

# **A Scene of Events: The Secular Use of Mendicant Friaries in Late Medieval Denmark**

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## **Introduction**

In 1432, during one of the numerous conflicts between the Danish King and the Hanseatic League, the antagonists met in the town of Horsens *in clauistro fratrum minorum in refectorio communi*<sup>1</sup> – the refectory in the Franciscan friary – to discuss different matters. The chosen location may seem special as the Danish King – Erik of Pomerania – had a large fortress just outside the town gates, and since the Franciscan friars were not directly involved in the king's war.

However, the incident is far from unique, and several medieval written sources offer insights into the secular use of the Danish mendicant houses. All the same, the architectural and archaeological source material from Denmark regarding the building culture of the mendicant orders is well preserved and researched acquainting us with a valuable insight into the structure, layout, and development of these ecclesiastical institutions. Thus, a comparative study of the written sources and the archaeological evidence can generate a new level of understanding to the social role of the mendicant orders.

It is the aim of this article to give an overview of the different characteristics of the secular use and compare this to the structural development of the mendicant houses in the Danish Middle Ages. First, it is however necessary to offer a brief survey of the mendicant orders in Denmark and some general aspects of their material culture.

## **Establishments of the mendicant orders in Denmark – an overview**

From the date of papal recognition and onwards, the mendicant orders spread quickly across a large part of Christian Europe. In Denmark, the Dominican friars arrived already in 1221, where they were given a house in the episcopal town of Lund. The Franciscans arrived some years later in 1232 and

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<sup>1</sup> *Regesta Diplomatica Historiæ Danicæ* 2 ser., I, no. 4973.

were given a house in the town of Ribe. During the next 50 years, the friars settled in most Danish towns of importance. After that, it was not until the fifteenth century that new mendicant houses were established and the country saw the coming of a third mendicant order, the Carmelites.<sup>2</sup>

By the time of the Reformation a total of 28 Franciscan, 19 Dominican and eight Carmelite friaries had been established; this amount constitutes approximately 40% of the total number of monastic establishments in the Danish Middle Ages, mirroring the great importance of mendicant monasticism in high and late medieval Denmark.<sup>3</sup>

Quite a few of these friaries are partially preserved today (often wielding a new function), and several are also known from archaeological excavations. Since the 1950s, large urban excavations have unearthed remains of numerous mendicant friaries, suggesting that the mendicant houses were far more complex institutions in regards to their plan arrangements and material culture than previously believed. However, most synthesising work was done in the early twentieth century, and the large amount of data accumulated after this point is still in a process of evaluation.<sup>4</sup>

### **The character of secular events**

Our primary sources regarding the character of the secular events are the written ones, which are preserved in a large number. In most cases it can be difficult to decipher whether or not an event took place within the actual friary or simply on friary grounds since phrases like “at the Dominicans” can have several possible meanings. In some cases more detailed accounts of actions and places are mentioned, and often phrases like “in the Franciscan Friary in the small room” indicate that the event took place within the building complex itself, despite not mentioning the exact location. In the following sections some different examples of secular events will be examined primarily on the basis of written sources.

#### **Political and juridical uses**

In the late medieval period, the royal court sessions are often mentioned to have taken place within different mendicant houses. The Danish realm was throughout the medieval period characterized by the travelling itinerant kingdom, and the royal household was therefore on continuous move. Despite the

<sup>2</sup> *Scriptores Minores Historiæ Danicæ Mediæ Ævi* vol. 2 (Copenhagen: Selskabet for Udgivelse af Kilder til dansk Historie, 1922), 293, 373.

<sup>3</sup> Vilhelm Lørczen, *De danske Franciskanerklostres Bygningshistorie* (Copenhagen: C. E. C. Gad, 1914); idem, *De danske Dominikanerklostres Bygningshistorie* (Copenhagen: C. E. C. Gad, 1920); idem, *De danske Karmeliterklostres Bygningshistorie* (Copenhagen: C. E. C. Gad, 1924).

<sup>4</sup> Olaf Olsen, “De danske middelalderklostres arkæologi”, *hikuin* 23 (1996): 18-19.

fact that the Danish Crown had numerous estates throughout the kingdom, several of the king's juridical acts for some reason took place within different mendicant friaries. King Christopher of Bavaria (1440-1448) held court in the Franciscan friary of Ribe in 1443, and his successors, King Christian I (1448-1481) and King Hans (1481-1513), held several royal courts in the Franciscan friary of Copenhagen and the Dominican friary of Odense. A source dating from 1504 even mentions King Hans having a dedicated courtroom in the Dominican friary of Odense.<sup>5</sup>

Not only the royal court sessions were held on friary grounds, but different political negotiations also took place within mendicant houses. In 1325, a dispute between a group of Danish noblemen and the German town of Kampen was settled in Wismar "at the Dominicans". Eskil Skaane, a friend and relative of the Danish noblemen, had been killed in Kampen and the town council of Wismar had agreed to mediate between the two parties. None of the friars were mentioned in the legal dispute – all business was settled between the Danish noblemen, the citizens of Kampen, and the Wismar town council.<sup>6</sup> Another example refers to one of the several conflicts involving the trade privileges of the Hanseatic League, which was resolved between the English king and the representatives of the League in a Dominican friary in London.<sup>7</sup>

In the examples mentioned above, the friars themselves are very anonymous which probably was quite common. All actions are merely the work of people from outside the friary, albeit there are examples of the friars themselves actively taking part in whatever political argument or dispute their convents accommodated. In the Holy Roman Empire, there are numerous examples of friars being involved in politics and even imperial elections are known to have taken place within friary walls. In Denmark, it is clear that the friars themselves sometimes participated in the ongoing political turmoil and especially during the conflict between Church and Crown in the thirteenth century, the friars actively took part on both sides. The Dominican friars in Aarhus sided with the king's party resulting in excommunication. This however did not prevent the friars from hosting the provincial chapter of all Nordic Dominicans in 1272.<sup>8</sup>

## Death, burial and commemoration

From an archaeological perspective, the most striking evidence for actions of a religious connotation is the large amount of burials within the friary precinct. Archaeological excavations in several friaries have encountered burials at

<sup>5</sup> *Repertorium Diplomaticum Regni Danici Medievalis* 2 ser., no.s 3603, 3939, 8010b, 10181, 10262, 11057.

