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TRACING THE JERUSALEM CODE

VOLUME 1: THE HOLY CITY
CHRISTIAN CULTURES IN MEDIEVAL SCANDINAVIA
(ca. 1100 - 1536)

*Edited by Kristin B. Aavitsland
and Line M. Bonde*



Tracing the Jerusalem Code 1

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Christian Cultures in Medieval Scandinavia
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In memory of Erling Sverdrup Sandmo (1963–2020)

Contents

List of Maps and Illustrations — XI

List of Abbreviations — XVII

Editorial comments for all three volumes — XIX

Kristin B. Aavitsland, Eivor Andersen Oftestad, and Ragnhild Johnsrud Zorgati
Prelude — 1

Introductions: Jerusalem in Medieval Scandinavia

Kristin B. Aavitsland

Chapter 1

Jerusalem: Navel of the Storyworld in Medieval Scandinavia — 12

Klaus Johan Myrvoll

Chapter 2

Re-Naming Jerusalem: A Note on Associative Etymology in the Vernacular
North — 42

Eivor Andersen Oftestad

Chapter 3

Translatio Templi: A Conceptual Condition for Jerusalem References
in Medieval Scandinavia — 49

Part I: Kings, Crusaders, and Jerusalem Relics: Strategies of Legitimation, Models of Authority

Bjørn Bandlien

Chapter 4

Jerusalem and the Christianization of Norway — 59

Øystein Ekroll

Chapter 5

Scandinavian Holy Kings in the Nativity Church of Bethlehem — 86

Pål Berg Svenungsen

Chapter 6

The Saint and the Wry-Neck: Norse Crusaders and the Second Crusade — 95

Ane L. Bysted

Chapter 7

***Historia de Profectione Danorum in Hierosolymam: A Journey to the Lost Jerusalem* — 132**

Lukas Raupp

Chapter 8

Importing Jerusalem: Relics of the True Cross as Political Legitimation in Early Twelfth-Century Denmark and Norway — 140

Lena Liepe

Chapter 9

The Crown of Thorns and the Royal Office in Thirteenth- and Fourteenth-Century Scandinavia — 166

Part II: The Holy City: Travels, Perceptions, and Interactions

Anthony Bale

Chapter 10

From Nidaros to Jerusalem; from *Feginsbrekka* to Mount Joy — 191

Denys Pringle

Chapter 11

Scandinavian Pilgrims and the Churches of the Holy Land in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries — 198

Stefka G. Eriksen

Chapter 12

Physical and Spiritual Travel across the Christian Storyworld: *Leiðarvísir*, an Old Norse Itinerary to Jerusalem — 218

Maria H. Oen

Chapter 13

The Locus of Truth: St Birgitta of Sweden and the Pilgrimage to the Holy Land — 245

Part III: Jerusalem Transposed and Reenacted: Townscapes, Churches, and Practices

Øystein Ekroll

Chapter 14

St Olav, Nidaros, and Jerusalem — 270

Line M. Bonde

Chapter 15

Jerusalem Commonplaces in Danish Rural Churches: What Urban Architecture Remembers — 299

Kersti Markus

Chapter 16

The Holy City in the Wilderness: Interpreting the Round Churches in Västergötland, Sweden — 324

Margrete Syrstad Andås

Chapter 17

Entering the Temple of Jerusalem: Candlemas and Churching in the Lives of the Women of the North. A Study of Textual and Visual Sources — 340

Kaja M. H. Hagen

Chapter 18

Heavenly Agent and Divine Disclosure: The Holy Cross at Borre — 375

Martin Wangsgaard Jürgensen

Chapter 19

The Heavenly Jerusalem and the Late Medieval Church Interior — 394

Part IV: Navigating the Sacred Storyworld: Nordic Landscapes and Salvation History

Kristin B. Aavitsland

Chapter 20

***Civitas Hierusalem famosissima*: The Cross, the Orb, and the History of Salvation in the Medieval North — 424**

Mikael Males

Chapter 21

Imagining the Holy Land in the Old Norse World — 455

Margrethe C. Stang

Chapter 22

**Enemies of Christ in the Far North: Tales of Saracens, Jews and the Saami
in Norwegian Medieval Painting — 477**

Jørn Øyrehagen Sunde

Chapter 23

**The Virtues Building Jerusalem: The Four Daughters of God and Their Long
Journey to Norwegian Law in the Thirteenth Century — 500**

Biörn Tjällén

Chapter 24

Zion in the North: Jerusalem and the Late Medieval Histories of Uppsala — 520

List of Contributors — 535

Bibliography — 537

Index of Manuscripts — 591

Index — 593

List of Maps and Illustrations

- Fig. 1.0** The Hereford *mappa mundi*, c.1300 oriented and centring on Jerusalem. Public domain, Wikimedia Commons — **10**
- Fig. 1.1** St Olav, *Rex perpetuum Norvegie*. Detail of portable ivory altar, early fourteenth century, National Museum of Denmark. Photo: CC BY-SA, John Lee, Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen — **12**
- Fig. 1.2** Scenes from the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Altar panel from Nedstryn Church, Western Norway, 1270–1300. University Museum of Bergen. Photo: Svein Skare © Universitetsmuseet i Bergen — **25**
- Fig. 1.3** *Civitas Hierusalem*. Central part of the gilt altar panel from Lisbjerg Church, 1135. National Museum of Denmark. Photo: John Lee, Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen — **36**
- Fig. 1.4** Taking the cross for Jerusalem. Relief above the portal of the southern transept, Ribe Cathedral, early thirteenth century. Watercolour by J. Kornerup, 1865. National Museum of Denmark. Public domain, Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen — **38**
- Fig. 2.1** Wooden stick with runic inscription mentioning Jerusalem [iaurusalem], thirteenth century. Excavated from Trondheim city centre 1973–1985. NTNU, Vitenskapsmuseet, Trondheim — **42**
- Fig. 3.1** Roman soldiers carrying the *menorah* from the Temple of Jerusalem. Relief from the Arch of Titus, Rome, 81–85 CE. Photo: Roger Jensen — **53**
- Fig. 4.0** Mail-clad knights fighting sword in hand below a scene from the life of St Nicholas. Murals in the nave of Aal Church, Jutland, c. 1200–1225. Photo: Martin Wangsaard Jürgensen — **56**
- Fig. 4.1** Mølen, a portion of the coastline in Vestfold, South-Eastern Norway, identified with Old Norse Nesjar, site of the battle between King Olav Haraldsson and Svein Haakonson at Palm Sunday 1016. Photo: Arnstein Rønning, CC BY-SA 3.0 — **61**
- Fig. 4.2** Full-page miniature of Christ's entry into Jerusalem, preceding the benediction for Palm Sunday, in the Benedictional of St Æthelwold, Bishop of Winchester 963–984. British Library, Add MS 49598, f. 45v — **65**
- Fig. 5.1** Tadeus Rijchter, *St Olav*. Copy of mural on column in the Nativity Church, Bethlehem. Gouache on paper, 180 × 110 cm © Frederiksborg Castle, Museum of National History. Photo: Kit Weis — **86**
- Fig. 5.2** Tadeus Rijchter, *St Knud*. Copy of mural on column in the Nativity Church, Bethlehem. Gouache on paper, 180 × 110 cm © Frederiksborg Castle, Museum of National History. Photo: Kit Weis — **90**
- Fig. 6.1** Orkney, Kirkwall. St Magnus Cathedral. Photo: Robert Scarth, CC BY-SA 2.0 — **126**
- Fig. 6.2** Orkney, Orphir. Ruined round church, early twelfth century. Photo: Kjartan Hauglid — **129**
- Fig. 7.1** The ruin of St Olav's Church of the Premonstratensian monastery in Tønsberg, twelfth century. Photo: Kjell Oscar Bakker — **132**
- Fig. 8.1** The Dagmar Cross, front. National Museum of Denmark. Photo: CC BY-SA; Lennart Larsen, Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen — **140**
- Fig. 8.2** The Dagmar Cross, reverse. National Museum of Denmark. Photo: CC BY-SA; Lennart Larsen, Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen — **150**
- Fig. 8.3** The Roskilde Cross. National Museum of Denmark. Photo: CC BY-SA; Lennart Larsen, Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen — **152**

