

## Trade and Transaction. How to become a Canon – and finance a Chapter – in Norway in the 15th and 16th Centuries.

This article concentrates on the late medieval cathedral chapter and the canons of the archdiocese of Nidaros in Norway, and it will shed light on the close connection between the members of the cathedral chapter and the stockfish trade. The archdiocese included in the late medieval period the whole of today's northern Norway, a vast area with limited surplus from agricultural products but all the more with an abundance of maritime resources, in particular the Arctic cod. The cathedral chapter in Nidaros had obtained *ius patronatus* to a large amount of the northern parishes in the archdiocese, and thus the canons, as titular parish priests to these parishes, made substantial profits from their land rent and in particular, their fish tithes income. Many of these parishes, in Norwegian called *kannikgjeld* were perpetuated as *praebendae parochiales*, belonging to certain positions in the chapter, and these benefices in the fish-abundant north generated in many instances more income for each canon, than their ordinary altar prebends in the cathedral built-up by land rent. In addition, some of the canons seem to have been operating, either as facilitators, intermediaries or as acting tradesmen themselves, in the reselling of the dried cod, the *stockfish*, in the lucrative export trade through the Hanseatic Office at Bryggen in Bergen. In this trade and the economic and social networks that developed around it, we can get a glimpse of how the local elites along the coast were able to *canonize themselves*, i.e. to pursue higher ecclesiastical careers.

### The Nidaros Archdiocese

The province of Nidaros dates back to 1152 or 53, when the cardinal and papal legate Nicolaus Brekespear – later pope Hadrian IV – came north to establish the archbishop's see in Nidaros. Before that, the diocese of Nidaros and the other Norwegian dioceses were subject to Hamburg-Bremen (until 1104) and then Lund (until 1152). During the next 150 years, Nidaros was tied stronger to the Roman curia, and the church in Norway could no longer bear the impress of being a mission church under strong royal and secular influence.<sup>1</sup> The secular cathedral chapters of Norway developed rapidly in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and the

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<sup>1</sup> Margit HÜBERT, Nogen undersøkelser om de norske domkapitlers væsentlig indtil 1450. Avhandlinger fra Universitetets historiske seminar, Kristiania 1922, p. 17.

institutions became more and more independent from the bishops as well.<sup>2</sup> This we see clearly in the two main controversies over jurisdiction and power in the province around 1300. Both in the diocese of Stavanger and in the archdiocese, parts of the disputes were evolving around the question whether privileges and gifts given by one bishop to his chapter, were “in perpetuum” and binding also for the succeeding bishop.<sup>3</sup> Certainly a type of dispute not unknown to other provinces in Catholic Europe in this period.<sup>4</sup>

The even more typical jurisdictional conflict within the church – the question of the papal provisional rights – also hit Nidaros from time to time, not only when appointing new bishops, but also in matters about canons and their benefices. There were also, of course, disagreement *within* the chapter, when the canons tried to use the curia and the pope’s provisional rights to get their hands on vacant or certain profitable benefices.<sup>5</sup>

The chapter in Nidaros was established with a dean already in 1152/53, but it is uncertain if there ever was one in the first centuries – we hear nothing more of the dean, before he was re-established as the head of the chapter in 1419.<sup>6</sup> From then the dean was the de facto leader of the chapter, and scholars have argued that prior to the changes initiated by the Reformation, the Nidaros chapter was the only Norwegian chapter with a real *dignitas* – a leader with independent clerical jurisdiction.<sup>7</sup> In a letter to the pope from 1523, the dean’s duties and privileges were thoroughly listed. He was determined to reside at the chapter at all times – whereas the other canons had a rotation system where they had to reside and be present to do choir service in the cathedral at certain periods. It seems like the dean was given wide and practically full authority as second-in-command in the diocese, when the archbishop was not present.<sup>8</sup> In spite of some clashes now and then, the main picture in the

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<sup>2</sup> HÜBERT Nogen undersøkelser, p. 62.

<sup>3</sup> Lars HAMRE, Striden mellom erkebiskop Jørund og domkapitlet i Nidaros, in: *Ecclesia Nidrosiensis 1153–1537. Søkelys på Nidaroskirkens og Nidarosprovinsens historie*, ed. by Steinar IMSEN, Trondheim 2003, p. 187–213; Geir Atle ERSLAND, *Stavanger bys historie vol 1: Bispeby og borgarby – frå opphavet til 1815*, Stavanger 2012, p. 133–141; Hilde INNTJØRE, *Kirkeorganisasjonen i Stavanger bispedømme ca. 1250–1500*. PhD Diss. in History, University of Bergen 2018, p. 63–113.