<sup>6</sup> *Diplomatarium Danicum* 2. ser., IX, no. 200.

<sup>7</sup> *Diplomatarium Danicum* 4. ser., I, no. 555.

<sup>8</sup> John B. Freed, *The Friars and the German Society in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Medieval Academy of America, 1977), 135-38; Kjeld de Fine Licht et al., ed., *Danmarks Kirker. Århus Amt*, vol. 3 (Copenhagen: Nationalmuseet, 1976), 1004.

very different locations. A friary churchyard is often known, but burials also appear within the church and in particular in the cloister walks and garth. Despite being the foci of several archaeological excavations, there are still many questions in relation to the social structure of burials on the friary precinct: Who was buried where?

The friary churchyard was probably used by the laity. Written sources suggest this, and also the sheer amount of burials compared with the intensive use of the cemetery indicates that it hardly were the friars themselves who were laid to rest there. Since the mendicant houses were independent ecclesiastical institutions, they had no parish affiliated and thus no obligations regarding burial. Consequently, the burials on the lay cemetery are interpreted as referring to people coming from the outside world who actively sought the friary as a place of burial. Morphological analyses of the bone material on the lay cemetery of the friary in Svendborg clearly show that the deceased had a very different place of origin compared to those individuals buried on the local parish graveyard in Svendborg.<sup>9</sup>

More interesting are however the burials within the actual building complex. The actual church space was sometimes used for burial, and to some extent it is probably the same tendency as known from the churchyard that people from the outside world had bought a burial place within the friary church. In Svendborg, Duke Abel Abelsen was buried within the chancel in 1279, and excavations in the same place have unearthed brick built burials of the late Romanesque or early Gothic period.<sup>10</sup>

Places, which in particular appear to have been sought, are the cloister walks and garth; several burials in this particular area have been investigated at numerous sites (fig. 1). Earlier research tended at interpreting these burials as of the actual friars, however the amount of women and children among the deceased suggest that they are likely people from the outside world. The interpretation of the burials in the cloister walks as the remains of the friars themselves has in some cases proven difficult to be reinterpreted. In the Dominican friary of Schleswig the large number of women and children among the deceased was suggested to be the result of the moral decline of the late medieval period when the friars supposedly fathered several children with their concubines.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Hans Krongaard Kristensen, *The Franciscan Friary of Svendborg* (Svendborg: Svendborg County Museum, 1994), 85-98; Vicki Rytøft Lillegaard Kristensen, *Svendborgs middelalderbefolkning. Morfologiske afvigelser på to kirkegårde* (Højbjerg: Middelalder-arkæologisk Nybedsbrev, 2012), 27-28.

<sup>10</sup> Krongaard Kristensen, *The Franciscan Friary of Svendborg*, 62-65.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Caselitz, "Die menschlichen Skelettreste aus dem Dominikanerkloster zu Schleswig", *Ausgrabungen in Schleswig. Berichte und Studien* 1 (1983): 126.



Fig. 1: The cloister walk in the Dominican friary of Ribe is among the few still preserved Danish examples. Through several excavations, it has become evident that the (inner) cloister was intensively used as public burial place during the medieval period. Photo: ML 2010.

From written sources we can gain some knowledge as to which social classes were buried within the friary precinct. It was quite common for the guilds in some Danish towns to have an actual burial arrangement with the mendicant friars. In 1516, the shoemakers' guild in Odense even got a specific part of the friary churchyard reserved for their members defined as the area south west of the main portal of the church.<sup>12</sup> The nobility may also have found their final resting place within the friary precinct as suggested by a few written sources; however the material is scant.

The royal family also found the friaries to be attractive burial places. King Erik Plovpenning (1241-1250) was first laid to rest in the Dominican friary of Schleswig after being murdered by his own brother and successor Abel.<sup>13</sup> The king's bones were later moved to Ringsted, where his father and kin rested. King Erik Klipping (1259-1286) supposedly had an interest in being buried in

<sup>12</sup> *Danmarks Gilde- og Lavsskråer* vol. 2 (Copenhagen: Selskabet for Udgivelse af Kilder til dansk Historie, 1904), 374-75; Lars Bisgaard, "Begravelse i gilderegi i middelalderen", *hikuin* 27 (2000): 70-73.

<sup>13</sup> Deert Lafrenz, *Kirchen, Klöster und Hospitäler. Die Kunstdenkmäler der Stadt Schleswig* vol. III (Munich/Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1985), 300-01.

the Franciscan friary of Odense, albeit his body was interred in the cathedral of Viborg after he was murdered in 1286.<sup>14</sup>

One of the most extravagant burials on friary ground was the dedicated burial choir of the royal family established in the Franciscan friary of Odense during the reign of King Hans (1481-1513) and Queen Christine. The entire chancel of the church was refitted with new choir stalls for the friars, a large and lavishly decorated altar piece made by one of that time's finest sculptors Claus Berg, vaulted burial chambers, and series of plates and epitaphs commemorating the royal family and displaying the royal lineage of the king and queen. Both the king and queen along with some of their children were laid to rest here until the friary church was demolished in the early nineteenth century. However, it was not without problems. When King Hans died in 1513, the clergy at the cathedral of Roskilde claimed the rights to bury the king, since the late regent's father, Christian I, had established a burial chapel for the royal house of Oldenburg in Roskilde. The queen dowager however did not agree with the clergy in Roskilde, and petitioned the pope on the matter. Eventually she was granted the right to bury the King in Odense.<sup>15</sup> In a way, the refitting of the friary chancel was something more than establishing a burial. It was a memorial display with the objective of establishing a commemorative culture around the royal family.

This growing emphasis on commemorative acts could take different material form and despite not being buried within the friary, some noblemen or high standing citizens established annual masses to commemorate the deceased, and from several friary churches dedicated altars are known to have existed (fig. 2). – The late medieval friary church could take different architectural forms, however most predominant in Denmark is an asymmetrical two-aisled plan arrangement where the slightly smaller side-aisle gave space to altars and burials of people from the outside world (fig. 3).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Jørgen Nybo Rasmussen, *Peder Olsen som de danske franciskaneres historieskriver* (Copenhagen: Den Danske Historiske Forening, 1976), 70; Jens Vellev, "Den forsmøtte kongegrav", *Skalk* vol. 6 (1974): 10-15.