- Fig. 8.4** The Orø Cross. National Museum of Denmark. Photo: CC BY-SA; Lennart Larsen, Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen — **153**
- Fig. 8.5** The Tønsberg Cross, Oslo University Museum of Cultural History. Photo: CC BY-SA 4.0; Eirik Irgens Johnsen, Kulturhistorisk museum, Oslo — **160**
- Fig. 9.1** St Mary's Church, Oslo. Reconstruction of the façade by Harald Sundt, 1926. From *Riksantikvarens kulturminnebilder* — **166**
- Fig. 9.2** St Louis of France publicly displays the passion relics of Sainte Chapelle on Good Friday. Drawing from Matthew Paris' *Chronica Majora*, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, Parker MS 16 fol. 141v. Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International — **186**
- Fig. 10.0** The Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem. Photo: Stefano Baldini/ Alamy Stock Photo — **188**
- Fig. 10.1** Mount Joy: Nabi Samwil (Palestine). Photo: Anthony Bale — **194**
- Fig. 11.1** Țarțūs (Tortosa), Latin cathedral. Photo: Denys Pringle, 1984 — **198**
- Fig. 11.2** Map of the Holy Land showing Abbot Nikulās's route from Acre to the Jordan, 1145–53. Drawing by Kirsty Harding — **205**
- Fig. 11.3** Jerusalem, church of St Mary in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Photo: Denys Pringle — **207**
- Fig. 11.4** Jerusalem, Mount of Olives. Constantinian church of the Eleona (Pater Noster), plan and section. From L.-H. Vincent and F.-M. Abel, *Jérusalem nouvelle*, Paris 1914–1926, fig. 154 — **209**
- Fig. 11.5** Jerusalem, Mount of Olives. Church of the Eleona (Pater Noster), plan of the medieval crypt. Drawing by Peter E. Leach, after Vincent and Abel, *Jérusalem nouvelle*, Paris 1914–1926 — **211**
- Fig. 11.6** Map showing the route of Friar Maurice's voyage through the western Mediterranean in 1271. Drawing by Ian Dennis — **212**
- Fig. 11.7** Țarțūs (Tortosa), Latin cathedral. From the SW. Photo: Denys Pringle — **213**
- Fig. 12.1** The opening of *Eiríks saga víðförla*, late fourteenth century. Flateyrbok, GKS 1005, fol. 4v. Reykjavík, Safn Arna Magnússonar — **218**
- Fig. 13.1** Niccolò di Tommaso, *Birgitta of Sweden at the cave in Bethlehem, beholding the vision of the Nativity of Christ*. Tempera on panel. Vatican City, Pinacoteca Vaticana. Photo: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0, Richard Stracke, www.christianiconography.info — **252**
- Fig. 13.2** St Birgitta of Sweden with pilgrim attributes. Fresco, early sixteenth century. Harg Church, Uppland, Sweden. Photo: Wikimedia Commons — **266**
- Fig. 14.0** Procession of women accompanying the Virgin Mary to the Temple. Norra Strö Church, Scania, c.1450–1475. Photo Lennart Karlsson, © National Historical Museums, Sweden — **268**
- Fig. 14.1** St Olav, king and martyr. Stained glass window from Lye Church, Gotland, c.1325. Photo: Øystein Ekroll — **270**
- Fig. 14.2** Nidaros Cathedral, seen from the NE in 1872. Photo: Erik Olsen/Nidaros Cathedral Restoration Workshop — **285**
- Fig. 14.3** Vertical section of the Nidaros Cathedral octagon seen towards the East. Drawing by Hermann M. Schirmer, printed in Johan Meyer: *Domkirken i Trondhjem* (Trondhjem 1914), Fig. 10 — **292**
- Fig. 14.4** The ground plan of the Holy Sepulchre Church rotunda (in red) interpolated on the plan of the Nidaros Cathedral octagon (in black). Graphics: Samuel B. Feragen/Øystein Ekroll — **295**

- Fig. 14.5** Altar panel from c.1300, Trondheim. Nidaros Cathedral. Photo: ©Torgeir Suul NDR — **297**
- Fig. 15.1** Portal jambs, Hunseby Curch, Lolland. a. Inscription, inner northern jamb; b. Inscription, inner southern jamb. Photo: Line M. Bonde, 2018 — **300**
- Fig. 15.2** Reconstruction of Hørning Church, Moesgaard Museum, Aarhus. Photo: Sten Porse, 2006 — **303**
- Fig. 15.3** The “minimum church model:” plan, elevation, and cross-section facing East. Based on schematic drawings from *Danmarks Kirker*. Altered by Line M. Bonde and digitized by Kim Bonde, 2019 — **304**
- Fig. 15.4** Characteristic samples. a. Door opening, Branderup Church, Southern Jutland; b. Window opening, Klim Church, Northern Jutland; c. Apse, Munke Bjergby Church, Zealand; d. Wall recesses, Hammelev Church, Eastern Jutland; e. Chancel arch, Hassing Church, North-western Jutland; f. Baptismal font, Godsted Church, Island of Falster; g. Wall painting, apse, Sæby Church, Zealand. Photo: Line M. Bonde, 2016–2019 — **306**
- Fig. 15.5** North portal, Sinding Church, Central Jutland. Photo: Line M. Bonde, 2018 — **311**
- Fig. 15.6** Grønbæk Church, Central Jutland. a. Blind arcades, apse; b. Detail of column base from the blind arcade of the apse. Photo: Line M. Bonde, 2018 — **312**
- Fig. 15.7** Wall painting in Soderup Church, Zealand, southern wall of the nave. Photo: Kirsten Trampedach, Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen — **313**
- Fig. 15.8** Baptismal font, Husby Church, Southern Jutland. Photo: Line M. Bonde, 2018 — **314**
- Fig. 15.9** Largescale movements of an idealized celebration of Holy Mass. a. *Asperges me / vidi aquam*; b. *Introitus*; c. *Introitus, Kyrie* etc. Drawn by Line M. Bonde and digitized by Kim Bonde, 2019 — **319**
- Fig. 16.1** Resurrected Christ on the baptismal font of the Ottravad Church, twelfth century. Photo: CC BY-NO-ND 2.5 Lennart Karlsson 1995-05-17 — **324**
- Fig. 16.2** Round church of Skörstorp. Photo: CC BY-SA 3.0 Gunnar Creutz, 2010 — **326**
- Fig. 16.3** Round churches and the place called the Holy City in the area between Falköping and Lake Vättern in Västergötland. Drawing by Anu Printsmann. © Lantmäteriet — **331**
- Fig. 16.4** Round church of Agnestad. After Frölén 1910, 106. Drawing Henri Papson — **331**
- Fig. 16.5** Round church of Dimbo. After Hyltén-Cavallius 1864, 202 — **332**
- Fig. 16.6** Tympanum of the southern portal of the church of Valstad. Photo: Kjartan Hauglid — **334**
- Fig. 16.7** Jesus Christ on the cross. The baptismal font of the Ottravad Church, twelfth century. Photo: CC BY-NO-ND 2.5 Lennart Karlsson 1995-05-17 — **337**
- Fig. 16.8** Serpent in the Urnes style on the baptismal font of the Ottravad Church, twelfth century. Photo: CC BY-NO-ND 2.5 Lennart Karlsson 1995-05-17 — **338**
- Fig. 16.9** Christ Pantocrator and a priest (?) placing a cross on a mound. The baptismal font of the Ottravad Church, twelfth century. Photo: CC BY-NO-ND 2.5 Lennart Karlsson 1995-05-17 — **339**
- Fig. 16.10** Self-presentation of the stone master on the baptismal font of the Ottravad Church, twelfth century. Photo: CC BY-NO-ND 2.5 Lennart Karlsson 1995-05-17 — **339**
- Fig. 17.1** Presentation in the Temple. Detail of the Tresfjord altar panel, Tresfjord Church, Møre. Photo Svein Skare, © University Museum of Bergen, Norway — **340**
- Fig. 17.2** Presentation in the Temple. The Kropp baptismal font, The National Historical Museum, Stockholm. Photo Lennart Karlsson, © National Historical Museums, Sweden — **353**