<sup>4</sup> Lars HAMRE, Art. „Kannikgjeld“, in: *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingetid til reformasjonstid*, vol. 21 (1977), col. 228.

<sup>5</sup> HÜBERT Nogen undersøkelser, p. 74; Sigrun Høgetveit BERG, *Trondenes kannikgjeld – makt og rikdom gjennom seinmiddelalder og reformasjon*. PhD Diss. in History, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø 2014, p. 197–207.

<sup>6</sup> *DN XVII-386*, 1419.

<sup>7</sup> HÜBERT Nogen undersøkelser, p. 27–29, 42f, 85f.

<sup>8</sup> *DN VII-566*, 1523; HÜBERT Nogen undersøkelser, p. 26.

late medieval period, is of a chapter and an archbishop that cooperated well.

#### How was the Chapter established and financed?

In the earliest period, it is unclear how the Nidaros chapter was organized.<sup>9</sup> In Norway, only the statutes of the Oslo chapter are known from the sources.<sup>10</sup> But the development of the chapters was of course determined by several factors – they emerged in cooperation and conflict with the bishop, the curia and secular authorities, but very often the most determining factor was the economy. How to establish and sustain the members of the chapter?

Already early in the 13th century the Nidaros chapter must have had some common property, and in 1253 we learn that the Archbishop Sørle gave a considerable contribution to their *mensa communis* consisting of the fabrica tithes from four nearby churches. He argues specifically that the chapter needed more income than what their prebends gave them – what they had was barely worthy a metropolitan chapter.<sup>11</sup> Later, this *mensa communis* was extended with more fabrica tithes, new prebends, other gifts and fees.<sup>12</sup>

However, what really extended the canons' income potential in Nidaros in the late medieval period was the large number of *kannikgjeld* (in German *Pfarrpfründen*), that were directly attached to the chapter in this diocese.<sup>13</sup> The first ones originated in the 13th century, but most of them seemed to have been established as a necessary re-structuring of the diocese after the population – and thus the income potential for estate owners and tithe holders – dropped after the Black Death hit hard in the mid-14th century.

In the beginning, the income from the various *kannikgjeld* probably went to the *mensa communis*, while from at least the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards the canons appointed themselves as titular parish priests to these parishes. In that way they were getting the income but were

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<sup>9</sup> In the late 15th century, the Nidaros chapter appear somewhat as midwives for the emerging chapter in Turku in Finland, giving them copies of how they organized their *mensa communis* in Nidaros – since this was "commonly well-recognized" according to the Turku chapter. We know of this from correspondence between the chapters (*DN* XVIII-124–126, 129–131, 1493), but the actual fundas from Nidaros is not preserved.

<sup>10</sup> ERSLAND Stavanger, p. 92–97; HÜBERT Nogen undersøkelser, p. 43.

