READING BETWEEN THE LINES:

A 17th Century Corpus of Funeral Inscriptions from Odense revisited

By Birgitte Bøggild Johannsen[1]

The article presents a reading in context of the manuscript, Monvmenta et Inscriptiones Otthinienses Uberioribus Historicis et Genealogicis Illustratæ Notis, *composed c. 1679 by Jens and Jacob Bircherod, and comprising 325 inscriptions from churches and profane buildings in Odense. In the corpus,* Danmarks Kirker. Odense Amt *(1990–2001) the collection proved an invaluable guide to Late Medieval and Early Lutheran funeral monuments, the amount of which during the subsequent centuries was reduced by more than 75%. However, a conspectus of the material* in toto *has never been undertaken. The following lines aim at presenting a preliminary survey of commemorative patterns in a major Danish urban community, equally taking into account changing confessional practices across the watershed of the Lutheran Reformation. Focus will be directed towards 139 examples from c. 1475–1618, representing different social groups, men and women, ranging from members of the nobility and upper strata of the clergy, the municipal corporation and the learned elite to more ordinary citizens, craftsmen or clergymen.*

Introduction

Around 1679, two young scholars, the brothers Jens (1658–1708) and Jacob Bircherod (1664–1687) compiled a partly illustrated corpus of inscriptions, *Monvmenta et Inscriptiones Otthinienses Uberioribus Historicis et Genealogicis Illustratæ Notis* (here: *MIO*), comprising 325 inscriptions from churches and secular buildings in Odense, capital of the Diocese of Funen.[2]

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[1] A previous version of the paper was presented in 2013 in Utstein at the conference, "The Righteous shall be in everlasting Remembrance. Remembering the Dead in the 16th and 17th Centuries", arranged by the University of Oslo as part of the network, "Death in Early Protestant Tradition".

[2] On the corpus and its authors, see Johannsen 2008 (a).

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Apart from texts, related to fittings in the city's four parish churches and to objects and buildings in civic use, the collection includes no fewer than 275 funeral inscriptions from sepulchral tablets, tombstones and one funeral banner. *In toto* the catalogue presents a frozen image, or a probably reliable record of extant or readable examples from a period of around 350 years, the earliest dating from the 14th century. From an antiquarian perspective, the corpus proves an indispensable guide to the mapping of Late Medieval and Early Lutheran funeral monuments in Odense, all described in detail – with ornate translations of the Latin inscriptions and perspicacious commentaries by Peter Zeeberg – in *Danmarks Kirker. Odense Amt* (1990–2001). The Bircherod collection is especially valuable in view of the systematic destruction of tomb sculpture, not only following the Reformation, but also undertaken during building renovations in the 18th–19th centuries.[3] However, a close-reading of the inscriptions in this important source, extant only in manuscript, has never been undertaken. It should also be added that research in Late Medieval and Early Modern epigraphy in Denmark – except for a pioneering overview of inscriptions on Danish tombstones c. 1470–1600 by Jörn Staecker (2003) – is still a *desideratum*.[4]

In the following, the texts of *MIO* will form the basis of some reflections on social, cultural and confessional strategies as reflected by language, typography and the use of codes, exposing humanistic learning, style and manners as well as religious predilections in a major Danish provincial town across the watershed of the Lutheran Reformation. Focus will be directed towards 146 examples, covering the period c. 1475 till 1618, when the parochial structure of the city underwent change. The analysis will be developed in dialogue with the results of Staecker and takes its point of departure in standards since the early 1940'ies developed by the corpus of

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[3] For instance, more than 100 tombstones and 15 sepulchral tablets from St. Canute's were sold at auction, destroyed or recycled with new inscriptions during the 18th century, see *DK. Odense Amt* 1990–2001, 708–710.

[4] Staecker 2003, 415–436. For a survey of epigraphic studies in Denmark, Johannsen 2008(b). The corpus *Danmarks Kirker,* since 1933 published by the National Museum, does not as a principle present post-Reformation inscriptions (after 1550) *in extenso,* in contrast to medieval texts. Some exceptions are made, however, for eulogies or religious poems when these – as a result of the knowledge of the author or of a unique content – "deserve particular interest", thus upgrading the singular at the expense of the more common. In this respect, *Danmarks Kirker* claims a prerogative as an art-historical index, in relation to inscriptions primarily functioning as a *repertorium*, referring (if possible) to full text editions which, however, in several cases, only exist in manuscripts similar to MIO. Presentations of texts on chosen funeral monuments (sepulchral tablets and tombstones) *c.* 1536–1600 are given by Honnens de Lichtenberg 1989 and by Krüger 1999, the latter referring to 80 slabs from Southern Jutland, south of the Danish-German border of 1864.

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Die Deutschen Inschriften.[5] In contrast to Staecker's survey, based upon Chr. Axel Jensen's catalogue of tombstones for the nobility with predominant focus upon stylistical agendas, *Danske Adelige Gravsten fra Sengotikens og Renaissancens Tid. Studier over Værksteder og Kunstnere, 1470–1600* (1951–1953), also wall monuments will be included in the present study as well as lost items, not systematically listed in Jensen's catalogue.