- Fig. 17.3** Presentation in the Temple. The Gumlösa baptismal font, Gumlösa Church, Scania. Photo Lennart Karlsson, © National Historical Museums, Sweden — **354**
- Fig. 17.4** Presentation in the Temple. The Vall baptismal font, Vall Church, Gotland. Photo Lennart Karlsson, © National Historical Museums, Sweden — **355**
- Fig. 17.5** Childhood of Christ scenes, the Hopperstad Ciborium, Hopperstad Church, Sogn. Photo and © Linn Willetts Borgen — **355**
- Fig. 17.6** Presentation in the Temple. Detail of the Skaun altar panel, Skaun Church, Trøndelag. Photo Eirik I. Johnsen © The Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo, Norway — **358**
- Fig. 17.7** Door for sacramental niche, Bunge Church, Gotland. Photo Lennart Karlsson, © National Historical Museums, Sweden — **359**
- Fig. 17.8** Purification of Mary, Södra Råda Church, Västra Götaland. Photo Lennart Karlsson, © National Historical Museums, Sweden — **366**
- Fig. 17.9** Presentation in the Temple. Norra Strö Church, Scania. Photo Lennart Karlsson, © National Historical Museums, Sweden — **367**
- Fig. 17.10** Presentation in the Temple. Detail of retable, ca 1520, in Valö Church, Uppland. Photo Lennart Karlsson, © National Historical Museums, Sweden — **370**
- Fig. 17.11** The presentation in the Temple. Early fifth-century mosaic in S. Maria Maggiore, Rome. After *I mosaici della patriacale basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore in Roma*, 1967 — **372**
- Fig. 17.12** Jacopo Torriti, Presentation in the Temple, 1296. Apse mosaic in S. Maria Maggiore, Rome. Photo: © 2019. Andrea Jemolo/Scala, Florence — **373**
- Fig. 18.1** The Borre cross, ca. 1250-1300. 301cm x214cm. Museum of Cultural History, Oslo. Photo: Kaja M. H. Hagen — **376**
- Fig. 18.2** Detail of the Borre cross: a square-shaped convex panel beneath the carved quatrefoil in the intersection of the cross arms. Photo: Kaja M. H. Hagen — **379**
- Fig. 18.3** X-ray of the convex panel in the intersection of the cross arms. Photo: Kaja M. H. Hagen — **380**
- Fig. 18.4** *Arma Christi* with crucifix, instruments of the passion and measuring stick, 1312–1321. *Passionale quod dicitur Cunegundis abbatissae*, Ms XIV A 17, fol. 10r, National Library, Prague — **383**
- Fig. 18.5** Detail of the Borre cross: *Christ Harrowing Hell*. Photo: Kaja M. H. Hagen — **388**
- Fig. 18.6** Parchment with a prayer to St Dorothy, the Holy Cross, and Christ, from Torpo church in Hallingdal. 1450–1500. DN vol. 12, 266. National Archives of Norway (Arkivverket) — **391**
- Fig. 19.1** Inside Sanderum Church, Funen, looking east. Photo: Arnold Mikkelsen — **394**
- Fig. 19.2** The Romanesque decoration in the apse of Sanderum Church as seen when uncovered in 1895. Watercolour by J. Kornerup, National Museum of Denmark. Public domain, Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen — **399**
- Fig. 19.3** The Romanesque decoration on the north wall of the chancel in Sanderum Church. Photo: Arnold Mikkelsen — **400**
- Fig. 19.4** Abraham with souls in his lap depicted in the north window of the chancel in Sanderum Church. Photo: Arnold Mikkelsen — **401**
- Fig. 19.5** Scenes from the Passion of Christ, c.1525, in the chancel vault of Sanderum Church. Photo: Arnold Mikkelsen — **402**
- Fig. 19.6** Last Judgement painted c.1525 in the nave of Sanderum Church. Photo: Arnold Mikkelsen — **403**
- Fig. 19.7** The Holy Family painted c.1525 opposite the Last Judgement in the nave of Sanderum Church. Photo: Arnold Mikkelsen — **404**

- Fig. 19.8** The Scourging at the Pillar in the chancel vault of Sanderum Church, c.1525. Photo: Arnold Mikkelsen — **407**
- Fig. 19.9** St Peter at the gates of the Heavenly Jerusalem, c.1525, nave of Sanderum Church. Photo: Arnold Mikkelsen — **408**
- Fig. 19.10** A vision of Paradise painted in the chancel vault of Løjt Church, c.1520. Photo: Martin Wangsaard Jürgensen — **410**
- Fig. 19.11** Saints and paradise vision entwined. Painted in Chapel of St Birgitta, Roskilde Cathedral, in 1511. Photo: Martin Wangsaard Jürgensen — **411**
- Fig. 19.12** Inside Heavenly Jerusalem. Mural in Vinderslev Church, 1500–1525. Photo: Martin Wangsaard Jürgensen — **419**
- Fig. 20.0** The Heavenly Jerusalem. Altar retable, Sahl Church, Jutland, c.1200–1225. Photo: CC BY-SA; Arnold Mikkelsen, Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen — **422**
- Fig. 20.1** Plan of Jerusalem. Icelandic manuscript fragment, early fourteenth century (AM 732b 4to, fol. 8v), The Arnamagnæaen manuscript collection, Copenhagen — **424**
- Fig. 20.2** Plan of Jerusalem. Icelandic manuscript fragment, early fourteenth century (AM 736 I 4to, fol. 2r), The Arnamagnæaen manuscript collection, Copenhagen — **426**
- Fig. 20.3** Plan of Jerusalem. Icelandic manuscript, 1300–1350 (AM 544 4to, *Hauksbók*, fol.19r), The Arnamagnæaen manuscript collection, Copenhagen — **428**
- Fig. 20.4** Plan of Jerusalem (“Crusader map”), Frakish manuscript fragment (psalter?), mid-twelfth century (ms KB 76 F 5, fol. 1r). Koninklijke Bibliotheek, National Library of the Netherlands, The Hague — **430**
- Fig. 20.5** *Templum Domini*. Detail of the Jerusalem plan in AM 736 I 4to, fol. 2r. The Arnamagnæaen manuscript collection, Copenhagen — **431**
- Fig. 20.6** Wooden church model, probably the headpiece of a ciborium. Oslo University Museum of Cultural history. Photo: CC BY-SA 4.0 Grete Gundhus — **432**
- Fig. 20.7** Cosmological diagrams and a Latin verse on the Holy Cross, facing the plan of Jerusalem on the opposite folio. Icelandic manuscript fragment, early fourteenth century (AM 736 I 4to, fol. 1r), The Arnamagnæaen manuscript collection, Copenhagen — **447**
- Fig. 20.8** Labyrinth diagram and *mensura Christi*, one 16th-part of Christ’s body length. Icelandic manuscript fragment, early fourteenth century (AM 732b 4to, fol. 7r), The Arnamagnæaen manuscript collection, Copenhagen — **451**
- Fig. 21.1** Rune inscriptions on the SE wall in Maeshowe, Orkney. Photo: Karen Langsholt Holmqvist — **457**
- Fig. 21.2** The reddish stone with Helgafell (The Holy Mountain) in the background. Photo: Thomas Males — **471**
- Fig. 22.1** Map of dioceses in medieval Norway. Data: Norwegian Mapping Authority, Museum of Cultural History. Illustration: 09.05.2019, E. B. Tesfamariam — **479**
- Fig. 22.2** Altar frontal from Dale II/Unknown church. Detail showing the monstrous Turk’s head used as weapon. University Museum of Bergen. Photo: Svein Skare © Universitetsmuseet i Bergen — **482**
- Fig. 22.3** Altar frontal from Nedstryn. Detail showing scene 3: Saracens worshipping Chosroes and 4: the battle of Niniveh. University Museum of Bergen. Photo: Svein Skare © Universitetsmuseet i Bergen — **484**
- Fig. 22.4** Painted chancel vault from Ål church. King Herod and the Massacre of the Innocents. Museum of Cultural History, Oslo © 2019 Kulturhistorisk museum, UiO/ CC BY-SA 4.0 — **486**

- Fig. 22.5** Altar frontal from Hauge. Detail showing the Flagellation and the Carrying of the Cross. University Museum of Bergen. Photo: Svein Skare© Universitetsmuseet i Bergen — **487**
- Fig. 22.6** Altar frontal from Røldal, detail showing Christ's tormentors with "African" physiognomy and a winged helmet. University Museum of Bergen. Photo: Svein Skare © Universitetsmuseet i Bergen — **488**
- Fig. 22.7** Painted chancel vault from Ål church: The Crucifixion with Synagoga personified. Museum of Cultural History, Oslo © 2019 Kulturhistorisk museum, UiO/CC BY-SA 4.0 — **490**
- Fig. 22.8** The Detail of the Trondheim altar frontal, showing Thorir Hund slaying St Olav at the Battle of Stiklestad. Nidaros Cathedral, Trondheim. Photo: ©Torgeir Suul NDR — **494**
- Fig. 23.1** Sculpture at the right jamb of the south chancel porch, c.1225, Nidaros Cathedral. Photo: © Nidaros Domkirkes Restaureringsarbeider — **500**
- Fig. 23.2** Sculpture at the left jamb of the south chancel porch, c.1225, Nidaros Cathedral. Photo: © Nidaros Domkirkes Restaureringsarbeider — **512**
- Fig. 24.1** Altar shrine with St Erik of Sweden (to the right) and St Olav of Norway (to the left), mid-fifteenth century. From Länna Church, Sweden. Statens historiska museer, Stockholm. Photo: Wikimedia Commons — **520**
- Fig. 24.2** Uppsala Cathedral. Detail of woodcut by Olof Rudbeck. Illustration in Olof Rudbeck's *Atlantica*, 1679. Upplandsmuseet, Sweden. www.digitaltmuseum.se — **524**