<sup>15</sup> Birgitte Bøggild Johannsen, "'Fore wor (...) siæle bestands og salighetz skild.' Om kongelige stiftelser og sjælegaver fra kong Hans' og dronning Christines tid," *Kirkehistoriske Samlinger* (1999): 7-50; Mogens Vedsø et al., ed., *Danmarks Kirker. Odense Amt*, vol. 3 (Copenhagen: Nationalmuseet, 2001), 1771-72.

<sup>16</sup> Otto Graf, "Klassifikationsprobleme der Bettelordensarchitektur," Univ. Diss. (Stuttgart, 1995), 195-205; Wolfgang Schenkluhn, *Architektur der Bettelorden* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2000), 136; Vilhelm Lorenzen, "Toskibede Kirker i Danmark," *Architekten* 6 (1904): 477-83; idem, "Franciskanerkirker i Danmark," *Kirkehistoriske Samlinger* (1904): 372-99.



Fig. 2: On the chancel walls of several friary churches, the coat of arms of nobles who established annual masses to pray for and commemorate them were painted. In the same way as different noble lineages in the early medieval period established monasteries in their family name, the noblemen and bourgeoisie of the late Middle Ages established the same memorial cult based on the mendicant churches. The shown example is from the Dominican church in Aarhus, the frescoes dating primarily from the fifteenth century. Photo: ML 2010.

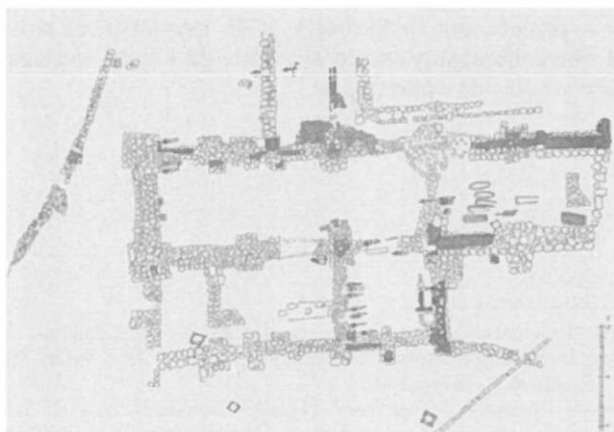


Fig. 3: Plan of the Franciscan church of Næstved, excavated in the 1950s. The church has a complicated buildings history, dating from the foundation in the thirteenth century until its demolition in the sixteenth century. In the course of the late Middle Ages a side-aisle with different smaller chapels was erected, hence giving the church its characteristic asymmetrical plan arrangement. From: Erik Skov, "Næstved gråbrødre kloster", *Nationalmuseets Arbejdsmark* (1959): 59.

## Acts of charity and piety

In the household accounts of Queen Christine, dating from the first half of the sixteenth century, several entries mention the donation of alms to the poor. The pious queen lived most of her life (especially after her husband's death in 1513) at Næsbyhoved Castle outside Odense, and thus several of her donations went to the mendicant establishments in Odense, in particular the Franciscans which she greatly favoured. Her household accounts – besides mentioning several donations to the town's mendicant brethren – often refer to the donation of alms to poor people, and in several cases this took place on the Franciscan friary churchyard or within the actual friary itself.<sup>17</sup>

## Setting the scene – the structuring of a building complex

In regard to the internal structure and layout of a friary complex, it is interesting how the friars coped with these public activities whilst at the same time upholding the functions of an ecclesiastical institution ruled by different monastic constitutions and following a distinct way of life. The urban friaries were probably characterised by a distinct spatial structure that took these problems into consideration.

Space can be acknowledged as a social construct, which to some degree mirrors itself in material culture. Space is not just something that exists – it is actively made and defined by someone with a purpose, and vice versa experienced and perceived by someone. It can be either present as a manifest material thing (i.e., a room surrounded by walls), or defined by social or cognitive boundaries that leave no future material evidence for us to examine.<sup>18</sup> Despite neither written nor archaeological sources reveal the full extent of secular activities in the friaries precincts, they still contain valuable information regarding the architecture and structure of space in Danish friaries. In this case, it is interesting how space was used actively by the convent to attract and manipulate the laity, and conversely how the laity perceived the concept of monastic space.

## The dynamics of material culture

When the friaries were dissolved at the time of the Reformation, most convents were characterized by fairly large complexes structured around one or more cloisters. Most of these large brick-built friaries had a long and complex line of development with different intensive phases.

<sup>17</sup> *Dronning Christines Hofholdningsregnskaber* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1904), 93, 139.

<sup>18</sup> For a discussion on material versus social and metaphorical space in monastic studies see, e.g., Megan Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and their Meanings* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 2-12; Roberta Gilchrist, "Community and Self: Perceptions and Use of Space in Medieval Monasteries", *Scottish Archaeological Review* 6 (1989): 55.



In the earliest phases of settlement, the individual convents supposedly lived in preliminary houses that were later replaced by actual (often brick-built) buildings. Thus already in the mid-thirteenth century a lavishly decorated brick architecture is known from several friaries (e.g., the Dominican houses of Ribe, Viborg, and Aarhus); but despite the extravagant architecture, the building complexes appear small. Since the mendicant orders unlike larger land-owning monasteries had an economy based on alms-giving, the amount of buildings in the early phase of settlement appears to correspond with the needs of the individual convent. The complexes contained a church, an east wing with dormitory, sacristy, chapter house, and the brothers' parlour, and occasionally a wing opposite the church housing kitchen and refectory – thus being a complex containing the basic functions of the institution. These fairly small complexes tend to exist more or less unaltered up during the fourteenth century.<sup>19</sup>

In the fifteenth century and primarily in the second half, a veritable building boom occurs. All the Danish friaries seem to expand heavily and several new wings and adjoining houses appear as known from, e.g., the Franciscan friaries of Odense, Ystad, and Schleswig (fig. 4a-c).<sup>20</sup> The new establishments dating after 1400 (for instance the Carmelites) also seem to build massive extravagant friaries, and the ascetic building custom of the thirteenth century seems completely abandoned.<sup>21</sup>