In a wider perspective, the paper aims at contributing to the current comparative research in epigraphy – inscriptions in general being defined as linguistic acts implying a producer or circle of authors, an intended audience and a targeted message to be communicated, and accordingly reflecting variations in religion, status and gender or categorizing the individuals involved in terms of markers of social or socioeconomic classes. The texts should not only be read as codes to "Selbstdarstellung und Selbstvergewisserung, sie dienen zugleich auch der Positionierung innerhalb der Gesellschaft von Gleichgesinnten und Andersdenkenden und dokumentieren damit "kollektive Verhaltensdispositionen".[6] Moreover, funeral inscriptions are important confessional barometers, reflecting changing approaches to the gradual implementation of the Reformation, or the persistence of traditional Catholic values.[7]

Accordingly, the present overview seeks to take advantage of a coherent, comprehensive close-up of status in a well-defined urban community. Yet, the deficits of the material should not be concealed. As to drawing conclusions on the use of various typographical forms, we can only operate with a certain degree of probability, confronting the texts in *MIO* with the illustrations given or with the still extant monuments, while commentaries on the iconography or composition of lost examples for obvious reasons are restricted to a minimum.

The Bircherod Corpus in Context

The authors of *MIO* were Jens and Jacob Bircherod, born in Odense as the sons of Jacob Jensen Bircherod, Professor at the local Gymnasium. While Jacob died in his youth, Jens Bircherod, who from 1693 till his death in 1708 was Bishop in the Diocese of Aalborg, became renowned for his diaries, in which he painstakingly recorded memories from his own private circles as well as events of local or national importance. Both belonged to a dynasty of scholars and clergymen active mainly in Funen and Zealand.[8] Through the

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[5] For an introduction to *Die Deutschen Inschriften (DIO)*, see Kloos 1992 and http://www.inschriften.net.

[6] Hüpper 2008, 125.

[7] Macha, Balbach & Horstkamp 2012.

[8] Johannsen 2008 (a); a forthcoming Ph.d. thesis by Valdemar Grambye will focus upon Jens Bircherod.

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mediation of his father, who was member of a wide network of learned colleagues including representatives from the urban patriciate in Odense and fellow scholars at the University of Copenhagen, Jens Bircherod obtained a position as assistant to the famous Danish antiquarian Peder Hansen Resen (1625–1688) and it is beyond all doubt that Resen's corpus of inscriptions from Copenhagen, *Inscriptiones Haffnienses* (1668), constituted a major paradigm for the Bircherod brothers. Both, in particular Jens, also contributed to Resen's ambitious antiquarian-topographical collections, *Atlas Danicus*, of which only a small part, including 109 engravings, was published in his lifetime (1677), while most of it was lost in the Copenhagen fire of 1728. In general, the works of Resen belonged, like *MIO*, to the humanist genre of epigraphic collections or *Epitaphienbücher*, widespread all over Europe since the late 15th century.[9] A number of these also included illustrations.

The original manuscript version of the Bircherod corpus, which was apparently meant for publication as can be deduced from the production of accompanying engravings, is unknown. However, a number of later versions have been handed down, including various additions.[10] The most detailed version – giving 1679 as the year of production – was compiled c. 1730 by the nephew of the brothers, Jacob Thomsen Bircherod (1693–1737), Provincial Court Judge in Odense. However, a very early, possibly autograph version exists, embellished with drawings made by Jacob Bircherod and forming the model for the subsequent engravings.[11] As previously mentioned, the illustrations and the texts distinguish between various typographies used, as confirmed by still-existing specimens, which present Gothic minuscules, Renaissance capitals and fracture as well as Humanist minuscules (*antiqua*).

The object of investigation was Odense, capital of the Diocese of Funen and one of the major Early Modern cities in the Danish provinces, ranking with Malmø, Køge, Roskilde, Aalborg, Aarhus, Ribe and Flensburg. The precise order of precedence in terms of population cannot, however, be determined with certainty. The city possibly comprised around 4–5.000 inhabitants before c. 1650.[12] Yet with regard to wealth and political importance during the 16th and early 17th centuries, Odense almost approached the status of Copenhagen, profiting from its location as the geographical center of the Danish Realm. Odense was furthermore one of the four ceremonial stages in the nationwide ritual of paying homage to the King-elect, and during the decisive prelude to the Reformation played a central political role as the setting for a number of highly important annual meetings

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[9] Zajic 2008.

[10] On the various manuscripts, see Johannsen 2008 (a), 46–50.

[11] The Royal Library. NKS. 4646, 4⁰.

[12] Ladewig Petersen 1985, 103ff.

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of the Council of State. Yet unlike Copenhagen or Malmø, Odense can generally be characterized as a conservative city where the Reformation was only slowly implemented. Even several decades after 1536 the independent status of the large Benedictine monastery of St. Canute was still tolerated.[13] During its heyday prior to the Swedish Wars (1657–1660), the city was a prosperous commercial town, a center of learning with a Latin School, expanded in the early 17th century with a 'Gymnasium'. Odense numbered representatives from the nobility as well as an urban patriciate, consisting of executives from the city council, wealthy merchants, professors and physicians (among them the personal physician of Christian III, Cornelius Hamsfort the Elder), apothecaries and distinguished artisans (for example the goldsmith Didrik Fuiring, the maker of Christian IV's crown).