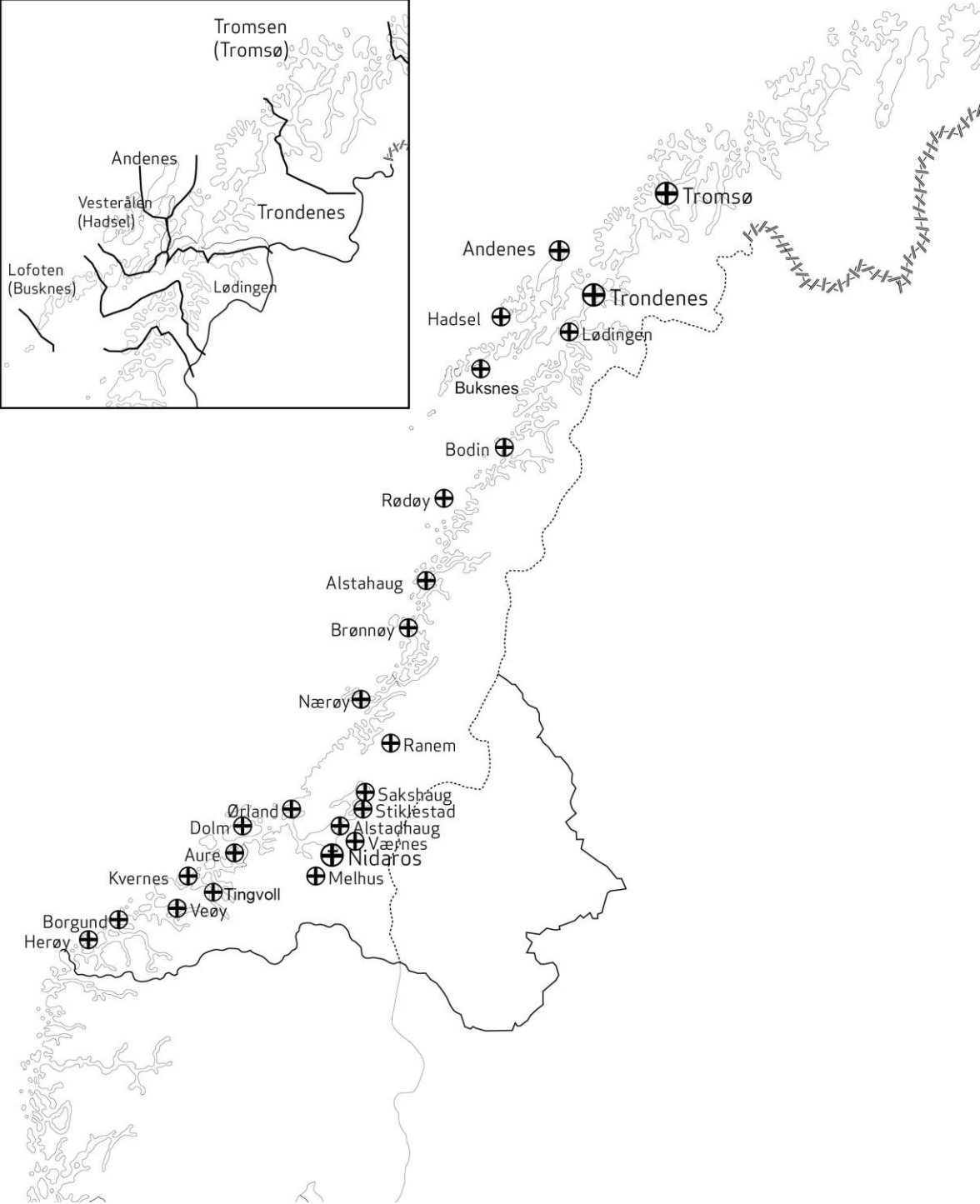
<sup>11</sup> *DN* III-4, 1253; *DN* II-9, 1252; HÜBERT Nogen undersøkelser, p. 93.

<sup>12</sup> *DN* 1-61, 1267; DYBDAHL Nidaros erkesetes økonomi, in: *Ecclesia Nidrosiensis 1153–1537. Søkelys på Nidaroskirkens og Nidarosprovinsens historie*, ed. by Steinar IMSÉN, Trondheim 2003, p. 280–281.

<sup>13</sup> HAMRE *Kannikgjeld*, p. 228.

also responsible for the churches and the *cura animarum* and had to pay the vicars and chaplains to do the daily work in the parishes.

Figure 1 – kannikgjeld in Nidaros archdiocese



There were some *kannikgjeld* in other dioceses as well, but at least in Norway, we hear of few – and they were predominantly located close to the cathedral in the diocese.<sup>14</sup> In Nidaros, there were more than 20 all around the diocese, some more ordinary sized parishes with 3–5 churches, but several of them were merged into extensive entities, covering up to 14 churches, like Trondenes, Tromsø, Vesterålen and Lofoten. (See Figure 1.) These were prosperous vocations, and through the late medieval period they were all perpetuated with the leading prelatures in the chapter.

In Norway, the tithes were divided into four parts; one for the bishop, one for the parish priest (*mensa*), one for the church (*fabrica*) and one for the poor in the parish (the so-called *bondelut*). At least in the biggest *kannikgjeld*, like Trondenes held by the dean and Vesterålen held by the archdeacon, the canon seem to be getting the income from *both* the mensa and the fabrica part of the tithes, while in ordinary parishes, the fabrica tithes were collected and administered by the lay church warden. In other words, these particular parishes were an extremely valuable part of the canons' income, and in Nidaros, unlike anywhere else in Denmark-Norway, this way of organizing and financing the canons in the chapter survived the royal take over of the Norwegian Catholic Church in the Reformation in 1536/37. (The king, however, seized the archbishop's properties and his part of the tithes. See Figure 2.) The *kannikgjeld* stayed on as the main income source for the upper clergy; the superintendent (the Lutheran bishop) and the canons in the Lutheran chapter. This in turn made the Nidaros/Trondheim<sup>15</sup> chapter into a fairly strong entity the rest of the sixteenth century – and it was a specific northern feature with Catholic remnants within the new, centralized Lutheran Danish-Norwegian state which was run from Copenhagen.<sup>16</sup>

Figure 2 – Fish tithes and land rent from the four major *kannikgjeld*.