List of Abbreviations

| | |
|------------------|--|
| BBB | <i>Biblioteca bio-bibliografica della Terra Santa e dell'Oriente francescano</i> , ed. Girolamo Golubovich, 5 vols. Florence: Quaracchi 1906–27. |
| DD | <i>Diplomatarium Danicum</i> , Copenhagen 1938–2002. |
| DI | <i>Diplomatarium Islandicum (Íslenzkt fornbréfasafn)</i> , Reykjavík 1857–1976. |
| DK | <i>Danmarks kirker, 1933–</i> , http://danmarkskirker.natmus.dk/ |
| DN | <i>Diplomatarium Norvegicum</i> , 23 vols. Christiania/Oslo, 1847–2011. |
| DS | <i>Diplomatarium Suecanum (Svenskt Diplomatarium)</i> , 6 vols. Stockholm 1829–1946. |
| IED | <i>An Icelandic–English Dictionary</i> , eds Richard Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson. Oxford, 1957. |
| IHC | <i>Itinera Hierosolymitana Crucesignatorum (saec. XII–XIII)</i> , ed. Sabino de Sandoli, 4 vols. Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Collectio Maior 24. Jerusalem 1978–84. |
| <i>Lex.poet.</i> | <i>Lexicon poeticum antiquæ linguæ septentrionalis (Ordbog over det norsk-islandske skjaldesprog)</i> , ed. Sveinbjörn Egilsson, Copenhagen 1931. |
| KLNM | <i>Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder, 1956–1978</i> |
| MGH SRG | <i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum</i> , n.s., Berlin 1922– . |
| MHG SS | <i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores (in folio)</i> , ed. G.H. Pertz, T. Mommsen et al. Hanover-Berlin-etc. 1826– . |
| NBL | <i>Norsk biografisk leksikon</i> , Kristiania/Oslo, 1923–1983. |
| NIÆR. | <i>Norges Indskrifter med de ældre Runer</i> , ed. Sophus Bugge, Christiania 1891–1903. |
| NlyR | <i>Norges innskifter med de yngre runer</i> , ed. Magnus Olsen, Oslo 1941–60. |
| NSL | <i>Norsk stadnamleksikon</i> , eds Jørn Sandnes and Ola Stemshaug. Oslo 1997 |
| ONP | <i>Orbog over det norrøne prosasprog (Dictionary of Old Norse Prose)</i> , https://onp.ku.dk/onp/ |
| ONP 1989 | <i>Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog: Registre (Indices)</i> , Copenhagen: The Arnamagnæan Commission, 1989. |
| PG | <i>Patrologia Cursus Completus, Series Graeca</i> , ed. J.P. Migne, 161 vols. Paris 1857–66. |
| PL | <i>Patrologia Cursus Completus, Series Latina</i> , ed. J.P. Migne, 221 vols. Paris 1844–64. |
| RHC Occ | <i>Recueil des historiens des croisades, Historiens occidentaux</i> , Paris, 1844–1895. |
| RS | <i>Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores, or Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland in the Middle Ages (Rolls Series)</i> , 99 vols. London 1858–97. |
| SDHK | <i>Svensk Diplomatariums huvudkartotek över medeltidsbrev</i> , riksarkivet.se/sdhk |
| Skj. | “Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning.” In 1–2. A. Tekst efter håndskrifterne. B. Rettet tekst, edited by Finnur Jónsson. København-Kristiania: Gyldendalske Boghandel-Nordisk Forlag, 1912–1915. |
| <i>SkP.</i> | “Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages.” Turnhout: Brepols, 2007-. |
| SOL | <i>Svenskt ortnamnslexikon</i> , ed. Mats Wahlberg. Uppsala 2016. |
| SRI | Sveriges runinnskifter |
| SRD | <i>Scriptores Rerum Danicarum Medii Aevi</i> , ed. Jacob Langebek and Peter F. Suhm, 8 vols, Copenhagen 1772–1834. |

Editorial comments for all three volumes

The research behind this book and the two others making up this mini-series was funded by the Norwegian Research Council (RCN, project no. 240448/F10). The three books trace the reception of Jerusalem and the Holy Land in Scandinavia through a millennium. The geographical term Scandinavia originates from the classical Roman author Pliny (*Naturalis historia*, book IV), who applied it to an island beyond the Baltic, probably identifiable with the peninsula of Sweden and Norway. In modern usage, the term is conventionally understood as the three kingdoms Denmark, Norway, and Sweden; whereas the wider term *Norden* (the Nordic countries) also includes Finland, Iceland, the Faroes, Greenland, and the Baltic states. Historically, there are tight cultural connections between all these countries. Their borders and mutual political constellation have changed many times during the millennium that is covered by these three books. We therefore tend to have the horizon of *Norden* in mind, although most of the source material discussed is Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish, and we have chosen to apply the term Scandinavia consistently. For the Middle Ages (vol. 1), we have also chosen to include Iceland and Orkney in Scandinavia because of the very tight administrative, ecclesiastical, and cultural connections with Norway.

The periodization of the three books is worth commenting on. The first volume covers the medieval period from the Christianization in the tenth and eleventh centuries, until the Protestant Reformation in the early sixteenth century. In Scandinavian historiography, the reformation (1536–37 in Denmark-Norway and 1527–1600 in Sweden) marks the watershed between the medieval and early modern periods. We have chosen to stick to this conventional periodization, as the introduction of Lutheranism significantly affected the understanding of Jerusalem. The second volume, then, covers the early modern period from the Reformation until around 1750, when Enlightenment ideas became widespread among key figures. Although it is difficult to draw a sharp line between the early modern and modern periods, Enlightenment thought, and subsequently Romanticism, engendered a second transformation of Christian cultures in general and the understanding of Jerusalem in particular. This is investigated in the third volume, which covers the period from c.1750 to c.1920. These dates are approximations, and the delimitation is further explained in the introduction to volume 3.

For references to the spoken and written vernacular of Scandinavia in the medieval period, we have chosen the term Old Norse, regardless of the authors' land of origin. Old Norse names appear slightly modernized, except from in chapters written from a philological point of view.

A note about the Norwegian capital Oslo, which is referred to in all three volumes: The city was moved westwards and renamed in 1624 after a great fire, and for almost three centuries its name remained Christiania (or Kristiania) after the Danish king Christian IV (r. 1588–1648). In 1925 the city's medieval name Oslo was introduced again. To avoid anachronistic uses of the city's name, we refer to Christiana/

Kristiania in the period between 1624 and 1925. The city of Trondheim is variably referred to as Nidaros, the city's medieval name. Both these names, however, have been in continuous use since the Middle Ages.

The territory that covers today's Israel and Palestine has had multiple names through the centuries. The authors shift between Palestine, The Holy Land, etc, etc, dependant on the terms used in the actual source material. Our aim has been to avoid anachronisms. For the many illustrations, the editors have worked diligently to obtain necessary permissions to reproduce them (cf. List of Maps and Illustrations, XI–XVI). Should there still be concerns regarding image permissions, please contact the editors responsible for the respective volume.

Kristin B. Aavitsland, Eivor Andersen Oftestad, and
Ragnhild Johnsrud Zorgati

Prelude

Why Jerusalem in Scandinavia?

Jerusalem has been invested with thicker layers of meaning than most places in the world. In the history of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Jerusalem is a significant place, a *topos* in the most fundamental sense of the word. For the Jews, it is the ancient capital of Judea, where King Solomon had the first Temple erected for the God of Israel; for the Christians, it is the centre of Jesus of Nazareth's life, death, and resurrection; and for the Muslims, it is the site of the first *qibla* (praying direction), from which the Prophet Muhammad journeyed to the heavens. Within the Christian tradition, the city became a rhetorical and poetical *locus communis*, a commonplace, drawing on a cluster of biblical metaphors from which a whole set of ideas about human society, divine revelation, eschatological expectation, and the connection between these, could be drawn. In conflict with Jewish and Muslim traditions, the Christians have claimed to be the legitimate heir to, and interpreter of, Jerusalem.