In the wake of the Reformation, the number of religious institutions in Odense was reduced from 13 to four: The churches of St. Canute (the Cathedral and former Benedictine Monastery Church), St. John, Our Lady and the former Greyfriars Church, since c. 1539 housing the congregation of the demolished St. Alban's Church, in 1618 to be transferred to St. Canute's and subsequently upgraded to the status of a parish church. Each had its individual social physiognomy (**Diagram a**), with different numbers of tombs for the three estates. At the bottom of the hierarchy, from a social perspective, was the Church of Our Lady on the eastern periphery of the city, with only six monuments to the nobility, followed by St. John's and St. Canute's (each with nine examples), though surpassed by Greyfriars Church with 13 examples, reflecting the particular status of the church, which housed the royal funeral complex for King John, Queen Christine, Prince Frans and King Christian II. Tomb monuments to the citizenry comprised by far the largest number (88), more than twice the number of aristocratic examples (37). As to the last, this probably reflected changing burial patterns, as the nobility since the 16th century gradually preferred secluded burials in parish churches, near their private manor houses – often preceded, however, by a funeral service celebrated in Odense.[14]

Numerically, the clergy represented the smallest group (20 examples), counting, however, an almost complete list of post-Reformation vicars at the individual parish churches, canons and superintendents, but excluding two transitional figures of mixed confessional observance, Gustav Trolle and Knud Gyldenstierne, buried in 1535 and 1560 respectively in the cathedrals of Schleswig and Aarhus. In contrast, only seven monuments to pre-

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[13] Venge 1982; *DK. Odense Amt* 1990–2001, 79ff.
[14] Nyborg & Johannsen 2005; *DK. Odense Amt* 1990–2001, 703ff.

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Reformation clergymen were recorded.[15] This may possibly be regarded as by-blow of a deliberate *damnatio memoriae* during the early establishment of Lutheranism following the aforementioned demolition of religious institutions. To these factors should be added monuments lost for unknown reasons before the late 17th century, the most deplorable losses being the Neo-Latin epitaphs, probably written on parchment or paper and mounted on wooden tablets, for Prince Frans (d. 1511) and Queen Christine (d. 1521) in Greyfriars Church and for the Catholic Bishop Jens Andersen Beldenak (d. 1537) in the Cathedral.[16]

Nonetheless, the representativity of the recorded funeral monuments inside the churches can be characterized as fairly high. However, examples in the local churchyards, among which we can count the still-functioning (until the early 17th century) churchyard of the demolished Dominican Monastery Church were as a principle not registered – except for one example, a communal monument in the Greyfriars Churchyard. A remarkable fact, also reflected by *MIO*, is the scarcity of sepulchral tablets or wall monuments in Odense. Before the early 17th century this commemorative genre was apparently only modestly represented, numbering 15 examples in all, with the largest number (10) found in Greyfriars Church. In comparison, in this period sepulchral tablets were far more widespread in other major Danish cities – probably an indication of the conservatism of Odense.[17]

Patterns of Social, Gendered and Cultural Use of Language and Typography

As for the language used, Latin clearly predominated before *c.* 1525, while vernacular (Danish and in a few cases German), or a combination of Latin and the vernacular, prevailed in the succeeding period. As represented in **Diagram b.1–3**, Danish gradually gained a foothold on monuments to the nobility from *c.* 1525,[18] eventually predominating in the period 1575–1618. A similar pattern, almost excluding Latin or a mixture of languages, is represented in monuments to the citizenry, while the clergy only adopted Danish or a mixture to a very limited extent from *c*. 1550. This general picture coincides fairly closely with the results of Krüger and Staecker, the first one

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[15] Tombstones of Gisico (d. 1300), Peder Pagh (d. 1339), Jacob Mogensen (d. 1443), Amund Jensen (d. *c.* 1464), Ivar Lauritsen (d. 1487), Niels Andersen Ulfeldt (d. 1497) and Hans Urne (d. 1504), *DK. Odense Amt* 1990–2001, 1147, 1473, 814f.

[16] *DK. Odense Amt* 1990–2001, 791–797, 1826–1830.

[17] In comparison, the cathedrals of Ribe, Aarhus, the collegiate church of Our Lady in Copenhagen and Roskilde Cathedral numbered 34, 39, 60 and 110 examples.

[18] Earliest in the wall monument for Jørgen Marsvin and his wife, *c*. 1524, *DK. Odense Amt* 1990–2001, 1145.

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focusing on the cathedral of Lübeck.[19] The increasing popularity of the vernacular among the nobility and the citizenry, already detectable *c*. 1500 or even earlier, but not to be regarded in isolation as a denominational marker, is also noted by Staecker, who likewise points to the prevailing use of Latin by the clergy. [20] In Odense a more complex pattern appears for this group, who in a number of monuments use Danish or the mixture of languages, as stated above, while Latin, sometimes mixed with Danish, is increasingly represented in inscriptions for the nobility, and was even adopted by the citizenry in the period 1575–1618.