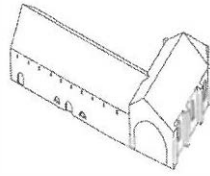
Despite this tendency towards a modest building activity during the early phases of settlement in contrast to a more intensive building programme in the late medieval period, the friaries were for most characterised by several small *ad hoc* building programmes. All additions and alterations seem to be individually assigned to the different convents; however, the result by the time of the Reformation gives a far more homogenous picture of the material culture than displayed in the earliest phase of settlement.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Henrik Græbe, *Ribe Skt. Katharinæ Kloster. Sognekirke og Hospital* (Ribe: Historisk Samfund for Ribe Amt, 1978), 69; Erik Levin Nielsen, "Viborg Sortebrødre-kloster. Antikvariske iagttagelser siden 1847", *MIV* 4 (1974): 44-55; Morten Søvsø, *Dominikanerklosteret i Århus. Klosteranlægget på baggrund af bygningsarkæologiske undersøgelser udført i tidsrummet 1833-2003* (Højbjerg: Middelalderarkæologisk Nyhedsbrev, 2011), 126-33.

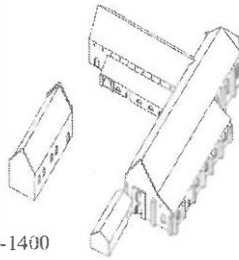
<sup>20</sup> Lafrenz, *Kirchen, Köster und Hospitäler*, 137; Ewald Gustafsson, "Gråbrödraklostret i Ystad. En byggnadshistorisk översikt," *Skånska kloster. Skånes Hembygdsförbund Årsbok* (1987/88), 128-34; Morten Larsen, "Franciskanerklosteret i Odense. En arkæologisk undersøgelse af det middelalderlige bygningskompleks," MA thesis (Aarhus, 2012), 94-100.

<sup>21</sup> Hans Krøngaard Kristensen, "Korsgangsmotivet ved danske klostre" in *Aspekter af dansk klostervæsen i middelalderen*, ed. I.-L. Kolstrup (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2000), 47-48.

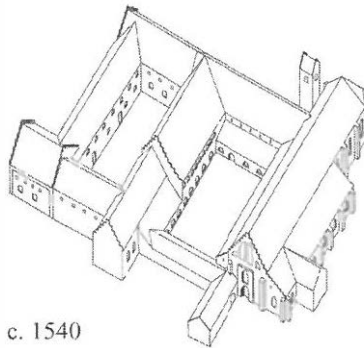
<sup>22</sup> Hans Krøngaard Kristensen, "Establishments of the Mendicant Orders" in *The Archaeology of Medieval Europe* vol. 2, ed. Martin Carver and Jan Klápště (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2011), 467.



c. 1300



c. 1350-1400



c. 1540

Figs. 4a-c: Axonometric reconstruction of three phases of the building history of the Franciscan friary of Odense seen from the south. The last decades prior to the Reformation show a veritable boom in construction works. The buildings history also reveals that the complexity of buildings gradually increased with the construction of a second cloister. Drawings: ML 2012.

### Conceptions of monastic space

A friary is first and foremost an institution. It is a place where the friars live and work in the service of God and his word. The older traditional monastic orders were primarily to be found in a solitary setting in the countryside, where the monks in pious seclusion sought contemplation and prayer. The reclusive

way of life emphasized by the traditional monastic orders does not agree with the image of the late medieval mendicant friaries and their general openness towards secular activities.

The fact that medieval monastic complexes were divided into different spatial hierarchies is well known from different examples. Rural monasteries in large parts of northern Europe were divided into different cloisters mirroring the different levels of access for monks and laity. The monastery was thus divided into three overall parts, the outer court, the inner court, and the cloister – the latter was solely accessible by the monks themselves, whereas the first ones were used for storage, stables, guesthouses, etc. and were thus more publicly orientated.<sup>23</sup> Despite being in opposition to the traditional rural monasticism, the mendicant orders probably in the same way structured their convents on the basis of different modes of hierarchy – however their conception of space is different.

The mendicant orders obviously perceived themselves as something different to the established monastic orders, not just in terms of their distinct way of life with a primary subsistence derived from alms, but also semantically. It is evident from the written sources that the Franciscans and the Dominicans regarded themselves as ‘brothers’ (*fratres*) who lived in ‘houses’ (*domus*) or ‘places’ (*locus*) opposite, for instance, to the Benedictines who mention themselves as ‘monks’ (*monachus*) living in ‘monasteries’ (*monasterium*) or ‘cloisters’ (*claustrum*).<sup>24</sup> This distinguishing between monastery and house might also indicate that the different orders had multiple ways of understanding themselves and their way of life. Moreover, it offers an insight into how the friars understood the concept of space – or at least that their conception of space was different from that of the rural monasteries.

However, giving space to secular activities while at the same time being a religious institution bound to some monastic ideals could cause a series of problems regarding the structure of space within the friaries that the brethren should acknowledge and cope with. Below, this problem will be discussed with emphasis on the plan arrangement and spatial structure of the friaries.

#### A hierarchical plan arrangement

In a conference article from 2009, the German researcher Matthias Untermann pointed out that the Franciscans typically structured their convents around two separate cloisters mirroring the opposition between the secluded claustral section and the semi-public section.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> J. Patrick Greene, *Medieval Monasteries* (London: Leicester University Press, 1992), 6-11; Glyn Coppack, *Abbeys and Priories* (Stroud: Tempus, 2006), 109-11.

<sup>24</sup> Lorenzen, *De danske Franciskanerklostres Bygningshistorie*, 131; Krongaard Kristensen, “Establishments of the Mendicant Orders”, 466-67.