In cultures influenced by Christianity, the idea of Jerusalem, earthly and celestial, has engendered a certain structure of literary and visual religious language, applied time and again throughout the last two millennia. In Scandinavia, however, the time span is only half the length, as the Christian faith arrived late to the Nordic shores. Still, a well of sources indicate that Jerusalem has been significant also to the inhabitants of this part of the world. Scandinavian sources are understudied in international scholarship on Jerusalem interpretations, consequently the current book series fills an important gap. We have investigated the image – or rather the imagination – of Jerusalem in religious, political, and artistic sources in a *longue durée* perspective, in order to describe the history of Christianity in Scandinavia through the lens of Jerusalem.

The impact of Jerusalem on Christian European culture has been extensively explored during the last decade, above all by scholars from the fields of art history, architecture, and liturgy.¹ These research efforts have concentrated on material

¹ See for instance the rich and varied material presented in the following collected volumes: Annette Hoffmann and Gerhard Wolf, eds., *Jerusalem as Narrative Space / Erzählraum Jerusalem*

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from the medieval and early modern periods. The present three books on Jerusalem in Scandinavia have, however, a wider chronological scope, as they follow Jerusalem interpretations all the way up to the twentieth century.

Two historical processes have been of extraordinary significance for the reception of the idea of Jerusalem in the Scandinavian countries. The first one is the late conversion to Christianity (tenth to eleventh centuries) and the subsequent formation of church and state in the twelfth century, largely coinciding with the emergence of crusade ideology. When Scandinavians articulated and interpreted their own cosmographic position within the scheme of Christian salvation history, an urgent issue seems to be that of connecting to Jerusalem, the moral and eschatological centre of the world, by translations of Jerusalem's holiness and authority.

The second formative process is the Lutheran reformation in the first half of the sixteenth century and the following efforts to transform the Scandinavian monarchies into confessional, monocultural states. This process implied a reinterpretation of Jerusalem's significance. The early modern Protestant legitimations of God's chosen people were based on a paradigm of justification by faith, and no longer on physical transfer of holiness or authority. Nevertheless, the idea of Jerusalem continued to legitimate secular and religious authorities and to construct a Lutheran identity.

The understanding of Jerusalem founded in premodern Christianity was inherently paradoxical and transcendent. It remained intact, although transformed, in early modern Protestantism. To pursue its manifestations into the modern paradigm, dominated by science, nationalism, increased secularisation, and individualization of religion has proved more complex and challenging. Still, Jerusalem remains a vital point of reference in nineteenth and twentieth century Scandinavian sources.

In this book series, we trace the impact of Jerusalem through a millennium of Scandinavian history. We argue that the models of understanding and the varied metaphorical repertoire connected to Jerusalem may be conceived as a *cultural code*. How this is done and what the implications of that have been are explained in the following introductory pages.

(Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2012); Lucy Donkin and Hanna Vorholt, eds., *Imagining Jerusalem in the Medieval West*, Proceedings of the British Academy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Bianca Kühnel, Galit Noga-Banai, and Hanna Vorholt, eds., *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem*, CELAMA (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014); Renata Bartal, Neta Bodner, and Bianca Kühnel, eds., *Natural Materials of the Holy Land and the Visual Translation of Place, 500–1500* (London – New York: Routledge, 2017).

Foundation: The Biblical Jerusalem Cluster

The foundation of the Christian idea of Jerusalem with its spectrum of connotations is obviously found in the Bible. In order to recognize the structure of literary and visual Jerusalem references in the sources we investigate, it is necessary to briefly recapture how biblical language describes Jerusalem.

In the Bible, Jerusalem functions within the framework of a special linguistic mode, according to the Canadian literary critic Northrop Frye (1912–1991). This linguistic mode is *poetic* in its essence, and it is constituted by metaphorical speech. It hence avoids precise linguistic specification and encourages productive multivalence.² Hence, biblical Jerusalem came to constitute a flexible, almost elastic linguistic framework for talking and thinking about human community and its relation to the Godhead. This is why biblical language is suited to verbalize the transcendent, Frye claims.³

Guidelines for metaphorical thinking are explicitly given in the Christian Bible itself. One of the fundamental premises is the distinction between the earthly and heavenly Jerusalem, between the earthly and heavenly sanctuary. According to the Bible, God had dwelled in the Garden of Eden. After the Fall of Man and the expulsion from the garden, God dwelled in sanctuaries built on his command by his chosen people: first in the transportable tabernacle, carried by the children of Israel as they wandered in the wilderness, designed after divine instruction and considered to be a replica of God's heavenly abode (Exod 26–27). Later, God dwelled in the temple in Jerusalem, erected under King Solomon (1 Kgs 5–8) as a stable place for God to abide for ever (1 Kgs 8:13). It was built on Mount Moriah, the place of Abraham's sacrifice, of Jacob's dream, and where God had shown himself to David (2 Chr 3:1). The Christian interpretation of the biblical temple(s) rests on the conviction that Christ is the new Temple, according to his own words (John 2:19–22). Ultimately, the Christian salvation history ends with the vision of the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:9–27), descending out of heaven from God. This eschatological city, the goal of history, has in contrast to the earthly Jerusalem no need for any temple, as "Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it" (Rev 21:22).

In Galatians 4, Paul applies this multivalent Jerusalem interpretation when he comments on the two women who carried Abraham's children:

For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave and one by a free woman. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, the son of the free woman through promise. Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing

² "It seems that the Bible belongs to an area of language in which metaphor is functional, and where we have to surrender precision for flexibility," Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (New York – London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1982), 56.

³ Frye, *The Great Code*, 56.

children for slavery; she is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. (Gal 4:22–26)

Paul construes Hagar and Sarah as specific sites: Hagar is the Mount Sinai in Arabia, where Moses received the law, and she also corresponds to Jerusalem of the Jews: Her children will forever be slaves under the law and have no right to inherit from the patriarch. The “free woman” Sarah, on her side, is Heavenly Jerusalem, the city of God, and her children will inherit his kingdom according to the promise God gave Abraham. Thus Heavenly Jerusalem is the foremother of God’s people. This connection between the city of Jerusalem, motherhood, God’s promise to the legitimate children of Abraham, and freedom from the Law represents a lasting metaphorical correlation of huge theological, cultural, and political consequence.

When Paul construed Heavenly Jerusalem as *mother*, he drew on a strong tradition in Jewish exegesis, included that of Jesus himself (Matt 23:37; Luke 13:34), which associated Jerusalem with female roles. Repeatedly, we hear about the *Daughter* of Zion (for instance Isa 62:11), and in the book of the Apocalypse, John sees “the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a *bride* adorned for her husband” (Rev 21:2). But Jerusalem is also “the city of the great king” (Matt 5:35), situated “on the high hill” (Matt 5:14). Hence, Jerusalem in her female roles as mother, daughter, and bride connects closely to the son, father, and groom who resides in her: the living God. The expectations of God the groom’s joyous union with his bride Jerusalem connects another line of biblical metaphors to the same cluster: that of fertility and abundance. The metaphorical repertoire of lush gardens (Eden), sprouting green vegetation, fertile land, and trees abundant with fruit, is ubiquitous in biblical language. Linked to the Jerusalem *topos*, it is contrasted by the equally ubiquitous images of barrenness, wasteland, ruin, and desolation. In this network of metaphors, Jerusalem the bride is contrasted with Babylon the whore.

As mother and bride, housing the king, Jerusalem is distinguished from every other city built by human hands. The temple of Yahweh, abode of the one and true God, is situated within her walls. The sacred architectural structure of the Temple, often blurred with the city itself, becomes the node in this biblical cluster of metaphors, gaining significance because it is set in the midst of God’s chosen people. The biblical Jerusalem cluster involves a dynamic relationship between God and this people, served by a priestly hierarchy and ruled by a lineage of legitimate kings, anointed by God. In Old Testament narrative, however, Jerusalem the Bride does not meet the measures expected from her and hence is abandoned by her groom. The wickedness of the children of Israel causes her to be deserted and abandoned. *Jerusalem desolata* (Isa 64:10) mourns her loss, longs for the reunion with her groom, and anticipates the consummation of their alliance.

This poetic narrative, with multiple archetypal features also found in folktales, has considerable potential for ideological interpretations. As such, it has permeated the entire history of Christianity. Through the ages, there are repeated examples of

how the biblical Jerusalem cluster is applied in strife for legitimation of political and religious structures. A key question has been who represents the true Jerusalem and constitutes its legitimate heir, the chosen people of God. Different answers to this question have elicited schisms, reforms, revolutions, wars, and agonizing polemics, and they continue to do so.