In a number of cases the choice of language might equally have had a deliberate gendered motivation (**Diagram c**). This issue, not commented upon by Krüger and Staecker, was pointed out by Minna Skafte Jensen[21] in an analysis of the bilingual epitaph in Hornslet Church for the nobleman Jørgen Rosenkrantz, produced *c*. 1575. In her close-reading of the memorial's parallel presentation of a poem in Latin and Danish, respectively in classical distichs and rhyming couplets, Skafte Jensen suggested that the two versions were meant for a male and a female audience respectively. "Latin by 1575 had almost regained its medieval status as the normal written language in Denmark, but only for men", mastery of the classical languages still being a rare option for women. Though no exactly similar case is to be found in Odense, it should be noted that Latin inscriptions for single women are only represented prior to 1525, while Danish totally dominates afterwards. For single men, we have a more even distribution (13–16), with five examples in mixed Latin and Danish, mainly with Latin phrases (e.g. *Hodie mihi, cras tibi*) and biographical presentations in Danish. As for married couples or groups of relatives, the Latin examples amount to a little more than half as many as the Danish ones (24 to 46).

The mixed-language examples (5) are particularly worth noting. On the tombstone in St. John's Church of the goldsmith Henrik Griben and his wife, made in 1589 on the occasion of her death, the Danish inscription, written on the central part of the stone, refers to the wife (with data of her successor added), while the presentation of the husband and probable originator of the monument is written in Latin in the frame.[22] Similar gendered distinctions could be seen on two slabs in St. Canute's. This applies to the memorial for the apothecary Jesper Simonsen (d. 1602), whose biography was given in Latin in flowery elegiac couplets, while the data of his wife and daughter were presented in Danish prose. The same distinction between Latin poetry and

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[19] Krüger 1999, 114 f.
[20] Staecker 2003, 420f.
[21] Skafte Jensen 1991.
[22] *DK. Odense Amt* 1990–2001, 1454.

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Danish prose for man and wife respectively is shown on the slab for Olve Olvesen Bager (d. 1616), vicar of St. Canute's, and his wife, Barbara Peders-datter (d. *c.* 1638).[23] In 1602, a beautiful rhymed poem was composed by Jacob Jacobsen Wolf, Professor at the Gymnasium, in memory of his fiancée, Karen Bangsdatter, who died the victim of a devastating plague. However, it was presented in Danish only, possibly out of consideration for an intended female audience.[24] Yet when his own tombstone, which also referred to two succeeding wives, was composed *c.* 1635, the duality of language, audience and even typography was represented by personal details and a poem in Latin italics, an apt classical quotation from the hymns of Prudentius (d. 405 A.D.), *Cathemerinon* (10, 53–56):

> Quidnam sibi saxa cavata Qvid pulchra volunt monumenta
> nisi qvod res creditur illis Non mortua sed data somno

> What other meaning do the sculpted stones and beautiful Memorials have,
> other than to demonstrate that those who are placed beneath them are
> [not dead, but only sleeping.

A Danish poem in fracture, probably self-composed, followed as a comment upon this verdict.[25]

As to typography, the material of *MIO* permits only tentative and general statements. *MIO* clearly distinguishes between the use of large and small letters, meaning Gothic minuscule before *c.* 1525. Later, this probably refers to the use of fracture style, in Germany already developed in the late 15th century, and in Denmark, as stated by Staecker, introduced by the clergy around 1500 and by the nobility and citizenry *c.* 1530, though kept up persistently by clerics until the end of the 16th century. In a few cases Humanist minuscules or *antiqua*, sometimes slanted, are found. However, contrary to the picture painted by Staecker, from the 1530s the Early Humanist capitals represent the totally predominant typography in Odense, used equally by the clergy (17 examples out of 20), the nobility and the citizenry, yet in some cases like the above-mentioned distinguishing on the same monument between types used for different languages or purposes.[26]

Confessional Codes

In 1546, Christiern Poulsen, former Prior of the Benedictine Monastery of St. Canute and from the Reformation until his death in 1575 principal and royal vassal at the secularized Catholic institution, had a tombstone made with his

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[23] *DK. Odense Amt* 1990–2001, 820, 822.
[24] *DK. Odense Amt* 1990–2001, 1847.
[25] *DK. Odense Amt* 1990–2001, 825.
[26] Drös 2006.

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image, obediently represented in secular dress. Above his head was the motto: *Spes mihi Christus*. This wellknown *topos*, paraphrasing the first epistle of Paul to Timothy (1 Tim.1), "Lord Jesus Christ, which is our Hope" was a motto also adopted by the Danish kings Christian III and Frederik II and used earliest by the former, with variations, on coins or medals from 1541 on (*Spes mea solus Deus*, *Spes mea Jesus*).[27]

