⁶⁰

In Sweden there are examples of individual noblemen having excellent education in the sixteenth century, but as a whole, the percentage of noble students appears to have been lower for this century than for the following. The subsequent rise in the number of noble students must be seen against the background of the gradual, but profound transition to a modern, centralized administration that took place in the period,⁶¹ leading to an increasing demand for educated personnel, not only nobles, who, as in Denmark, monopolized the higher posts, but also holders of lower administrative posts. Furthermore, Sweden's rise to a great power from the 1620s

⁵⁷ Nobles were normally exempted from the prohibitions against going to non-Lutheran universities, Helk, op. cit., pp. 50–52; Niléhn, op. cit., p. 187; S. Gøransson, "De svenska studieresorna och den religiösa kontrollen", *Uppsala Universitets årsskrift*, vol. 8, (1951).

⁵⁸ Helk, op. cit., p. 40 and p. 38, Table 2.

⁵⁹ Niléhn, op. cit., pp. 183–84.

⁶⁰ Helk, op. cit., 41–42; *Danmarks Historie*, vol. 2, (København, 1980), p. 463 (by H. Gamrath and E. Ladewig-Petersen); D. O. Fisher, "Kongens unge mænd", *Rigsråd, adel og administration 1570–1648*, edited by K. V. Jespersen (Odense, 1980), pp. 174–76.

⁶¹ Niléhn, op. cit., p. 184; Rosén, op. cit., pp. 442–54, 490–500.

onwards both led to an increase in the administration and gave the ruling class new opportunities and challenges, as officers, diplomats and governors of conquered provinces. The rush of Swedish students to Leiden and probably also to other West European universities from the 1620s is certainly to be regarded in this light. However, the country of noble students is above all Finland, which thus continues her medieval tradition as the country of the educated elite. There were noble students preparing themselves for a secular career already in the Late Middle Ages, but the great change in this direction took place after the Reformation, when high office in the Church was no longer attractive to the nobility. C. 50% of the, admittedly low (p. 18), number of Finnish students at foreign universities (1531–1640) were nobles. The percentage is somewhat lower if the Finnish students at the Jesuit schools, who were all non-nobles, are taken into account, and above all if we include the students at the Swedish universities, Uppsala and Dorpat (founded 1632) and from 1640 the Finnish University of Turku.

The important changes that took place in administration and in the recruitment of students, did not lead to any corresponding changes in the teaching and curricula of the universities. As in the Middle Ages there was a considerable distance between the learned studies at the university and the different tasks with which the civil servants had to deal. Neither were candidates for various careers in the administration met with any specific demand for one particular sort of education. The reports give no statistics as to which subjects were studied, but the Danish report mentions that only a few Danes became doctors of law, although this number increased towards the middle of the seventeenth century. This subject was namely mostly studied by nobles who normally did not take degrees. Some of the students at French and Italian universities no doubt studied medicine (including what we would call science), as the best education in this field was to be obtained here. But the majority of non-noble students in the “secular” field most probably confined themselves to *artes*, to which may have been added some years of law.

The studies of the nobles, who educated themselves for the highest posts in the administration, were in many cases not really university studies at all. Travelling was important for its own sake, and personal contacts, practical experience and knowledge of countries and peoples were probably as important as strict academic study. The curriculum for the Academy for nobles at Sorø in Denmark (founded 1623) gives an indication of the relevant subjects for noble students, namely languages (German and French), history and political science, fortification, riding, fencing, drawing and music. Such subjects were also included in their studies abroad.

To some extent, this general form of education corresponded to actual administrative practice, with relatively vague borders between the different branches, e.g. between the civilian and military sector. Specialization increased during the second half of the seventeenth century, in Denmark above all with the introduction of absolutism in 1660. But not until the next century was secular education professionalized in the same way as the education of the clergy, e.g. with the establishment of military academies and law examination at the university as a prerequisite for

higher posts in the civil service.⁶²

The intellectual importance of the studies at foreign universities appears to be a promising field for further research. There was a considerable cultural and intellectual revival in Denmark from the late sixteenth century and in Sweden from the first half of the seventeenth century,⁶³ while the years c. 1550–1650 were one of the most brilliant epochs in Western intellectual history, the period of the new astronomy of Kepler and Galileo, the philosophy of Descartes, the political thought of Grotius and Hobbes etc. Admittedly, the importance of the universities in this respect should not be overrated, as the new ideas often directly attacked current doctrines there. Still, the spread of those ideas was hardly possible without the sort of educated elite with a common culture that the universities produced. Studies at foreign universities and other forms of communication between the Nordic universities and the intellectual milieus abroad were certainly important in transmitting the new ideas to those countries, although much remains to be done regarding the exact connections between the two phenomena and the way in which different intellectual traditions in Denmark and Sweden may be explained from different impulses from abroad.