<sup>25</sup> Matthias Untermann, “Öffentlichkeit und Klausur. Beobachtungen zur franziskanischen Klosterbaukunst in der Provinz Saxonía“, in *Glaube, Macht und Pracht. Geistliche Ge-*

The interpretation of the cloisters as mirroring different levels of access and hierarchy within a monastic building complex is fairly interesting. Untermann's idea can easily be elaborated and developed when seen in context with the Danish material, where the numerous urban excavations of the past fifty years have unearthed archaeological traces of several buildings outside the main cloister of the mendicant friaries. Thus, there is a sound proof of the existence of a dual-cloister plan arrangement similar to that described by Untermann. Untermann suggested that the dual-cloister plan appeared already in the thirteenth or fourteenth century in the north German region; however, this is more uncertain in regards to the Danish material.<sup>26</sup>

The early buildings in the Danish friaries primarily belong to what can be termed the inner cloister, whereas the late medieval buildings mostly can be characterised as additions to the inner cloister (as, e. g., seen in the Franciscan friary of Odense). Despite the possibility of older wooden structures preceding the late medieval brick buildings, it is fairly conspicuous how many construction works that tend to be initiated after 1400, why a mere conversion from wooden to stone built buildings does not seem plausible. Wooden built structures however continued to be common in many friaries until the Reformation, and from the rest of Europe, it also seems very common to find elaborate wooden buildings in monastic complexes. The fact that we occasionally in an archaeological context have found timber framed houses in the friaries' outer cloisters (as seen in, e.g., the Franciscan friaries of Ribe, Viborg, and perhaps Nykøbing)<sup>27</sup> suggests that wooden structures probably were far more common than previously acknowledged. So in terms of dating the rise of the dual-cloister plan arrangement, it is not until the fifteenth century that we have concise evidence of its existence, however it can be fairly older.

Despite our problems in ascertaining and dating probable wooden structures of the high Middle Ages, the numerous brick-built constructions of the late medieval period offers an excellent insight into the nature and development of the friaries' buildings culture.

The Franciscan friary of Odense is partially preserved and displays this dual-cloister plan arrangement (fig. 4c). The buildings surrounding the inner cloister (the southern) comprise of the east wing with dormitory, chapter house, parlour, and sacristy and a middle wing (between the two cloisters) comprising of two sections – a freestanding refectory building dating probably from the late thirteenth century, and a late medieval building which integrated the older cloister walk and created an attachment between the refectory and the east wing. No

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*meinschaften des Ostseeraums im Zeitalter der Backsteingotik*, ed. Oliver Auge et al. (Rahden: Verlag Marie Leidorf GmbH, 2009), 199-208.

<sup>26</sup> Untermann, "Öffentlichkeit und Klausur", 201.

<sup>27</sup> *Kong Frederik den Førstes danske Registranter* (Copenhagen: Selskabet for udgivelse af Kilder til dansk Historie, 1879), 463; Hans Krøngaard Kristensen, *Middelalderbyen Viborg* (Aarhus: Centrum, 1987), 60; Lis Andersen, "Ribe Gråbrødre kloster – det sidste kapitel", *Mark og Montre* (2003): 36.

west wing was ever erected, but all buildings were combined to the church and the gate house by the cloister walk. The northern cloister consisted of several smaller buildings which in time combined to form an independent court. The complex was accessed through the southern cloister. The northern cloister was more secluded and primarily consisted of buildings related to the daily life and work of the friary.<sup>28</sup>



Fig. 5: Part of the preserved remains of the outer courts in the Franciscan friary of Viborg. The building to the left is the elongated east wing which, despite being heavily rebuilt in modern times, still displays the small window openings of the late medieval economy building. The building to the right comprises of at least two major building phases and contains a bricked up barrel-vaulted passage (partly visible in the bottom-right corner) indicating that the friary probably consisted of several hierarchical units. Photo: ML 2010.

The Franciscan friary of Viborg shows a unique way of development. The situation in the thirteenth century shows a very open spatial structure where the convent buildings are placed in a continuous line, probably in order to connect the church and claustral buildings to an older stone-built building far to the north. The situation in the early sixteenth century however reveals that the buildings were more systematically arranged around several smaller cloisters. Two main cloisters (of which one is still partially preserved) existed, and in relation to the outer cloister an additional wing was constructed. The fact that a small barrel vaulted passage is embedded within the structure suggests that perhaps even a third outer court existed in relation to the complex (fig. 5). The southern cloister is partially excavated and probably contained some of the same functions as its parallel in Odense, whereas the northern cloister comprised several buildings designed for storage and other functions related to the daily

<sup>28</sup> Larsen, *Franciskanerklosteret i Odense*.

work and economy.<sup>29</sup> Despite ending with the almost same type of plan arrangement as the friary in Odense, the starting point was fairly different. The same tendency towards more than one (or two) cloisters is suggested by archaeological excavations in the Franciscan friary of Ribe.<sup>30</sup>

Not all friaries had a plan consisting of dual-cloisters; however it should be acknowledged that no friaries can be considered "complete" since the Reformation on the very height of the building intensity of the late Middle Ages marked the end of monastic construction works. Some however had a plan arrangement comparable with the dual-cloister setting due to several buildings that were more or less linked together in the outer cloister. Also, as mentioned above, social or cognitive spaces sometimes leave few or no traces in the material record.

One of the best preserved complexes of this type is the Franciscan friary of Schleswig. The complex is organised around an inner cloister, however the west wing and the east wing are extended to the north and thus set the boundaries for an outer cloister. The buildings surrounding the outer cloister are characterised by an elaborate domestic architecture and especially the *Gotische Saal*, with its grand interior and hypocaust gives the impression of a formidable room for a refectory. In the inner cloister, the west wing is clearly integrated into the actual cloister walks, and also gives room to a beautifully decorated entrance way.<sup>31</sup>

The same tendency appears at some Dominican friaries. In Odense a series of small buildings which were partially excavated in the 1970s and 1990s indicate that the complex expanded beyond the inner cloister in the late Middle Ages.<sup>32</sup> Also, in Viborg the east wing was elongated already in the thirteenth century and by the Reformation an inner cloister was erected together with an outer cloister defined by a rectangular addition to the long east wing.<sup>33</sup> Although these complexes were not entirely surrounded by buildings, the overall layout indicates that the friaries were far larger and more complex structures.

Not acknowledging that the friaries took up a large quantity of urban space has in previous research often produced a series of problems and misinterpretations, and especially the idea among scholars of an ideal monastery consisting of merely a church and three adjoining wings around a cloister is hard to eradicate. The Franciscan friary of Flensburg is partially preserved, and the standing remains are often interpreted as respectively the east wing, the south

<sup>29</sup> Krongaard Kristensen, *Middelalderbyen Viborg*, 58-61.

<sup>30</sup> Jakob Kieffer-Olsen, "Ribe Gråbrødrekløster", *hikuin* 23 (1996): 107-16; Andersen, "Ribe Gråbrødrekløster – det sidste kapitel", 23-40.