The Insider Perspective: Jerusalem as Allegorical Structure in the History of Salvation

Political and cultural uses of the Biblical Jerusalem metaphors are conditioned by a certain perspective on human history, namely that of transcendent teleology: history has a direction, and mankind navigates towards its transcendent destination. The Christian Master Narrative about humankind is a kind of travelogue framed by the Bible. From man's creation, fall, and increasing alienation from the creator, he finds his long and winding way back to a state of bliss in the countenance of God with the help of his redeemer Jesus Christ. This journey begins in the Garden of Eden in the book of Genesis, and ends in the Heavenly Jerusalem in the Book of the Apocalypse. The narrative of salvation history thus unfolds between a rural and an urban vision of Paradise. At the end of history, God's abode is societal and civilizational: it is set in a city, in an architectural structure and a political entity. Through the centuries, the prophecy of the heavenly Jerusalem has not only articulated the Christian hope for eternal life, but also equipped Christians with a potent, poetic language suitable to describe the ideal political state or utopian community.

Early Christianity made Jerusalem the focal point of salvation history, as the point to which everything converges – like in the premodern *mappaemundi* (world maps), where Jerusalem was the physical, mental, and conceptual centre, “the navel of the world.” This designation originates from Jerome's commentary on the prophet Ezekiel.⁴ According to Ezekiel, God claims that “this is Jerusalem, I have set her in the midst of the nations, and the countries round about her” [Ista est Jerusalem, in medio gentium posui eam, et in circuitu eius terras] (Ezek 5:5). This understanding of Jerusalem as the focal point for salvation history was systematically codified in the epistemological model of the *quadriga*, the fourfold interpretation of Scripture.⁵ This scheme of interpretation first appeared in John Cassian (360–435), and came to have paramount impact on medieval exegesis.

⁴ Alessandro Scafi, *Mapping Paradise. A History of Heaven on Earth* (London: The British Library, 2006), 145.

⁵ See Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale, les quatre sens de l'Écriture*, 4 vols. ([Paris]: Aubier, 1959–1964).

In a comment about Psalm 147, in which Jerusalem is called to praise her Lord, John Cassian states:

One and the same Jerusalem can be taken in four senses: historically as the city of the Jews, allegorically as the Church of Christ, anagogically as the heavenly city of God “which is the mother of us all,” tropologically, as the soul of man, which is frequently subject to praise or blame from the Lord under this title.⁶

To medieval theologians, this functioned as a holistic and dynamic model of understanding. On the *historical* level, Jerusalem denotes the physical city, capital of David’s kingdom and the Children of Israel, the place where Solomon erected his temple and Christ suffered death on the cross. Because of the transcendent implications of these events, this denotation also contained other layers of meaning. *Allegorically*, Jerusalem signified the Christian Church, *eschatologically* (“anagogically” in John Cassian’s terminology) it pointed to the heavenly city for which humanity was bound, and *morally* (“tropologically”) it represented the individual Christian soul. This model thus facilitated an understanding that combined past, present, and future, time and eternity, the singular and the universal, and the human and divine into one single rhetorical figure – and onto one single spot: Jerusalem.

This hermeneutical model, further developed and applied in the medieval Christian world, was Christianity’s take on society. In post-medieval Christian cultures, it has undergone transformation and even fragmentation according to shifting religious paradigms. However, its fundamental components – the biblical metaphors – have remained stable and interconnected, and continue to inform Christianity’s conceptions about itself and the world.

The Outsider Perspective: The Jerusalem Code Operating in Christian Storyworlds

Our object of research is the historical application of the biblical Jerusalem cluster, the structuring principle derived from its interconnected metaphors, and its potential for cultural production and meaning-making. To describe these phenomena through shifting historical periods, we needed analytical terms that capture the pervasiveness and complexity of the Jerusalem connotations, their recurrent and manifold applications, and the shifting preconditions for their impact. Our attempt is to consider Jerusalem a cultural *code*.

The term “code” has a range of applications in different fields, from genetics and biochemistry (“genetic code”) to information technology (“programming code”)

⁶ John Cassian, *Conferences*, trans. Edgar C. S. Gibson, CCEL 438.

and popular culture (Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code*). In everyday usage, "code" may also refer to a selected arrangement of digits, like pin codes, bar codes, and QR codes. Diverse as these usages indeed are, they still have certain features in common. All of them concern transmission of messages communicated in languages enigmatic to other than the addressees, and they thus require decoding or translation in order to be understood. So, in all these cases, the term "code" is conceived of as a communicative key: it is a (hidden) script or formula that is applied to make things happen.

All these usages of "code" have a common root in the early stages of telegraphy during the Napoleonic wars, which necessitated military communication across long distances. In the process of developing new signal systems, the commander Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington (1769–1852) required what he called "a code of signals for the army."⁷ This usage of "code", designating a set of symbols agreed upon by a specific group, was in common use with the Morse code at the end of the nineteenth century.

In the twentieth century, especially in the 1960s, the practically applied concept of "code" was adopted as a descriptive, analytical term in several scholarly fields. It became a key term in structuralist linguistics, anthropology, and sociology, but first and foremost it proved fertile in modern semiotics and communication theory. Here, "code" came to be understood as a framework of conventions within which singular signs make sense in a certain way. Although the repertory of signs may change over time, the communicative potential of such codes presupposes a certain semantic stability. The spoken language, as well as body language, religious rituals, and cultural preferences belonging to a given social group, are obvious examples of semiotic codes. Such codes are means by which meaning is produced, hence they shape the world of their practitioners.

According to this understanding, Jerusalem is the organizing principle of a semiotic "code" because it connotes with a set of signs (established metaphors, see above) that stand in relation to each other and thereby enable meaning production. In Christian cultures, Jerusalem brings together a host of poetically potent images, applicable to express ideas of the sacred and of the relationships between God, man, and society. This code has proven to have a remarkable power to structure a variety of Christian outlooks on the world, and to articulate them in different media. To investigate the applications of Jerusalem-related metaphors in texts, images, buildings, and rituals, and to explore how they interconnect and produce meaning is, then, to trace the Jerusalem code.

The Jerusalem code operates both within time and space, and hence in what we define as a *storyworld*. This concept, borrowed from narrative theory and applied in

⁷ Quoted after Eric Ziolkowski, "Great Gode or Great Codex? Northrop Frye, William Blake, and Construals of the Bible," *Journal of the Bible and its Reception* 1, no. 1 (2014), 18.

the design of computer games, may elucidate how the Jerusalem code works. The *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* defines storyworld this way:

Storyworlds can be defined as the class of discourse models used for understanding narratively organized discourse [. . .] Storyworlds are mentally and emotionally projected environments in which interpreters are called upon to live out complex blends of cognitive and imaginative response.⁸

The storyworld thus defines the limits of individual agency within the storyline. Individuals (historical or fictitious) may move freely around in its universe, but beyond it there is a void. Their horizon is defined by the master narrative, and they perceive everyone they meet and everything that happens to them in light of it, just like in a computer game: the master narrative shapes the world.

A series of binary categories serves as navigation marks for movements in the Christian storyworld and informs all efforts to answer the question of who has the heavenly legitimation as true heirs to Jerusalem. The good city or state always has its wicked opponent: Jerusalem opposed to Babylon. This is a recurrent theme in biblical exegesis, famously systematized in St Augustine's vast narrative of the two contrasting cities. Legitimate authority is contrasted with illegitimate rule, and true devotion with idolatry or false religion. Hence, Jews and Muslims, for example, are part of the Christian storyworld on the premises of that world. If they inhabit competing storyworlds framed by their own master narratives, this is beyond the boundaries of the game. The Christian storyworld is also regulated by moral guidelines: virtue is the opposite of vice – hence every injustice has to be atoned for. Protagonists are either the children of God or the children of the world. Love of God is contrasted with love of self, and ultimately life is contrasted with death.

A Continued Jerusalem Code?