As in the case of the preceding periods, the political and administrative importance of the studies abroad must be examined within the whole context of the development of the early modern state in the Nordic countries, which is obviously outside the scope of the present article. Some tentative remarks may, however, be ventured as to the question of social mobility. During the period in question, the nobility had a monopoly or near-monopoly on higher office in the State both in Denmark and Sweden, which at least for Denmark represented a sharp contrast to the preceding period. As we have seen, merit, including education, was also of importance, but the chances of receiving the relevant education depended very much on one's social background (above pp. 20 f.). The explanation to this change must be sought both in the new alliance between monarchy and nobility, which made it impossible for the low-born royal servant to play the same role as in the previous period, and in the Reformation, which suppressed the rich and mighty celibate clergy, who must sometimes have been recruited from non-noble families and received their education through support from the Church.

On the lower level of bureaucracy, the situation was probably different. The Reformation and the growth of the early modern state meant a democratization of university education in the sense that such education became compulsory or at least highly desirable for much wider groups than before, notably the lower clergy. Although a development in this direction probably took place already in the Middle Ages, above all in Denmark, which was also the leading country in this field after the Reformation, there can be no doubt of the increase in the number of non-noble students. There were also burses and financial support for poor students, and both kings, bishops and private persons supported students. In the mid-sixteenth cen-

⁶² Law examination for future civil servants was introduced at the University of Copenhagen in 1736. A military academy was founded in Norway in 1750 and in Sweden in 1792.

⁶³ Famous names in Denmark are Niels Hemmingsen (1513–1600) in theology and Tycho Brahe (1546–1601) in astronomy. On intellectual life in Sweden during her period as a great power, see Lindroth, *op. cit.*, vol. 2.

tury, the Danish bishop Peder Palladius encouraged the pastors to pick out children who learnt easily and send them to schools to see if they might be qualified for clerical education.⁶⁴ The Swedish material from the seventeenth century does not contain many sons of peasants, but quite a high number of them may be hidden in the large group of students of unknown origin (c. 45% in Greifswald). In any case, unknown origin very often must mean low origin. But it is important to have in mind the great differences between various universities and various forms of education, which to a great extent corresponded to social differences (above pp. 20 f.). Such differences might to some extent be counteracted by the *famulus-* and *praeceptor* system, which allowed poor or non-noble students to go to the same universities as the nobility.⁶⁵ It was also possible for non-nobles to be ennobled and thus rise to positions that were normally reserved for the nobility. The importance of university education in this respect remains to be examined and compared to other ways of preference, e.g. business or military service.

At the lower level, social mobility is likely to have decreased from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century, when the shortage of clergy was replaced by overproduction. In sixteenth-century Sweden, only 10% of the students were sons of pastors, while in the following century 30% were. There was thus an increasing tendency towards recruitment within the class, a tendency that was strengthened by the less encouraging prospects for future clergymen. In this way, recruitment worked in the same direction as professional education. A well-educated, non-celibate clergy with more wealth and higher general esteem than the old clergy, to an increasing degree recruited within its own ranks, became an important element in the new class of officials, which was to play a prominent part in the future history of the Nordic countries.

The ups and downs in the numbers of students at foreign universities follow approximately the same curve in Denmark and Sweden: a very low number immediately after the Reformation, then a rise, with a climax in Denmark in the 1590s and in Sweden 1611–20, a significant decline in the 1620s, fairly constant until c. 1650, a new rise and then a decline towards the end of the century. Although students from the Nordic countries continued to go abroad during the following century, their number was considerably lower. The seventeenth century, and above all its first half, is the great period of Nordic students at foreign universities, their number probably being higher than at any other period before our own time.

We have tried to some extent to explain the rise in numbers. To account for the decline, we shall probably have to use different explanations for different periods. For the period 1620–50 the Thirty Years War is the obvious explanation. In addition, in the case of Sweden, the 1620s was the great break-through for the University of Uppsala, which may imply that the total number of students did not drop, only the number abroad. The same explanation may perhaps apply to Denmark. The earlier drop in Denmark, shortly after 1600, is, however, probably not explained in the same way, neither is the general tendency over most of Europe

⁶⁴ Helk, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 42–43.