<sup>31</sup> Lafrenz, *Kirchen, Köster und Hospitäler*, 130-210.

<sup>32</sup> The excavations are for most unpublished. Fields reports in Odense Bys Museer: SBT78, OBM 9775. For a general introduction see Mogens Vedsø et al, ed., *Danmarks Kirker. Odense Amt* vol. 3, 1756-58.

<sup>33</sup> Nielsen, "Viborg Sortebrødrekløster. Antikvariske iagttagelser siden 1847", 44-55.

wing, and adjoining houses to the east.<sup>34</sup> However, the results of building archaeological surveys and field archaeological excavations are not consistent with the traditional interpretation, yet the rendition is still upheld in recent publications.<sup>35</sup> The buildings are more likely to be linked with an outer cloister, and the friary church and east wing are to be found far to the north.

#### Entrance and access

The fact that most friaries were organised around at least two cloisters, alters the conception of space and spatial relations within the complex considerably. In relation to the secular use of the monastic buildings, it is primarily the inner cloister linking directly to the friary church that is interesting. Often a structured form of entrance and access to the complex designed for the secular world is found here.

There are different examples of the modes of access to the cloister walk; most common is perhaps an entrance through the west wing. A characteristic feature regarding the Danish friaries is the tendency to displace the west wing in relation to the church nave, thus creating a small square in front of the gables. From there, a grand entrance leads into the church, and in the gable of the west wing, the entrance to the claustral buildings is situated (fig. 6).<sup>36</sup> The specific form of entrance varies between convents, but the overall composition remains more or less the same – in a few convents where a west wing was never erected, e.g., the Franciscan friary of Ystad, the access is often referred to a designated gate house. From here, there is direct access to the cloister walks.<sup>37</sup> Upon entering the complex there are different structural layouts determining the way visitors would be led.

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<sup>34</sup> Lorenzen, *De danske Franciskanerklostres Bygningshistorie*, 27-32; Ludwig Rohling, *Die Kunstdenkmäler der Stadt Flensburg* (Munich/Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1955), 247-59.

<sup>35</sup> Frauke Witte, *Archäologie in Flensburg. Ausgrabungen am Franziskanerkloster* (Haderslev/Flensburg: Gesellschaft für Flensburger Stadtgeschichte e.V., 2003), 43-54.

<sup>36</sup> Græbe, *Ribe Skt. Katharinæ Kloster*, 37.

<sup>37</sup> Gustafsson, "Gråbrödraklostret i Ystad. En byggnadshistorisk översikt", 129.

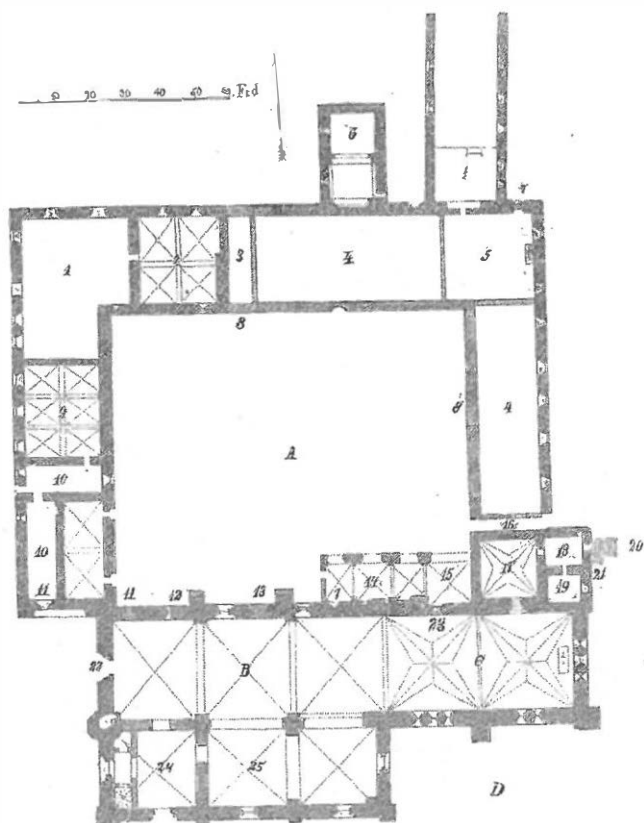


Fig. 6: Plan of the Dominican friary of Aarhus as it looked prior to the comprehensive restoration works of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The medieval plan arrangement of the west wing can thus still be observed. From the entrance in the south gable, two barrel-vaulted hallways (10) lead to a grand hall (9) and a porter's cell (the vaulted room to the south). From: J. P. Trap, *Statistisk-topografisk Beskrivelse af Kongeriget Danmark* VI, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Copenhagen: Forlagsbureauet, 1879), 6.

One of the most elaborated entranceways is found in the Dominican friary of Aarhus. The entrance in the late Middle Ages was structured around two narrow hallways placed in an angle, with a porter's cell placed just before entering the cloister garth. Opposite of the porter's cell a large and lavishly decorated vaulted hall was placed; often this room is interpreted as suitable for the conduct of secular activities (fig. 6-7).<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> de Fine Licht et al, ed., *Danmarks Kirker. Århus Amt* vol. 3, 1291-94; Søvsø, *Dominkanerklosteret i Århus*, 94-95; Morten Larsen, "Udi predickebrødris huuss. Aspekter af tiggerordenenes samfundsrolle i middelalderens Danmark", *Kirkehistoriske Samlinger* (2012): 18.





Fig. 7: The preserved late medieval hall in the west wing of the Dominican friary of Aarhus. The hall is covered by six vaults carried by two reused granite pillars, and lavishly decorated with late medieval frescoes. Photo: ML 2010.