The inclusion of Biblical texts is normally read as a denominational, mainly Protestant code (**Diagram d**). It is well known that Luther, in the preface to his Funeral Hymns, recommended appropriate examples.[28] Yet it has been inferred – among others by Andreas Zajic, in his mapping of primarily Catholic funeral inscriptions from Lower Austria, that this should not be viewed in isolation as a marker of Lutheranism.[29] In the case of Odense, however, its prevalence harmonizes with the traditional picture: 14 post-Reformation examples with particular emphasis on the late 16th and early 17th centuries, citing Scripture, five of them in accordance with Luther's charts, while the remainder possibly reflect personal predilections or reiterate scriptural texts chosen for the funeral sermon. A common phrase, used in five cases from the period *c.* 1486–1571 – that is, in both Catholic and Protestant contexts – is *Requiesca(n)t in pace*. The significant post-Reformation change of the verb from hopeful subjunctive to confident indicative (*Requiescit/ requiescunt*) is not demonstrated in Odense.[30] However, the telling certainty of the soul's abode with God ("whose soul is with God" or "blessed with God/Christ") is expressed in 11 cases, the earliest represented by the slab, stylistically dated *c.* 1550, for Henrik Knudsen Gyldenstierne (d. 1517) in St. John's Church.[31] Direct reference to the Resurrection (in some cases illustrated with the image of Christ resurrected, or the vision of Ezekiel) is found in 19 examples, the earliest from *c.* 1550 (the stylistically dated slab for Peder Lykke (d. 1535), in all probability a distinct Protestant marker.[32] Of a similar Protestant stamp is the epithet *gudfrygtig* (God-fearing) and the emphasis on death as a sleep, which appears present in six texts.[33]

Particular attention should be paid to examples that refer directly to the denominational change. *MIO* gives four cases, to which should be added the above-mentioned epitaph, lost before *c.* 1679, for Bishop Jens Andersen

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[27] Galster 1979.

[28] Luther 1542 (1923).

[29] Zajic 2008, 298f; Steininger 2006, 245–247.

[30] Krüger1999, 166f.

[31] *DK. Odense Amt* 1990–2001, 1447.

[32] *DK. Odense Amt* 1990–2001, 1842f.; cf. also Krüger 1999; Staecker 2003; Steininger 2006; Zajic 2008; Hüpper 2008.

[33] Staecker 2003, 421f. The registrations of *MIO* permit no certain conclusions as to the use of the monogram of Christ (*IHS*), also counted by Staecker 2003 as a Protestant code.

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Beldenak (d. 1537). The eulogy from 1538 by the Lutheran Superintendent Jørgen Jensen Sadolin offered a remarkably understated testimonial to the introduction of the Reformation, pointing to 1538 only as the year when he himself was nominated as superintendent of Funen, and when the nuns from St. Clare's Convent voluntarily vacated their building, having escaped from their vows ("Verbifugis locus est Clarissis sponte relictus").[34] Actually their convent was returned to the clergy and restored to its previous use as a private residence, formerly for Queen Christine and now for the superintendent himself. Sadolin, one of the earliest Lutheran preachers in Odense, was himself praised on his death in 1559 as a brave "defender of Christ's flock". He was also the author of an epitaph in elegiac couplets from 1549 in honor of Jacob Frost, vicar of Greyfriars Church. Frost fought against previous misuses:

> In monachos hostes domini vafrosque sophistas
> Suscepti belli prospera signa tulit
> Sed neque divitibus, pravis satrapisqve pepercit
> Qvos tenuit studium, foede Epicure, tuum

> On monks, enemies of the Lord and cunning sophists
> He declared war, and his battle was fortunate.
> Nor did he spare the rich, evil and power-hungry gluttons,
> whom the worship of you, foul Epicure, has gripped.[35]

A related utterance is the pious creed by Lauritz Hansen, a city clerk, who still *c.* 1560 mentioned "den onde tid" (the evil times), yet sought comfort in the house of the Lord contemplating the beautiful service.[36]

In short, the overall view of post-Reformation confessional markers shows us a picture congruent with the conspectus offered by Staecker – in Odense, though, with a remarkable increase *c.* 1575–1618, not, as in Staecker's examples with a more even distribution *c.* 1550–1602.[37] This might be read as an indication of the relatively conservative nature of Odense. It should however, be added that out of a total of 132 examples from *c.* 1530–1618, less than 50% (55 examples) involve explicit denominational messages.

Towards a Protestant Theology of Office

Worth noticing is a number of the funeral inscriptions of *MIO*, which convey particular didactic messages to the living in order to elicit devotional responses to the remembrance of the dead as virtuous figureheads of the

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[34] *DK. Odense Amt* 1990–2001, 794; Skafte Jensen 2008.
[35] *DK. Odense Amt* 1990–2001, 803, 1830 f.
[36] *DK. Odense Amt* 1990–2001, 1831.
[37] Staecker 2003, Diagram e–f.

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Church or the urban authorities. In their display of a sincere Protestant confession or ideals of virtues and learning, these examples reflect a specific *Amtstheologie* or identify the deceased as representatives of a civic humanism, all striving together towards the model for officials formulated by St. Paul in his first Epistle to Timothy (4, 12): "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity".[38]