Kannikgjeld (the canon's position/prelature at the chapter in brackets)	King <sup>17</sup> 1567		Canon 1589	
	Fish tithes	Land rent	Fish tithes	Land rent

<sup>14</sup> HÜBERT Nogen undersøkelser, p. 89; INNTJORE Kirkeorganisasjonen, p. 142–143.

<sup>15</sup> The Catholic archdiocese was called Nidaros, while the Lutheran diocese was called Trondheim. The name of the city changed gradually from Nidaros to Trondheim during the late medieval and early modern period.

<sup>16</sup> Sigrun Høgetveit BERG, Dei nordnorske kannikgjelda, in: Ottar 317/4 (2017), p. 4–10; Magne NJÅSTAD, Kompetanse og kontinuitet, in: Nidaros erkebispedet i seinmiddelalderen – et kultursentrum? Ed. by Øystein EKROLL and Erik OPSAHL, Oslo 2018, p. 61–78.

<sup>17</sup> Formerly the archbishop's land rent and part of the tithes.

<b>Trondenes</b> (the dean at the chapter)	249 v	131 v	583 v	164 v
<b>Tromsø</b> (the parish priest at the cathedral)	66 v	17 v	260 v	28 v
<b>Vesterålen</b> (the archdeacon at the chapter)	54 v	89 v	100 v	148 v
<b>Lofoten</b> (the chaplain at the cathedral)	392 v	78 v	200 v	36 v
<b>Total</b>	761 v	315 v	1143 v	376 v

v = *våg* fish. One *våg* equals 18,5 kilo stockfish (dried fish). At the Bryggen in Bergen the average exchange ratio was 3 kilos of rye flour per 1 kilo of stockfish in the first half of the 16th century, and 2 kilos of rye per 1 kilo stockfish in the second half of the 16th century. (NEDKVITNE 2013, p. 506.) There are no systematic registers of the income from these *kannikgjeld* until after the Reformation. Even if these figures above show mid/late sixteenth century income level, they mirror the late fifteenth/early sixteenth pre-Reformation situation fairly well. (BERG 2020, p. 39.)

### How many Canons did service in Nidaros?

In the Nidaros chapter's expansion period in the 13th century, when the Nidaros church rose to power, wealth and strength in cooperation and negotiation with the expanding reign of the kings Håkon IV Håkonsson and Magnus VI Håkonsson, there were between 12 and 15 canons. By the time of the Reformation, the number had risen to 20 in 1540 – each with their own parish as their income, in addition to their income from the prebends in the cathedral and their part of the mensa communis.<sup>18</sup> The chapter could appoint new canons together with the archbishop when positions became vacant, and the increase in the number of canons through the late medieval period must reflect an expanding activity in Nidaros.<sup>19</sup>

The cathedral was a popular pilgrim church, with the body and shrine of St Olav, and after the Archbishop Aslak Bolt's renewal and revitalization of the archbishop's see from the 1430s, Nidaros had the cultural strength and the economic power to expand both the archbishop's and the chapter's political influence. From Aslak Bolt and onwards, the archbishop was the de facto leader of the Norwegian Council of the Realm. Norway was in a personal union with Denmark, with the union king seated in Copenhagen, definitely most interested in the relations to Sweden and the constant challenge from the North German towns in the Baltic sea. This national and international political role of the archbishop on the

<sup>18</sup> DN XII-597, 1540.

<sup>19</sup> HÜBERT Nogen undersøkelser, p. 44, 60; DYBDAHL Nidaros.