Having entered the inner cloister there are several possibilities. In its original form, the cloister walks acted as mediators between the convent's different buildings and rooms. As such there is nothing in the archaeological record which contradicts this, a fact that also precludes us from knowing whether or not the access ways within the friary itself were controlled by the convent. We do know however that the accessibility of the outer cloister was difficult which corresponds with the interpretation of this as being clausurated.<sup>39</sup>

The accessibility between the inner cloister and the friary church is interesting since both spaces had a significant meaning to secular people. The Danish friary churches were for a large part built on an asymmetrical two-aisled plan, where the smaller side-aisle turned away from the claustral buildings – the main aisle thus lay side by side with the cloister walks. In all regards, the pos-

<sup>39</sup> Untermann, "Öffentlichkeit und Klausur", 199-201.

sibility of the cloister walk being incorporated in the friary church as a kind of combined cloister walk and side-aisle should be acknowledged. The phenomenon is known from the Franciscan church in Odense and the Dominican church of Holbæk, and was probably far more common than previously acknowledged. While the cloister's first storey contained the actual function as a cloister walk, the second storey acted as a kind of tribune within the actual church space, displaying the coherence between the different monastic spaces.<sup>40</sup>

*"... in the Franciscan friary in the small room"*

Upon entering, a number of questions occur as to the specific location of secular events. Despite the plan indicating that the inner cloister was semi-public, it is interesting as to which rooms and places that were used for what.

Written sources are mostly not very informative about this subject; however some quite interesting locations are occasionally mentioned. In 1426, King Erik of Pomerania held court in the sacristy of the Dominicans in Odense.<sup>41</sup> The friars must have had a fairly large sacristy, and archaeological excavations have shown that a large reorganisation of the east wing actually took place in the fifteenth century resulting in a fairly enlarged sacristy.<sup>42</sup>

In many cases it is only mentioned that the events took place within *the small room*, why the activities were thought to have taken place in the chapter house.<sup>43</sup> Despite being the central place of all decisions within the friary, the interpretation of the vague expression "room" as being the chapter house is highly simplified. The word "room" could possibly be interpreted as several different spaces within the friary. Also, depending on the scale of activity one should expect that smaller rooms may be fit. The chapter house as well as the refectory is used on an everyday basis by the convent itself; that is why other locations may be more logical.

No friary was built in strict accordance with an idealistic constitution. There are of course a series of norms as to how a friary should be organised. However (as the building history clearly suggests), friaries were greatly influenced by numerous spatial factors such as the surrounding urban topography as well as the *ad hoc* building process, resulting in different ways of adapting and utilising the environment.<sup>44</sup> Some parts of the friaries were more or less

<sup>40</sup> Untermann, "Öffentlichkeit und Klausur", 200; Larsen, *Franciskanerklostret i Odense*, 75, 110; Mogens Vedsø et al, ed., *Danmarks Kirker. Holbæk Amt* vol. 5 (Copenhagen: Nationalmuseet, 2001), 2845-2849.

<sup>41</sup> *Repertorium Diplomaticum Regni Danici Medievalis* 2. ser., no. 6242.

<sup>42</sup> Unpublished field reports in Odense Bys Museer: SBT 81.

<sup>43</sup> E.g., in Vedsø et al., ed., *Danmarks Kirker. Odense Amt* vol. 3, 1756.

<sup>44</sup> L. A. S. Butler, "The Archaeology of Urban Monasteries in Britain", in *Advances in Monastic Archaeology*, ed. Roberta Gilchrist and Harold Mytum (Oxford: B.A.R., 1993), 80-81.

alike (e.g., the plan disposition of an east wing in many cases bears resemblances to other friaries), whereas other parts of the friaries are completely unique in comparison to others.

The west wing is perhaps the best example. In most cases, it accommodates the actual entrance way but apart from that there are few common features, and in some cases an actual wing was never erected displaying its relative use. In the case of the Dominican friary of Aarhus, the wing held a large and elegantly vaulted hall in connection with the entrance way that generally is believed to have been used for greeting visitors as well as different secular gatherings. In Holbæk, the west wing of the Dominican friary also holds the entrance along with an interior cloister walk and several smaller vaulted rooms of different shapes and sizes. The same picture is known from the badly preserved west wing of the Franciscan friary of Nykøbing as well as the Carmelite Friary of Elsinore.<sup>45</sup>

In the traditional rural monasteries the west wing was reserved for the lay brethren; however this institution was abandoned by the mendicant orders. The differentiated modes of organising the west wing, its significance in relation to entrance and access as well as its relative existence suggest that it had very different uses, thus having the ability to accommodate both monastic as well as secular events. The latter could be done without interfering with rooms designed to uphold a friary's function as ecclesiastical institution.

### **Why? The reasons for secular use**

It is conspicuous how often the mendicant friaries are mentioned as a scene of secular events but an intricate question is why. In many cases several of these activities could easily have taken place within other institutional or private buildings, town halls, guild halls, or royal castles. Even public squares would in many cases seem to suffice. In relation to the introductory example regarding the Danish king's negotiation with the Hanseatic League in the Franciscan friary of Horsens, it is thought-provoking why the King did not use his royal castle and estate Bygholm just outside the town walls.

### **Politics, peace and practicalities**

In the above example, it appears quite reasonable that the negotiating parties wanted to meet on neutral ground, an explanation which also concurs with the case on manslaughter between the town of Kampen and the friends of Eskil Skaane. Tense political and juridical arguments might for the sake of

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<sup>45</sup> Lorenzen, *De danske Franciskanerklostres Bygningshistorie*, 80-83; idem, *De danske Karmeliterklostres Bygningshistorie*, 52-55; Henrik Græbe, "Holbæk Kloster. Sortebrødrenes hus indviet til S. Lucius", *hikuin* 20 (1993): 33-52.

peace have been better held on neutral ground<sup>46</sup> – and friary space was probably perceived as inviolable despite the fact that killings on monastic grounds did occur.

Sometimes the holy asylum was taken to its limit, which a case from 1484 illustrates. A knight, who sought refuge in the Franciscan friary of Arboga in Sweden after mutilating a woman, was given asylum since a group of angry townsmen had tried to hunt him down. However, while feeling safe behind the friary walls, he taunted the angry citizens on the other side, resulting in an angry townsman forcing his way into the friary precinct and beating up the knight. Eventually, the knight was fined for violating the woman but the angry townsman was also fined for violating monastic space.<sup>47</sup> The fact that several juridical issues were settled on friary ground could also indicate the wish for imbuing actions and decisions with a divine seal.

It should also be acknowledged that the friars in particular were interested in hosting these events, since they probably provided the convents with significant publicity and thus attracted people and money. Being dependent on alms and donations, the commercialisation of the friaries seems less curious.