In 1827 the English poet, artist, and eccentric mythographer William Blake (1757–1827) made an engraving of the famous Hellenistic sculpture group *Laocoön*, surrounded by a swarm of graffiti-like aphorisms, most of them about the nature of art. Among them is a statement that “The Old & the New Testament are the great code of art.” Scholars have discussed how this statement is to be interpreted. Blake, who made this engraving a few months before his death, had for a lifetime constantly reflected, interpreted, and reinterpreted biblical history, or biblical myth, in his literary and artistic works, shaping his own peculiar mythological universe. As cryptic or esoteric this universe may be, Blake still draws on the storyworld of

⁸ David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan, eds., *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (London – New York: Routledge, 2005).

salvation history in which Jerusalem is the eschatological centre.⁹ The literary scholar Eric Ziolkowski suggests in his study on William Blake's aphorism on "the great code of art" that the code is the productive poetical language "float(ing) in a multivalent sea of biblical and classical reception."¹⁰ If this is an operative understanding of the concept, we could add that this code, productive not only in the field of art but also in religion and politics, is working as long as that sea has not dried up. The cluster of metaphors that informs the Jerusalem code is productive in a culture as long as the framework of salvation history is regarded as a relevant scheme of understanding. In contemporary Western culture – and perhaps most significantly in Scandinavia – this is probably not the case anymore.¹¹ The storyworld is scattered, and competing storyworlds that also gravitate around Jerusalem are readily available in our neighbourhoods, or in the media. Perhaps Jerusalem is about to be a forgotten code, increasingly hidden and inaccessible, to the given interpretative space. Ironically enough this happens in a world in which Jerusalem, the material Middle Eastern city, continues to represent a pivotal point of tension and conflict. In contemporary society, we claim that the Jerusalem code still lingers underneath cultural, religious, and political discourses.

⁹ As is well known, Blake's literary works abound with "mythological," nationalist Jerusalem references, the hymn "O did those feet in ancient times" and his tale of Jerusalem being the daughter of the giant Albion being the most famous examples. See Morris Eaves, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to William Blake* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

¹⁰ Ziolkowski, "Great Gode or Great Codex?," 4.

¹¹ This is probably the case for Scandinavia more than any other parts of the globe. See Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, "Uneven Secularization in the United States and Western Europe," in *Democracy and the New Religious Pluralism*, ed. Thomas Banchoff (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Introductions: Jerusalem in Medieval Scandinavia



Fig. 1.1: St Olav, *Rex perpetuum Norvegie*, on horseback, with a T-O globe beneath his foot. Detail of portable ivory altar, early fourteenth century. Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen.

Kristin B. Aavitsland

Chapter 1

Jerusalem: Navel of the Storyworld in Medieval Scandinavia

Medieval Latin Christianity centred on Jerusalem – conceptually, devotionally, and often politically. The inclusion of the Scandinavian lands into Christendom provided the Northerners with new points of reference in space and time. Their new Christian horizon, or, as we prefer to label it, their Christian storyworld, came to frame the development of polities and institutions, of literary and material culture in this northernmost part of Europe. Actions and movements within this storyworld were often informed and motivated by what we conceive of as the Jerusalem code.¹ This book is about the political, religious, and cultural workings of the Jerusalem Code in Medieval Scandinavia. It spans across almost five centuries and includes visual and literary material from Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Iceland. It does not claim, however, to be comprehensive. Still, we consider it a valuable contribution not only to the historiography of medieval Scandinavia, but also to the international scholarly exploration of Jerusalem reception in medieval Europe, which has been going on for some years.² The present introduction attempts to establish a conceptual and historical backdrop for the rich and varied manifestations of the Jerusalem code presented in this volume. The longevity of the Jerusalem code beyond the Middle Ages is explored in two additional volumes.³

1 For definitions of *storyworld* and *Jerusalem code*, fundamental concepts to this volume and the two subsequent volumes in this series, see *Prelude*, 6–8.

2 See for instance Annette Hoffmann and Gerhard Wolf, eds., *Jerusalem as Narrative Space/ Erzählraum Jerusalem* (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2012); Lucy Donkin and Hanna Vorholt, eds., *Imagining Jerusalem in the Medieval West*, Proceedings of the British Academy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Bianca Kühnel, Galit Noga-Banai, and Hanna Vorholt, eds., *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem*, CELAMA (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014); Renana Bartal and Hanna Vorholt, eds., *Between Jerusalem and Europe: Essays in Honour of Bianca Kühnel* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

3 The two subsequent volumes of *Tracing the Jerusalem Code: Volume 2: The Chosen People. Christian Cultures in Early Modern Scandinavia (1536–c.1750)*, ed. Eivor Andersen Oftestad and Joar Haga; *Volume 3: The Promised Land. Christian Cultures in Modern Scandinavia (c.1750–c.1920)*, ed. Ragnhild J. Zorgati and Anna Bohlin.

Kringla heimsins: *The Scene of Salvation History*

About 1230 the Icelandic author, law speaker, and erudite man of letters, Snorri Sturluson (1178/9–1241) set out to write a chronicle of the Norwegian kings. He opened his narrative with the following paragraph:

The disc of the world that mankind inhabits is very indented with bays. Large bodies of water run from the ocean into the land. It is known that a sea extends from Nörvasund (the Straits of Gibraltar) all the way to Jórsalaland (Palestine). From the sea a long gulf called Svartahaf (the Black Sea) extends to the north-east. It divides the world into thirds. To the east is the region called Asia, and to the west some call Europe, and some Enea. And from the north of Svartahaf extends Svíþjóð in mikla (Sweden the Great) or in kalda (the Cold). Some claim Svíþjóð to be smaller than Serkland in mikla (Saracen-land the Great, North Africa); others compare it to Bláland in mikla (Blacks-land the Great, Africa). The northern part of Svíþjóð remains uninhabited because of frost and cold, just as the southern part of Bláland is empty because of the heat of the sun. In Svíþjóð there are many large uninhabited areas. There are also nations of many kinds and many languages. There are giants there and dwarfs, and there are black people there, and many kinds of strange nations. There are also amazingly large wild animals and dragons.⁴

It emerges that Snorri Sturluson begins his history of the Norwegian kings with a description of the world – or rather, a description of the inhabited lands, the *oikumene*. In doing so, he follows a well-established Christian convention. From patristic times, the *terrarum orbis* – in Snorri’s vernacular: the *kringla heimsins* – was conceived of as the unity of the three continents Europe, Asia, and Africa (the latter dubbed Serkland and Bláland in Snorri’s terminology). The division of the world in three continents occurs in the writings of both Jerome and Augustine, and most medieval authors inherited it as an undisputed given. Snorri describes the inhabited world according to this conventional scheme, in which the Mediterranean and the Black Sea separate the three continents, and *Jórsalaland*, the land of Jerusalem, occupies the central point in between them.⁵ Since Late Antiquity, this scheme had been visualized as a

⁴ “Kringla heimsins, sú er mannfólkit byggir, er mjök vágskorin; ganga höf stór or útsjánum inn í jörðina. Er þat kunnigt, at haf gengr frá Nörvasundum ok alt út til Jórsalalands. Af hafinu gengr langr hafsbót til landnórðs, er heitir Svartahaf; þat skilr heimsþriðjungana: heitir fyrir austan Asía, en fyrir vestan kalla sumir Európa, en sumir Enea. En nórðan at Svartahafi gengr Svíþjóð hin mikla eða hin kalda; Svíþjóð hina miklu kalla sumir menn eigi minni en Serkland hit mikla, sumir jafna henni við Bláland hit mikla. Hinn nórðri hlutr Svíþjóðar liggr úbygðr af frosti ok kulda, svá sem hinn syðri hlutr Blálánds er auðr af sólar bruna. Í Svíþjóð eru stórheruð mörg, þar eru ok margskonar þjóðir ok margar tungr: þar eru risar ok þar eru dvergar, þar eru ok blámenn, ok þar eru margskonar undarligar þjóðir, þar eru ok dýr ok drekar furðuliga stórir,” Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, 3 vols, trans. Alison Finlay and Anthony Faulkes, London: Viking Society for Northern Research, University College London, 2016, vol. 1, *Ynglinga saga*, ch. 1.