Council of the Realm left the canons at the chapter with more responsibility and duties in Nidaros – and more room to pursue their own interests.<sup>20</sup>

In the rotation system at the cathedral at least 12 of the canons had to be present at all times. In the periods they didn't reside in Nidaros, they were not entitled to any part of the *mensa communis*. They needed permission from the archbishop to be away, and lawful absence was study leave, diplomatic missions, sickness – and they could attend their *kannikgjeld*. Apparently, the lack of *mensa communis*-income didn't hurt too much, since a growing number of sources in the late 15th and the 16th centuries report on canons being criticised for not being sufficiently present in Nidaros.<sup>21</sup>

### Admission Requirements

We know nothing of the admission requirements for the canons at the chapter in Nidaros, but they were ordained clerics and the majority had education beyond the introductory schooling at the cathedral schools. In the late medieval period, we can trace some of them in the rolls of Northern European universities; Cologne, Erfurt, Greifswald, Leipzig, Leuven, Rostock – and Prague, Orléans and Paris.<sup>22</sup> For most Norwegians these universities were far away and pursuing a university degree was a costly business. The chapter and the archbishop regularly complained about the cost and the distance one had to travel for both educational and diplomatic reasons, and they did in some instances pay collectively for their members to get their education, by letting them keep their prebend income when they were away and paid their vicars at home.<sup>23</sup> However, when closer universities in Uppsala and Copenhagen were established in 1477 and 1479, the university rolls show that none of these were attractive for Norwegian students – they still went further south, to well-established, primarily German, universities.<sup>24</sup> The cost was still high, and most of the studying clerics confined themselves with a lower or higher degree within the *artes*.<sup>25</sup> King Christian I proposed for the pope in 1474 that all the canons and the bishops in his realms had to be

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<sup>20</sup> BERG *Dei nordnorske*, p. 4–6; NJÅSTAD *Kompetanse*.

<sup>21</sup> BERG *Trondenes*, p. 259.

<sup>22</sup> HÜBERT *Nogle undersøkelser*, p. 46–48; Oluf KOLSRUD, *Preteutdaningi i Noreg, Norvegia Sacra*, vol. 21, Oslo, p. 42–45; Sverre BAGGE, *Nordic Students at Foreign Universities*, in: *Scandinavian Journal of History* 9 (1984), p. 1–29.

<sup>23</sup> HÜBERT *Nogle undersøkelser*, p. 49; BAGGE *Nordic*, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> KOLSRUD *Preteutdaningi*, p. 47; Arnold OTTO, *A Matter of the Learned: Ways of Reformation Knowledge from Germany to the North*, in: *The Protracted Reformation in the North. Vol 3*, ed. by Sigrun Høgetveit BERG, Rognald H. BERGESEN and Roald E. KRISTIANSEN, Berlin 2020, p. 11–33.

<sup>25</sup> KOLSRUD *Preteutdaningi*, p. 48.

either nobles or *doctores*, but did not succeed.<sup>26</sup> The Norwegian canons were neither predominantly nobles, nor professors.<sup>27</sup>

However, we do see a lot of dispensations from the canonical clerical demands when it comes to age and illegitimate birth. In 1400, the Pope Boniface IX granted dispensation and appointed the 12-year-old Guttorm Eivindsson, a *scolari*, a schoolboy, from Oslo as canon with prebends and reserved the *kannikgjeld* of Hadsel main church and its many annexed churches in northern Norway as his benefice.<sup>28</sup> The vocation was vacant after Håkon Ivarsson, who was provisioned to be bishop in Stavanger. This appointment was in obvious opposition to what the archbishop and the chapter preferred, and the reservation bulla of March 23 in 1400 explicitly forbids the archbishop, the chapter and "anybody else with any claims" to do any other disposition in this matter. The next year, however, Pope Boniface provides *another* canon in Nidaros, Werner Hermansson, with the same Hadsel church.<sup>29</sup> No mention of the 12-year-old Guttorm in this document. We do not know what has happened, but it might have been an example of conflicting procedures and differences in what type of document from which part of the provisional process that has survived in our archives, as Kirsi Salonen has elaborated on in her article in this volume. It might (also) be that, after all, the first provision was a bit too much for the 12-year-old Guttorm to handle. In other words, his patrons, who must have promoted Guttorm's candidacy, didn't have too strong a case when Werner entered the scene. It is noteworthy that Werner had been appointed papal chaplain two weeks earlier, *capellanus honoris*, and was thus exempt any other jurisdiction than his own and the papal chamberlain, the *camerarius*.<sup>30</sup> If this case shows a trace of conflict between different interests within the chapter of Nidaros, and not only a reasonable revision of a premature appointment of the 12-year-old Guttorm, one definitely must assume that the papal chaplain Werner had the upper hand.