More practical reasons might also have had influence on the choice of the friaries as the scene of events. Being institutions characterised (especially in the late medieval period) of numerous large buildings, it was a perfect place for assembling several people. And the actual cloister could also frame events that did not necessarily have to take place indoors. The large complexes were thus a practical means for hosting large gatherings as, for instance, the weddings between high noble families, as it occurred in the Franciscan friary of Ribe in 1504.<sup>48</sup>

### A culture of memory

In recent years a large focus in archaeology has been put on the active use and reuse of places of memory. Things or places of significance from the past are imbued with special meaning and may in some contexts be essential to actions in the present day, and even though the monuments from the past were built for a very different purpose, their meanings in the future might be quite different. It all depends on people's active perception of monuments from the past.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Jens Röhrkasten, "Secular Uses of the Mendicant Priors of Medieval London", in *The Use and Abuse of Sacred Places in Late Medieval Towns*, ed. Paul Trio and Marjen de Smet (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2006), 136.

<sup>47</sup> Jørgen Nybo Rasmussen, *Die Franziskaner in den nordischen Ländern im Mittelalter* (København: Verlag Butzon & Bercker, 2002), 210.

<sup>48</sup> O. Nielsen, "Familieoptegnelser af Iver Juel til Stubbergaard og hans Søn Kjeld Juel", *Danske Samlinger* 1 ser., I (1865-66): 47-59.

<sup>49</sup> Richard Bradley, *The Past in Prehistoric Societies* (London & New York: Routledge, 2002), 12-14.

One of the most obvious examples of this phenomenon is the use (and active reuse) of the cloister walks as scene of burial. As discussed above those buried within the cloister probably were people from the outside world who actively sought a final resting place by the orders. Also, the establishment of chapels and commemorative masses show the importance of mendicant friaries as scenes of social memory and tradition. By combining the memories of the past with the actions of the present day, the friaries facilitated a space of continuous social tradition aiding the society's recollective memory and habitus.<sup>50</sup>

The friary can be interpreted as an institution or as the home and workplace of the friars. In relation to the question of the secular uses of friaries, it is however more important to examine the way the laity perceived the concept of monastic space. Obviously, the urban friaries were places of special significance through the performance of different social activities.

The French anthropologist Marc Augé has a delicate way of explaining this.<sup>51</sup> The perception of space is dependent on how people identify themselves with particular places. Some places with a permanent relational or historical bond bear a specific meaning in regard to people's identity – for instance the home. Augé terms this spatial structure a place. Other spaces are in contrast defined by not wielding an importance on a permanent relational or historical bond, typically understood as places of transit; these places are characterised by Augé as 'non-places', since they in themselves do not wield any specific significance. Only in relation to the activities conducted here, it generates a societal meaning.

Despite the fact that Augé departed from a perception of the modern world, where non-places could be interpreted as airports, supermarkets or other places of transit, the non-place theory might also be used to describe spatial complexities in past societies. In that case, the friaries can be perceived as places of transit. In many cases it is different social issues and events that are settled on friary grounds – meetings, courts, agreements, burials, alms giving – nothing that could not have happened elsewhere, and also things that are part of the activities of everyday life. In regard to this, the friary precinct is a place which is imbued with a specific meaning and importance through the performance, perception and reproduction of these different social activities. The friary complex thus gains a specific meaning in relation to society through the activities of communal gatherings.

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<sup>50</sup> Richard Bradley, *The Past in Prehistoric Societies*, 12; Gavin Lucas, *The Archaeology of Time* (London & New York: Routledge, 2005), 84-92.

<sup>51</sup> Marc Augé, *Non-Places. Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, trans. John Howe (London/New York: Verso, 1995), 77-79.

## **Concluding remarks**

The fact that mendicant friaries accommodated secular events in the Middle Ages is well-known, and primarily the written sources offer an important insight into the differentiated activities that took place there. However, the practical way of coping with secular activities alongside sustaining a monastic institution is a neglected research theme in Danish monastic archaeology. The mendicant friars had a very different perception of the concept of monastic space, and it appears evident that the friars actively structured their space to accommodate both functions by obtaining a hierarchical plan arrangement, where different cloisters upheld different functions. Thus the inner cloister can be interpreted as a semi-public sphere, where the different buildings (but perhaps most commonly the west wing) gave space to different secular activities. Vice versa, the laity perceived the monastic space as something special, generating the societal commemoration while at the same time being a central ecclesiastic and public institution in the medieval urban space.

MEDIUM AEVUM  
QUOTIDIANUM

65

KREMS 2013

HERAUSGEGEBEN  
VON GERHARD JARITZ

GEDRUCKT MIT UNTERSTÜTZUNG DER KULTURABTEILUNG  
DES AMTES DER NIEDERÖSTERREICHISCHEN LANDESREGIERUNG

**niederösterreich kultur**

Titelgraphik: Stephan J. Tramèr

ISSN 1029-0737

Herausgeber: Medium Aevum Quotidianum. Gesellschaft zur Erforschung der materiellen Kultur des Mittelalters, Körnermarkt 13, 3500 Krems, Österreich. Für den Inhalt verantwortlich zeichnen die Autoren, ohne deren ausdrückliche Zustimmung jeglicher Nachdruck, auch in Auszügen, nicht gestattet ist. – Druck: Grafisches Zentrum an der Technischen Universität Wien, Wiedner Hauptstraße 8-10, 1040 Wien, Österreich.



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## Vorwort

Der vorliegende Band von *Medium Aevum Quotidianum* zeigt recht klar die Bedeutung, welche unterschiedliche Themen der mittelalterlichen Alltagsgeschichte und Geschichte der materiellen Kultur in der internationalen Forschung erhalten haben. Beiträge von SpezialistInnen aus England, Argentinien, Dänemark und Deutschland setzen sich mit Problemen auseinander, die von hagiographischen, theologischen, archäologischen und architekturhistorischen sowie fechttechnischen Grundfragen ausgehen und gut vermitteln, auf welche Art und Weise dieselben auf breitere alltagsrelevante Lebensbereiche Einfluss nehmen bzw. dieselben betreffen. Damit lassen sich auch neuerlich die vielfältigen trans- und interdisziplinären Ansätze und Methoden erkennen, die für eine umfassendere wissenschaftliche Aufarbeitung des mittelalterlichen Alltagslebens zu berücksichtigen sind und welche *Medium Aevum Quotidianum* und seine Publikationsreihe zu fördern versuchen.

Gerhard Jaritz