As reflected by *MIO*, the majority of clergymen in 16th and early 17th century Odense, including canons and superintendents, were memorialized with verbose inscriptions, preferably in verse and in Neo-Latin, presenting the deceased and his life as a paragon of faith, conduct and education. Bertel Lang (d.1597), vicar at Our Lady and headmaster of the Latin School, was praised not only for his pedagogical gifts, but also for his status as a shepherd to his church and an inspiration to the flourishing of virtue as he guarded Christ's flock for 25 years. Now he rested at the age of 60 with his spouse, Mette, while "his soul dwells among the stars".[39] Related examples of verses in Neo-Latin elegiac couplets were found on the tombstones of other members of the clergy, including the canon Jørgen Gyldenstierne (d. 1551), the superintendent Niels Jespersen (d. 1587) and the vicars Hans Foss (d. 1559), Jørgen Rasmusen Ydsted Schonning (d. 1571), Peder Lauritsen (d. 1573), Jacob Henriksen (d. 1577) and Jørgen Simonsen (d. 1602).[40] Particularly florid was the inscription on Henriksen's slab in St. John's Church, presenting (in the first person) his *curriculum vitae* – inseparably bound as he was to this very church, receiving here Christ's Holy Baptism, introduced to the true learning in God's words, appointed by Holy Church as a preacher of the Gospel, and now destined by fate to rest here, safely sleeping with the saints on this very spot ("tutus in hoc strato cum sanctis dormio") – a probable if remarkably inept reference to his burial in the chancel right in front of the Late Medieval high altar, later lost, but in 1577 still decorated with a triptych adorned with large images of Mary, figured as the Apocalyptic Virgin, St. John the Baptist and St. Michael.[41]

Verse inscriptions in Neo-Latin were not limited to the clergy. Examples produced for civil servants include the tombstones of the alderman Jørgen Hansen (d. 1588) and the apothecary Jesper Simonsen (d. 1602). The latter of these died during the devastating plague and was glorified as a *miles civilis* who fought bravely against the pestilence, smiled upon by Podalirius and Machaon, the sons of Asclepius. However, in the end his body was "slain by the bitter infection", while his divine soul went to "coelica Regna" (the

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[38] Wulf 2012; Aavitsland 2015.
[39] *DK. Odense Amt* 1990–2001, 1164.
[40] *DK. Odense Amt* 1990–2001, 817, 819, 1844, 1448, 1450, 1846.
[41] *DK. Odense Amt* 1990–2001, 1355 ff.

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heavenly abodes). Yet, the concluding formula, "Daedala terra vale" (Farewell, wonderful earth) was a remarkable humanist homage to the blessings of the temporary world.[42]

Epilogue

The *MIO* corpus, of which only selected aspects have been discussed in the present context, possesses rich potential for further analysis of social, confessional and cultural patterns in a well-defined major urban community during the 16th and 17th centuries. As stated, developments in typography and the increasing prevalence of Danish on monuments to the nobility and the citizenry, or the rebirth of Latin (or Neo-Latin) for the commemoration of the same group, including the clergy, reflect changes in cultural attitudes rather than denominational markers. As for the presence of direct or indirect Protestant codes, it should be noted, in relation to post-Reformation funeral culture in Odense, that these characteristics are represented in fewer than half the examples registered in *MIO*, while the remainder more neutrally state names and data, hardly deviating from pre-Reformation practices. In these contexts, we should probably recognize a reflection of the consensus-seeking, almost univocal Early Lutheran Church in Denmark, since in the majority of cases the funeral monuments refrain from demonstratively flaunting the new creed or breaking away from well-established customs.[43] Of much more distinct value in this context are memorials of prominent representatives of the Church and of city officials, elevated as paradigms of orthodoxy, virtue and learning.

None of these qualities, however, was to save the items from destruction. The vandalism reached a climax in the latter part of the 18th and the early 19th century, reducing the number of recorded monuments by almost 75%. A particular moment of "repressive erasure",[44] or a rebirth of Reformation iconoclasm, was evident in the emptying and demolition of Greyfriars Church *c.* 1804–1818, destroying 13 sepulchral tablets and 56 tombstones – an action to be paralleled with the liturgical reform debates ("Liturgistriden") of the 1780s.[45] Yet the value of the Bircherod collection was acknowledged by antiquarians, as witnessed by the continuing production of copies during the early 19th century, although it is still in 2017 left as a challenge to cultivators

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[42] *DK. Odense Amt* 1990–2001, 820.

[43] See also Johannsen & Johannsen 2012. As for iconography, a related "confessional reshuffling of the motifs used" should be reckoned with, rather than a myth of the creation of a unique new Lutheran system, cf. Jürgensen 2012, 367.

[44] Connerton 2008.

[45] *DK. Odense Amt* 1990–2001, 1774–1779, 1830–1849. This movement, supporting the elimination of older church furnishings and memorials, was pointed out by Birgitte Bøggild Johannsen in Nyborg & Johannsen 2006, 278–281.

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of Late Medieval and Early Modern epigraphy and language to edit this singular thesaurus in print or a digitalized version.