for the student explosion to be followed by a recession, the change usually taking place during the first half of the century. This is most likely to be explained from changing conjunctures, the seemingly endless demand for educated personnel, above all clergy, of the previous period being satisfied. But when the downward trend of the second half of the seventeenth century did not turn in the following period, the explanation must be sought in structural changes. Over most of Europe, the period of growth c. 1550–1650 was followed by a period of decline, both in number of students and in the general esteem and intellectual importance of the universities, a period which lasted until the next great epoch in the history of the European universities in the nineteenth century. In his discussion of England, Lawrence Stone suggests several explanations for this:⁶⁶ The upper or middle classes were closing their ranks to newcomers and were monopolizing offices, above all in the Church. For the upper classes, alternative forms of education gave the universities increasing competition, while at the same time the ideal of the scholarly gentleman was replaced by the ideal of “the man of quality” with social grace and good manners and a more superficial learning. Naturally, we cannot apply these explanations directly to the Nordic countries. The bureaucracy was a much more important element in the state on the Continent, including the Nordic countries, than in England, and its education accordingly played a more prominent part. Furthermore, what is to be explained in our case is not the decline in university students as such, but a decline in students at the universities abroad. Still, Professor Stone’s suggestions may be well worth testing for the Nordic countries as well. In addition, another explanation may be suggested, under which some of Professor Stone’s may be subsumed, namely a new relationship between education and profession. In its later phases, the process of bureaucratization led to increasing specialization, which the universities were no longer able to satisfy. Young nobles may have preferred military and naval academies, academies for nobles—Sorø Academy in Denmark (founded 1623) was directly intended as a substitution for universities abroad—or simply practical experience combined with “non-academic” travels abroad. Advanced research and partly even education in the new sciences was conducted at independent institutions, e.g. the Royal Society in England and l’Academie des Sciences in France, both founded in the seventeenth century.⁶⁷ And when professional education was left to the universities, like the study of theology and later of law in the Nordic countries, more specific demands from the authorities of the country as to the contents of the education may have made it increasingly difficult for graduates from foreign universities to be accepted.

In this perspective, the great university boom of the seventeenth century is the climax of the medieval university movement. The university of this period still represented the common, learned culture which members of the governing elite were supposed to acquire. Increasing bureaucratization led to an increase in this elite

⁶⁶ Stone, *op. cit.*, pp. 37–59.

⁶⁷ On the emergence of a professional education, above all of technical personnel, in France and Prussia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see W. Fischer and P. Lundgreen, “The Recruitment of Administrative Personnel”, *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, edited by C. Tilly (Princeton, 1975), pp. 546–61.

and a corresponding increase in the number of students. But in the long run, this same process resulted in professional education being substituted for common culture, and consequently in other institutions taking over a considerable part of the function of the universities.

Conclusion

We have examined the links that were formed between the Nordic countries and the intellectual centres of Western Christendom over a period of c. 500 years, from the rise of the Church as an independent power in the twelfth century till the first phase in the consolidation of the early modern State in the mid-seventeenth century. When looking at this period as a whole, one is first and foremost struck by the great degree of continuity. The university model that emerged from the great period of scholasticism in the thirteenth century continued to exist with relatively small changes until the seventeenth century, and the relationship between university and society was in certain important aspects the same: University education was certainly important for people seeking office in Church or State, but it was not professional education. University studies were part of the assimilation of the political and administrative elite into a common culture. What the Nordic students brought home with them, was therefore first and foremost this common culture.

Despite this essential continuity, the great changes that took place in Western political, ecclesiastical and intellectual history and in the relationship between the Nordic countries certainly affected university studies. These changes may be summarized as follows.

First, there was a shift in the political, economic and cultural importance of the Nordic countries from west to east, starting with the rise of Sweden in the late thirteenth century and continuing with the growing importance of Finland in the Late Middle Ages, together with the decline of Norway and Iceland. From the fifteenth century onwards, the North was dominated both in the political and the cultural field by the two great powers, Denmark and Sweden. Although we lack direct evidence in this field, the number of students from these countries c. 1500 may well have been higher than during the previous period, at least relatively, and there may well have been a "democratization" in the sense that even more humble posts in society were filled by university educated personnel.

Second, this shift was accompanied by a similar shift from west to east in the direction of the university journeys. After 1350 most Nordic students went to the new German universities, and the Nordic countries became a part of the German cultural sphere. This change is thus a medieval phenomenon, for which the Reformation of the sixteenth century was of no importance. Quite the contrary, it did not even break the contacts to countries outside Germany that still existed, as is evident from the relative importance of travels to non-Lutheran universities in the Netherlands, France and Italy during the seventeenth century. Nor did it lead to any radical break with the medieval model of a university.

Still, the Reformation did introduce great changes, in two fields. The suppression of the old Church led to a corresponding rise in the wealth and power of the State,

which now became the main “consumer” of university educated personnel, for its growing administration. The nobility monopolized the higher posts in this administration, but was at the same time met with growing demands to international experience and theoretical education, which led to an increasing number of noble students, as part of the “student explosion” of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. This “explosion” was, however, first and foremost caused by the higher demands on the education of the ordinary clergy, which also modified university education in a more professional direction. This clergy then became an important element in the new middle class of professional civil servants, while its education set a pattern for the education of other civil servants as well. In this way, the growth of bureaucratic administration which had led to the student explosion of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, came in the long run to cause the decline of the medieval model of the university as the centre of an international learned culture.