

Preface

From 1995 to 1998 the Danish Research Council for the Humanities financed a research network on 'Denmark and Europe in the Later Middle Ages'. This initiative to strengthen Danish research in the later Middle Ages arranged two international conferences which both took place in the conference rooms of the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters in Copenhagen.

The first conference took place from 28th to 30th August 1997 under the heading *Northern Europe 1400 to 1648: Crisis or Transformation?* Intending to bridge the traditional divide between medieval and early modern history, the conference discussed the relevance of the two traditional approaches to the social history of the period 1400 to 1648: On the one hand, it attempted to assess the view which interprets the period as one of crises and upheavals, constantly appearing and receding, often taking on the form of one long crisis. On the other hand, it tried to evaluate the view that what the period witnessed was no more than a slow transformation following a period of little or no change. At the conference fifteen scholars from both Scandinavia and the rest of the world gave papers dealing with the religious, economic, social and political aspects of crisis and transformation in the late medieval and early modern period.

Two years later, from 23rd to 26th August 1999, the second conference took place, this time with fifteen international scholars giving papers on *New Trends in Late Medieval Studies*. The purpose of this conference was to outline and assess the results of international research in the late medieval period during the last generation; approximately from the late 1960s to the late 1990s. The conference was especially interested in those areas where research had advanced most during the last generation, and where results of importance for our understanding of the late medieval period as such had been produced.

The steering committee for the research network 'Denmark and Europe in the Later Middle Ages' planned the second conference as its contribution to a very large common enterprise among Danish research institutions and individual scholars announcing 1999 as 'Year of the Middle Ages'. The Royal Danish Academy of

Sciences and Letters supported the initiative by giving the conference the status of an official Academy conference. This included that the Academy had beforehand accepted to include the conference proceedings in its publication series which is financed by the Carlsberg Foundation.

As responsible for the research network 'Denmark and Europe in the Later Middle Ages' I took on the task of editing the papers from the 1999 conference together with Professor Troels Dahlerup of the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters. Due to many other engagements I had, however, to postpone the task again and again and it has therefore taken more than eight years before a publication can finally be presented.

It is therefore understandable that a couple of the scholars who contributed to the conference in 1999 have chosen to publish their papers elsewhere. On the other hand this gave the opportunity to include some of the papers from the 1997 conference in the present volume. It was originally planned that the papers from the conference on *Northern Europe 1400-1648: Crisis or Transformation?* which consisted of a mixture of international papers and papers treating Scandinavia only was to be published in a volume from one of the large British publishing houses. Since that plan proved impossible to realise I agreed with the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters that we could offer the international contributors to the 1997 conference that their papers be included in the publication of the proceedings of the 1999 conference. This solution seemed reasonable as these international papers fitted well together with the papers from the conference on *New Trends in Late Medieval Studies*. The same was not the case with the Scandinavian papers.

The resulting volume of conference proceedings is, thus, the present anthology on *New Approaches to the History of Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. I have chosen to group the articles in four parts. In Part I: Political History, Part II: Social and Cultural History, and Part III: Legal History, are most of the papers from the 1999 conference on the new trends in late medieval studies. The papers in Part IV: From Late-Medieval to Early-Modern Europe: Crises, Revolutions and Transformations, mainly originate from the 1997 conference, although supplemented with a couple of papers from 1999.

I am well aware that it comes near to a scandal that it has tak-

en so many years to publish the papers from the two conferences in Copenhagen in 1997 and 1999, and no one regrets that more deeply than I do. In spite of the age of the papers I hope that the volume will stand out as an important contribution to international research on the late medieval and early modern history of Europe, presenting the most important bulk of new research that has been done in the last generation by some of the scholars who have been pioneers and front figures in that research.

The authors contributing to the volume have shown admirable patience for which I am deeply indebted. It is unfortunate that my co-editor Troels Dahlerup did not live long enough to see the conference proceedings published. He died in February 2006 at the age of 80. Apart from the contributors and my co-editor I would also like to express my profound gratitude towards the Danish Research Council for the Humanities, the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, and the Carlsberg Foundation for the economic support which made it possible first to arrange the two international conferences in 1997 and 1999 and now to publish this volume of papers drawn from their proceedings. PhD Philip Kelsall kindly undertook to control and correct the language in the papers written by scholars from outside Britain and North America.

Århus, 1st December 2007

Per Ingesman