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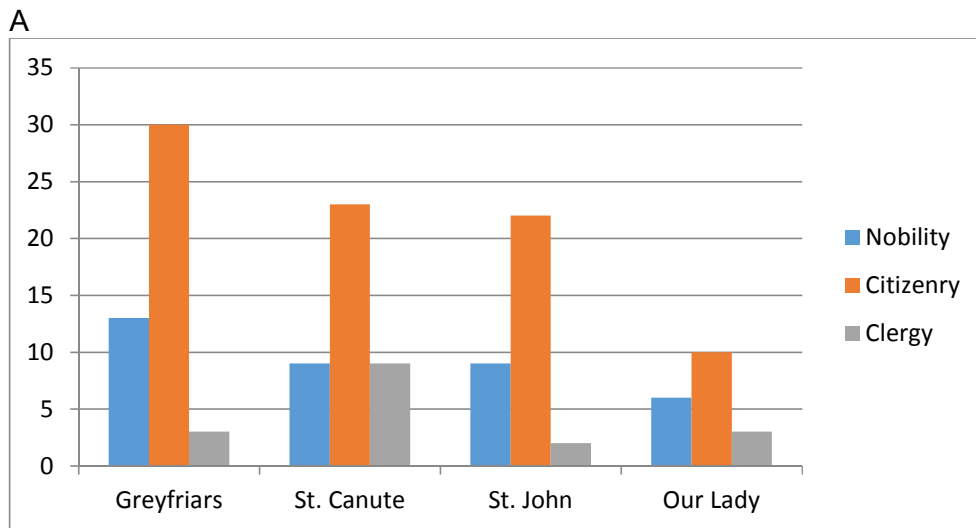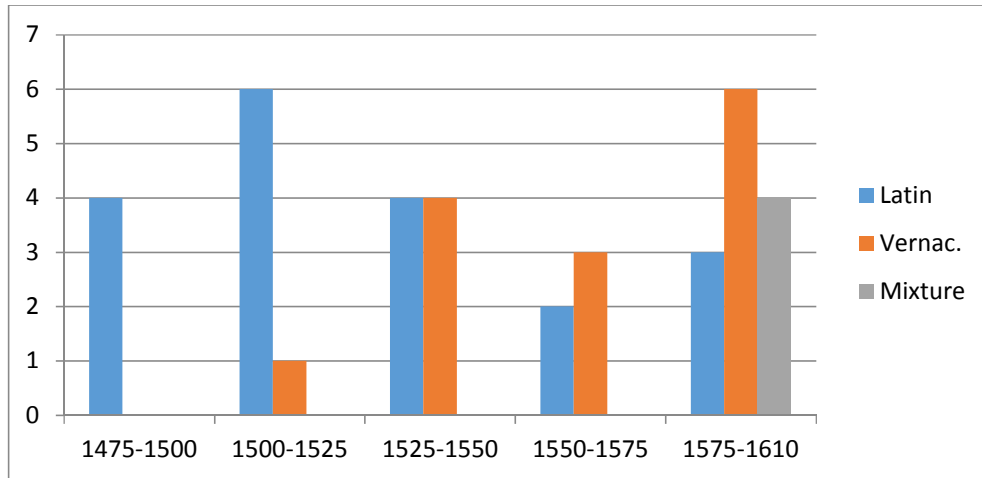*Birgitte Bøggild Johannsen: Reading between the Lines*

Diagrams

A

Diagram a. Social physiognomy of the four city churches in Odense (Greyfriars Church, St. Canute, St. John and Our Lady).

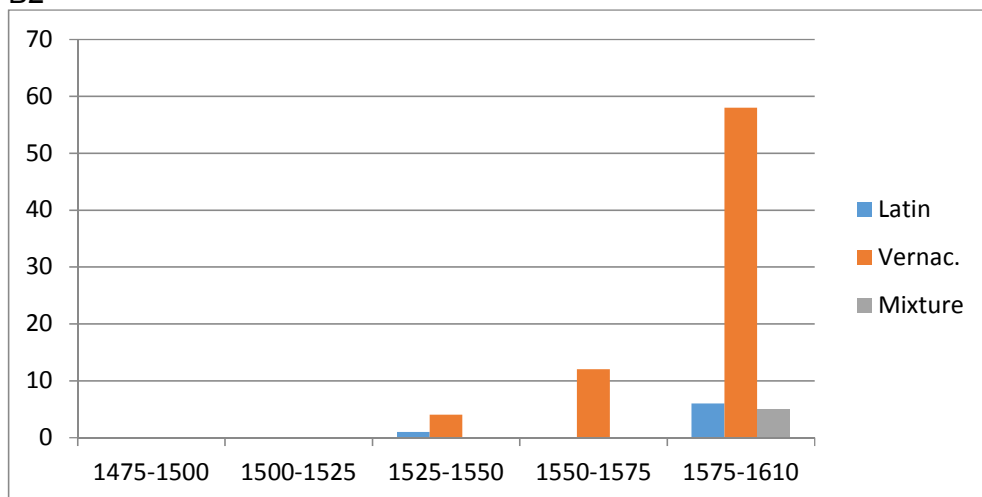Diagram b.1–3. Choice of language for members of the nobility (b.1.), the citizenry (b.2) and the clergy (b.3).
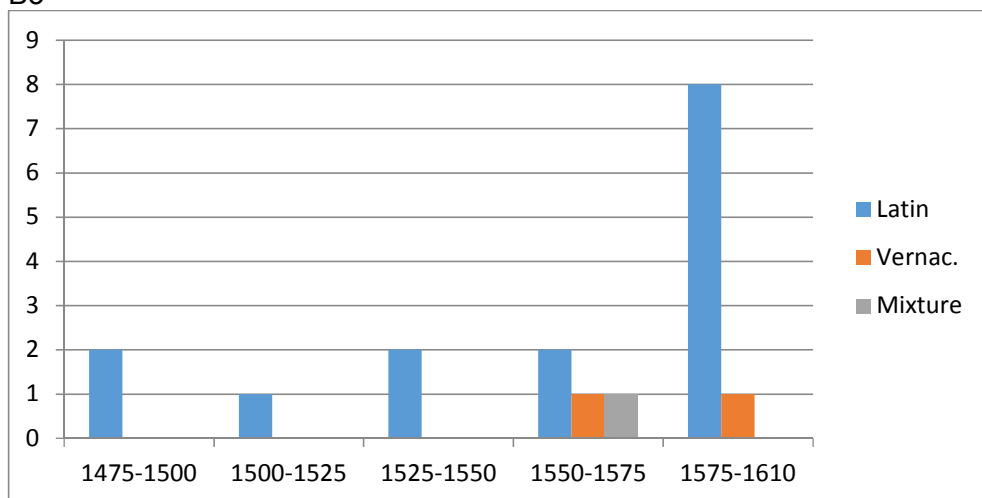▼

