



Dr. Richard Cole (UC London)

The Death of Tidericus the Organist

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The events of 1350 on the island of Gotland must be one of the strangest moments in Scandinavian history. Ostensibly, it was a story that had been told countless times before across Europe: the Black Death was ravaging the island, and the Jews were getting the blame. A hysteria ensued, the alleged perpetrators were forced to confess, and were duly burnt at the stake. What makes Gotland special is that there were no Jews to be burnt. Of the nine supposed conspirators, two were priests, and one, the only named individual, 'Tidericus', was an 'organista' – probably the organ player at the church of St. Olaf in Visby. A context of social unrest, with class divisions bisecting proto-national identities (Low German-speaking versus Gutnish-speaking), is suggested as the catalyst that would consign Tidericus and his co-accused to the flames.

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