Fred van Kan, *Het Capittel van Sint-Joris te Amersfoort. Een geschiedenis van "Eerwaardige wijze ende seer beminde heeren"*. Verloren, Hilversum 2018, 232 pp. ISBN 9789087047436. € 25.

This book is about chapters between world and heaven, between lay and professional. Ambiguously, the word 'chapters' here refers both to the chapters where the author of the book under review treats his subject and to the secular Chapter of Canons of Amersfoort (Netherlands, diocese Utrecht) which is that very same subject. 'Lay' refers both to the role played by the Canons within the lay world, and to the ambition of the book's author, Fred van Kan, to present his subject in such a way that it appeals to a wider audience of the historically interested. Being the former director of the Amersfoort Archives and a resident of that same town, and at present the director of the State Archives of Gelderland, Van Kan knows how to find and explore his sources, and has a personal involvement that guarantees an open eye and mind.

The Secular Chapter of the Church of Saint George in Amersfoort was founded on the 21st August 1337, as one of (ultimately) 39 secular Chapters in the medieval Diocese of Utrecht, which up to the reorganization of the Dutch dioceses in 1559, covered the major part of the present country of the Netherlands north of the Rhine-Meuse-system. To be precise, the southern regions belonged to the diocese of Liège, and parts of the far North-East belonged to the diocese of Münster. Thanks to the work by the late Jan Kuys, *Repertorium van collegiale kapittels in het middeleeuwse bisdom Utrecht* [Middeleeuwse Studies en Bronnen 148] (Hilversum, 2014) a unique survey of all these secular Chapters is available. The number totals 43 Chapters, since the two Chapters attached to the Utrecht cathedral (those of St Martin and St Salvator a.k.a. Oudmunster) and the Chapters of Stavoren and Dokkum (in Frisia) which already had ceased to exist in the twelfth century, are added. For only few of these Chapters the archives have been preserved in historically relevant numbers. The Chapter of Saint George is one of the fortunate examples. Moreover, it is the only one of these 43 Utrecht Chapters that has survived the wreckage of time, able to adapt to changing circumstances. Consequently, it could celebrate its 675th anniversary in the year 2012. That celebration called for a book covering the whole history of the institution. Van Kan accepted that challenge. After a brief introduction (pp. 13–20), presenting the phenomenon of Chapters and Canons in a very elementary way, three chapters of very unequal size then describe the Chapter until the Reformation (pp. 21–124), its continuation as a Protestant institution between Reformation and Napoleon (pp. 125–146), and its revival and change of character after the French period (pp. 147–162). Five appendices

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complete the *corpus* of the book (pp. 163–209), which is followed by a list of sources (actually only a list of archives containing the sources) and a bibliography.

The Appendices are: 1. The edition of the Latin text of the founding charter of the Chapter. And although that text is paraphrased on pp. 61 ff. a simultaneous translation most certainly would have served most readers. This also applies to appendix 2, giving the formulation of the oaths of the different officials (dean, canons, vicars, and lower officials). The third and largest appendix (pp. 168–189) gives the names (and to a certain degree, personal data) of all officials traced between 1337 and 2018. This could offer the basic material for a highly interesting prosopographical study which, however, the author did not carry out. It is followed by the appendix enumerating the property of lands and revenues within and without the walls of Amersfoort (pp. 189–206). Appendix 5 gives a list of the positive balances, annually divided among the canons from 1635–2016. That very promising table lacks a value-free denominator that would enable us to evaluate the development of the purchasing power of a canonicate.

Where the appendices show already that they in many ways imply an invitation to further research, the main text of the book may also be considered such an invitation. It opens windows overlooking a unique landscape of an institution that started its existence as a congregation responsible for the maintenance of choral prayers, and at present is a charitable institution, still run by a group of officials with the honorary title of canon, chaired by the mayor of Amersfoort in his function as dean. Of course, the medieval period receives most attention in the book. Here, the Chapter is placed within the context of the religious townscape of Amersfoort, and how this institution became the dominant force, not only for serving the masses and reading the hours, and for the temporary and 'eternal' memorial masses, but also how it obtained control not only over its ecclesiastical immunity, but also over all chapels and convents in town. In this sense, a delicate relationship existed between the Chapter and the chapel and confraternity of Our Lady, especially since the discovery of the miraculous statue of Our Lady in 1444. How all of this functioned, how the organization developed and how the capital situation of the Chapter developed, is briefly yet adequately described in this chapter. One of the most striking aspects is to learn how strongly-rooted this Chapter was, and remained, in the community of Amersfoort and its immediate surroundings. The numbers of people 'parachuted' from elsewhere, and the degree of absenteeism seem to have been much lower than elsewhere.

The obvious intertwining between the Chapter and the Amersfoort community, an image of which arises from the long chapter 2, might be one of the

main reasons why and how the Chapter managed to survive several turbulent episodes. As such, survival of institutions due to adjustment and adaptation to changing circumstances and requirements, has often occurred. At one end of the spectrum, one may think of individual prebends converting into student-loans, and at the other end, one could find the Teutonic Order in the Netherlands, turning into a charitable institution. The Amersfoort Chapter, however, is the only institution of this peculiar type that managed to persevere.

In an equally fascinating way as the second chapter of the book, the chapters three and four sketch briefly how the Chapter of Saint George seemed to frequently disappear behind the horizon when secular authorities tried to confiscate its properties and dissolve the organization. Nonetheless, its social and financial ties with the community, as well as its moral were so strong that, time and again, the Chapter of Saint George persisted.

Thanks to this, Van Kan's book is a welcome contribution to our understanding of a medieval institution that defied multiple threats.

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