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B1

B2

B3

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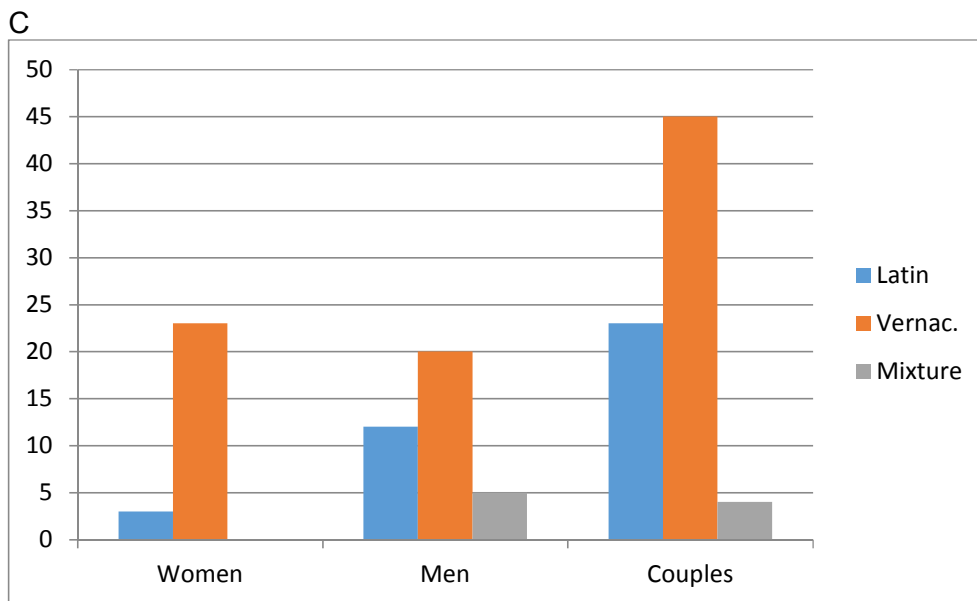*Birgitte Bøggild Johannsen: Reading between the Lines*

C

Diagram c. Gendered patterns of language use (Latin, Vernacular, combinations).
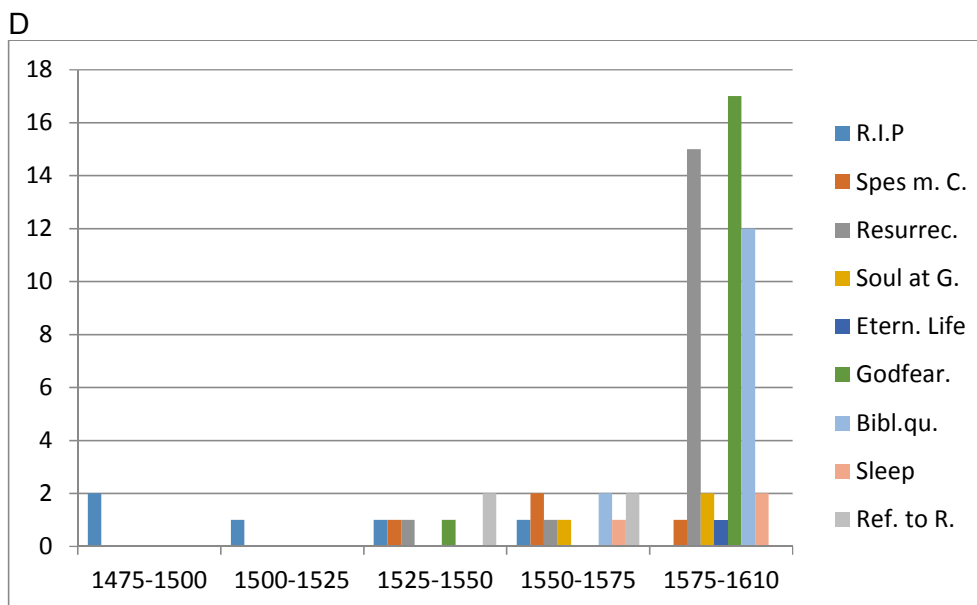
D

Diagram d. Confessional markers exemplified by Bircherod. Medium blue: Rest in Peace. Orange: Spes mea Christus. Dark grey: References to Resurrection. Yellow: Soul with God. Dark blue: References to Eternal Life. Green: Godfearing (Gudfrygtig). Light blue: Biblical quotations. Pink: References to sleep. Light grey: References to the Reformation.