PART ONE

CRUSADES AT THE ENDS OF THE EARTH
1400–1523

De Pygmaeis Gruntlandiae, et rupe Huitfark.
CHAPTER ONE

KALMAR UNION AND THE CRUSADE, 1397–1523

Crusades were inseparable from the air one breathed in Scandinavia in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as everywhere else in Europe. Royal ideology centred on crusading ideology and a Danish empire in the Baltic was created as result of a continuous crusade against the heathen Slavs living on the southern shores of the Baltic Sea, and against the Estonians. Crusades in support of the Holy Land were preached, and money for the war against the infidels collected. Crusading was depicted in literature and was painted on church walls. It was part of the celebration of mass, integrated into the liturgy, and in the monasteries, monks and nuns prayed for the success of the crusade. Nothing changed with the fall of Acre in 1291. The Holy Land was lost to Christendom and would not be re-conquered, but contemporaries could not of course have known that. Plans and treatises on how to recover the Holy Land were produced, vows were made, new crusade liturgy and prayers invented, and money collected for new crusades. The purpose of the present chapter will be to investigate the role of the crusade in the late medieval period, from the forming of the Nordic Union of Kalmar in 1397 to the end of the reign of Christian II in 1523. First, however, a brief look at the period from the fall of Acre to the founding of the Kalmar Union.

Denmark and the Crusade in the Fourteenth Century

Crusades were fought on all frontiers of Latin Christendom in the fourteenth century. The crusade theatres in the Baltic, in Spain, and in the Mediterranean attracted knights from all over Europe in search

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1 Powicke 1962, p. 80: “It is not too much to say that the recovery of the Holy Land, whether as an idea, a symbol, or an immediate duty, pervaded the minds of men in the thirteenth century. It was inseparable from the air they breathed. However indifferent or sceptical they might be, they could not escape its influence”.