#### What do we know about the Canons of Nidaros?

But who were these canons, apart from Guttorm and Werner? The prosopographic source material is very scarce. We do not meet the canons in any systematic registers or rolls or

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<sup>26</sup> *NgL* 2. r., II: 626; KOLSRUD *Preteutdaningi*, p. 52–53.

<sup>27</sup> BAGGE *Nordic*, p. 16.

<sup>28</sup> *DN* XVII-201, 1400. Probably, the appointment was meant to finance Guttorm's studies, Kolsrud argues (*Preteutdaningi*, p. 33). Hadsel is Vesterålen, cf Fig. 1.

<sup>29</sup> *DN* XVII-212, 1401.

<sup>30</sup> *DN* XVII-952, 1401.



chapter books, but in scattered diplomas, letters, receipts and witness declarations where one or several canons have some sort of role in the matter at stake.

We have got names, first names and patronyms, but very seldom any information about where they come from geographically, apart from their names that indicate that they were mainly Norwegians. As mentioned, there are no indications of any systematic recruitment of nobles to the Nidaros chapter, or other Norwegian chapters. On the contrary, the canons seem to have been recruited from the same social strata as the rest of the clergy, that is the upper level of the rural and urban societies, and there was no sharp line between high and low.<sup>31</sup>

Not surprisingly, some of the canons in Nidaros were related to each other. Fathers and sons – yet another example of celibacy being hard to implement – brothers, uncles, nephews, cousins and in-laws. A well-documented example is the family of Saxe Gunnarsson, the dean of the Nidaros chapter from 1492 until 1506.

Saxe was educated magister in Rostock in 1477 and was already a canon in Nidaros when he was appointed dean in 1492 – chosen by the chapter, confirmed by the pope. As dean, his main income was the *kannikgjeld* of Trondenes, the most prosperous of all the parishes in the archdiocese (cf Figure 2). In 1500 we meet him in Rome, pleading his case for the Pope Alexander VI. The year before he had been deprived of Trondenes by the pope, on accusations of economic irregularities, and another canon at the chapter, Philip Ingemarsson, was granted Trondenes. But Saxe must have argued well in Rome, and in several papal letters from late 1500, Saxe got reassurance from the pope that Trondenes would still be provided him.<sup>32</sup> In one of these letters Saxe emphasized that the parish of Trondenes lies on the edge of the Christian world, near to the schismatic Russians (*rutenorum scismaticorum infidelium*) and the heathen Sámi (*laponos homines pleni magicis artibus*), who are filled with magic arts, and thus bring great harm upon Christians. Therefore, he argued, it was of vital importance that the parish had an educated and wise man, like himself, who could withstand their delusions and teach them the true Christian faith.

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<sup>31</sup> HÜBERT Nogle undersøkelser, p. 60; BAGGE Nordic, p. 16.

<sup>32</sup> DN XVII-766, 1499, 785–787, 1500; BERG Trondenes, p. 197–207.

In what way Saxe met this challenge he gave himself, when he won back Trondenes, we do not know, and the whole question of how the Catholic Church regarded the ethnic and religious *others* in this area (i.e. the Sámi, the Russians, the Karelians), is extremely interesting – but not within the scope of this paper. The main point here is that Saxe *knew* this area, even if it was far away up north, because he had familiar interests there. His brother Engelbrekt lived at Trondenes, while his other brother, Aslak, lived at Andenes, one of the biggest fishing stations of the North in the sixteenth century and also a *kannikgjeld* (cf. Figure 1). They both belonged to the very elite of their local societies, captain of their own trade vessels shipping the stockfish southwards to Nidaros and the Hanseatic Office in Bergen. Their sons, Saxe's nephews, also engaged in this trade, and some went into service for the church and proceeded via university education to the higher clergy.

Most likely, one of Saxe's nephews was Olav Engelbrektsson, the last archbishop of Norway. Olav did also study in Rostock, and he was dean at the Nidaros chapter from 1515–1522, before he was elected archbishop. He kept nephews and cousins at his service in his household in Nidaros, and two of the canons and closest advisors in the chapter towards the end – that is, before the, for Olav and his system, devastating Reformation hit in 1536/37 – was Jens and Torbjørn Bratt, also relatives from Andenes. Olav's older brother, Gunnar, was a canon in Oslo, and another brother Aslak, at Trondenes, had his own vessel and was one of the richest men in Norway around 1520.<sup>33</sup> Aslak was also a *setesvein*, one of the archbishop's many local, lay stewards who attended his financial and administrative business around the country, and like most other *setesveinar*, he became burgher in Nidaros in 1535.<sup>34</sup>

It is by no means spectacular that the dean Saxe Gunnarsson and later the Archbishop Olav kept relatives in their service, but they also illustrate and personify the close connections between the clergy, the church and the chain of stockfish production and trade. The example shows the interwoven network of family, positions and resources in the parishes of the north and the chapter of Nidaros. And when Saxe argued his case before the pope with all sorts of ethnic and religious arguments, it is still likely that the financial argument was the one that mattered the most for Saxe. If not only out of concern for his personal income, the

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<sup>33</sup> Audun DYBDAHL, *Tiendpengeskatten som kilde til folk og samfunn ca. 1520*, Trondheim 2005, p. 51.

<sup>34</sup> BERG Trondenes, p. 229–230.

benefice of Trondenes, he might also have tried not to interrupt the prosperous networks of secular and ecclesiastical trade interests within the archdiocese.

### The Clerical Trade

The archbishop's church in Norway was big on trade, and had been so for a long time before Saxe and his family operated the northern shores. The decline of the Norwegian noble class in the late medieval period gave way for the church – in the trade business as well.<sup>35</sup> Even though the Hanseatic league dominated the foreign trade over Bergen in the late middle ages and connected Norway to their North-Atlantic and Baltic networks, the archbishop's engagement went both inland and abroad, to the White Sea in the east and southwards to Scotland, England, and the Netherlands. Several of the canons are also known to have had considerable personal trade interests and owned their own vessels.<sup>36</sup>

This trade involvement was not only accidental and sporadic. In Nidaros, the trade was put into an efficient system *within* the church organization in the late medieval period.<sup>37</sup> The chapter had their *kannikgjeld* around the diocese, and the archbishop had his *setesveinar*, almost 50 of them located in northern fishing stations.<sup>38</sup> The land rent, the tithes and fees were all paid mainly in dried fish, and the surplus of this could easily be redistributed and resold, as the stockfish was an excellent marketable commodity. Together the archbishop and the chapter matched their economic and political interests within the archdiocese with the metropolitan's ambitions for the province: To be a powerful national church, independent from both Rome and the Danish-Norwegian king. This economic strength made Nidaros the centre of what the Norwegian historian Øystein Rian has called "the Norwegian system" in the late medieval period. *Through* controlling the Council of the Realm (all the bishops were represented, and the archbishop was the leader), they were able to secure the rights of the church. The distant king, and a shrinking and increasingly less prominent native

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<sup>35</sup> Grethe Authén BLOM, Art. „Geistlighetens handel”, in: Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingetid til reformasjonstid, vol. 5 (1960), col. 232.

<sup>36</sup> DN II-468, 1381; RN VII-936, 1381; BLOM Geistlighetens, p. 233; Christian LYKKE, Aslak Bolt og erkesetets økonomi, Master's thesis in History, NTNU Trondheim 2000, p. 97, 101; Arnved NEDKVITNE, Utenrikshandelen fra det vestafjelske Norge 1100–1600, PhD Thesis in History, University of Oslo 1983, p. 296–304. The trade continued among the higher clergy after the Reformation, the superintendent (the Lutheran bishop) had his own vessel and the canons were repeatedly warned by the royal, county governor in Trondheim to stop meddling with the trade – the king was not pleased, he could inform them. (NLR 3: 185, 1563; DN XII-660, 1556.)

<sup>37</sup> LYKKE Aslak Bolt 2000; DYBDAHL Nidaros, p. 308–310.

<sup>38</sup> BERG Trondenes, p. 54.

nobility, left a void and a political space for the archbishop, his chapter and the rest of the church.

### Conclusion

In the north, in the archbishop's own diocese, this void made the church the most accessible way for ambitious families to rise. Being a part of the ecosystem of the stockfish trade – from the small fishing stations of the north, via Nidaros and Bergen and onto continental Europe – was a way for the local elites of the vast Nidaros Archdiocese to bring their sons into church service. And thus, further making the northerners able to *canonize themselves* in the closely tied secular and clerical family and kinship networks that – at least in some periods – were central in the Nidaros chapter and Archbishop's see. The *kannikgjeld* were geographically far away from Nidaros, but organizationally close. This made the distance from what seems to be the periphery of the north and into the heart of the Norwegian church, shorter.

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