⁵ Snorri distinguishes between habitable and inhabitable zones of the world, and hence reflects the concept of climate zones, prominent in medieval cartography, see for instance Stefan Schröder, “Die Klimazonenkarte des Petrus Alfonsi. Rezeption und Transformation islamisch-arabischen Wissens im

circular diagram, the so-called T-O map. About 600, Isidore of Seville (c.560–636) famously applied this simple graphical form in his widespread, encyclopaedic compilation *Etymologiae*, a work that left its firm stamp on numerous texts in Old Norse. It reflected both Jerome's and Augustine's mutually independent descriptions of the three continents of the world.⁶ In medieval culture the T-O map became an abbreviated and widely used sign for the *oikumene*, applied not only as diagrams in codices but also in the iconography of Christian rulership (Fig. 1.1).⁷

Jerome and Augustine's interest in the *oikumene* was exegetical. In the biblical language of the Vulgate, the created world – *mundus* or *saeculum* – is the scene on which the history of humankind unfolds. Implicit in this conception of the world, and especially evident in the term *saeculum*, is the unity of time and space. The finite, created cosmos will cease to exist in its present form at the end of time, when the drama of salvation history reaches its end and human existence will transcend the limitations of time. *Fines terrae*, the ends of the world, should thus be conceived of as the spatial as well as the chronological limits of humankind.⁸ Accordingly, any historical narrative, like the Bible itself, should begin with a description of the extension of the *oikumene*, in order to set the scene, so to speak, for the stories to be told.⁹ Snorri Sturluson adopts this understanding when he finds it necessary to describe the whole of the inhabited world in the opening paragraph of his history of the Norwegian kings. The *kringla heimsins* comprises time and space at the same time: it is the Christian *storyworld* of medieval narrative, whose main point of orientation was *Jórsalaland*, the land of Jerusalem.¹⁰

In the eyes of thirteenth-century Icelanders like Snorri and the Norwegians who were his intended audience, as well as for contemporaneous Danes and Swedes, the Christian *oikumene* was an obvious framing for any tale to be told. The eleventh-century kings Snorri writes about, however, had struggled hard to familiarize themselves with this particular conception of time and space. Compared to the rest of Western Europe, the Nordic countries converted to Christian faith at a late stage. Scandinavians had been exposed to Christian practices, and even occasionally tended to conform to them, from the eighth century on. The first missionary campaigns to the north took place in the early eighth century, but were mostly met with aggression. Nevertheless, pagan Scandinavians conformed to Christian practices in

mittelalterlichen Europa," in *Raumkonzepte: Disziplinäre Zugänge*, ed. Ingrid Baumgärtner, et al. (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2009).

6 For Jerome's formulation of Jerusalem as "umbilicus mundi," navel of the world, see *Prelude*, 5.

7 "die Erfassung und Schematisierung der Ökumene der klassischen Antike im Symbol der TO-Karte [wird] zur Abbeviatur der bewohnten Welt," Anne-Dorothee von den Brincken, *Fines Terrae: Die Enden der Erde und der vierte Kontinent auf mittelalterlichen Weltkarten*, MGH (1992), 3.

8 Brincken, *Fines Terrae*, 29.

9 "Die mittelalterlichen Karten zeigen vor allem Land; Wasser interessiert weniger, da er selten Schauplatz des Heilsgeschehen ist," Brincken, *Fines Terrae*, 28.

10 Cf. *Prelude*, 5.

their settlements overseas; and there is evidence of Christian presence in the Scandinavian mainland as well. During the ninth and early tenth centuries, Anglo-Saxon and Continental missionaries came to Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, enjoying a certain success but providing no wide-ranging results. The definite shift came with the conversion of the ruling dynasties: In Denmark, King Harald Bluetooth (911–986) was baptized in the 960s. In Norway, King Olav Tryggvasson (963–1000) proclaimed Christianity in the 990s, followed by his successor King Olav Haraldsson (995–1030), who introduced Christian law in the second decade of the eleventh century, and was declared patron saint of Norway after his death. In Iceland, the chieftains assembled at the *Alþingi* of 999/1000 decided to embrace Christianity. The Faroes and Greenland adopted the new faith at about the same time. In Sweden, members of the ruling dynasty received baptism from c.1000 and onwards, but pagan practices lived on longer here than in the rest of Scandinavia. When the ruling houses of these countries permanently adopted the new faith, Christianity gained a secure foothold in the north, and by the end of the eleventh century, the “change of custom” [*siðarskipti*] was more or less completed.¹¹

Pre-Christian Scandinavia was largely an oral culture. Literacy was introduced along with Christianity; hence Christian conversion implied not only a new cosmology and belief system, but also administrative, legislative, institutional, economic, and cultural transformation of the northern kingdoms. Literacy helped the Scandinavians to secure themselves a role in the history of salvation and a place in the realm of Christendom. The thirteenth century saw the culmination of what historians have described as the Europeanization of Scandinavia – the process by which the Scandinavian kingdoms became fully integrated in the culture of the Roman church and Latin Europe.¹² Studies of Nordic texts on geography from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries show that medieval Scandinavians were self-consciously aware of inhabiting the margin.¹³ The Jewish-Christian notion of Jerusalem as the world’s centre enforced this awareness of belonging to the periphery. When the

11 Dagfinn Skre, “Missionary Activity in Early Medieval Norway. Strategy, Organization and the Course of Events,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 23, no. 1 (1998). For general surveys of Scandinavian conversion history, see Richard Fletcher, *The Barbarian Conversion from Paganism to Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 369–416; Sverre Bagge, “Christianization and State Formation in Early Medieval Norway,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 30 (2005).

12 Sverre Bagge, “The Europeanization of Scandinavia,” in *“The Making of Europe:” Essays in Honour of Robert Bartlett*, ed. John Hudson and Sally Crumplin (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2016).

13 Kristin B. Aavitsland, “Defending Jerusalem: Visualizations of a Christian Identity in Medieval Scandinavia,” in *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem*, ed. Bianca Kühnel, *et al.* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014); Lars Boje Mortensen, “Sanctified Beginnings and Mythopoietic Moments. The First Wave of Writing on the Past in Norway, Denmark, and Hungary, c.1000–1230,” in *The Making of Christian Myths in the Periphery of Latin Christendom (c.1000–1300)*, ed. Lars Boje Mortensen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2006); Dale Kedwards, “Iceland, Thule, and the Tilensian Precedents,” *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 130 (2015).

Jerusalem code first was introduced in the North, it provided the Scandinavians with a productive network of metaphors, a comprehensive scaffold of poetically potent images, applicable to their efforts to inscribe themselves into the religious and cultural commonwealth of Christendom. An urgent issue for the northerners seems to be that of connecting to Jerusalem, the moral and eschatological navel of the Christian storyworld.¹⁴ This book aims to explore some of the ways in which medieval Scandinavians, living at the very brim of the *kringla heimsins*, related to its centre.¹⁵

Transfer of Sanctity: Medieval Modes of the Jerusalem Code

An obvious question to pose, then, is what kind of a centre Jerusalem was to medieval Europe – and to medieval Scandinavia. It was definitively not a political centre: never the capital of any empire, Jerusalem had no capacity to execute power over other territories. Nor was it an intellectual centre: it never housed any authoritative institution to which men of learning were attracted. Jerusalem's centrality was of a fundamentally different kind than that of closer centres with claims of influence over the Scandinavians, like Hamburg with its archbishop, Paris with its schools, or Rome with its canonists and ecclesiastical authorities. Jerusalem's lack of wide-ranging political and intellectual impact may indeed have prompted its significance as a *conceptual and symbolic centre*. From the point of view of the European margins in the eleventh century and onwards, "Jerusalem became the new center perhaps precisely because it could not claim any direct influence over the periphery," the historian Patrick Geary suggests.¹⁶ Jerusalem was The Holy City because it was the principal locus of divine intervention in human history, the universal *axis mundi*. Divine presence had sanctified the stones of Jerusalem and the very soil of the land, the *Terra sancta*. In a famous fourteenth-century English travelogue attributed to Sir John Mandeville, Jerusalem is described as a depot of sanctity, accumulated through the sacred events that had taken place there. In the words of Stephen Greenblatt, Mandeville's description of Jerusalem does not list these events in chronological order: "There is no sense of digging down through the sequential layers of the past, no historical framing. Instead there is a sense of *semiological*

¹⁴ Cf. *Prelude*, 8.

¹⁵ Aavitsland, "Defending Jerusalem," 121.

¹⁶ Patrick J. Geary, "Reflections on Historiography and the Holy: Centre and Periphery," in *The Making of Christian Myths in the Periphery of Latin Christendom (c.1000–1300)*, ed. Lars Boje Mortensen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2006), 325.

thickness, of opacity, of holiness solidified.”¹⁷ How, then, was this semiological thickness that constituted the authority of Jerusalem mediated to the peripheral zones of Christendom? In other words, what were the medieval modes of the Jerusalem code?

To suggest an answer to these questions, it may be useful to remind ourselves of the pervasiveness and complexity that sanctity had imposed on the city. From Late Antiquity, Jerusalem had become the paradigm of the epistemological model of the *quadriga*, the fourfold interpretation of Scripture.¹⁸ It is significant that in medieval culture, the four levels of interpretation – the historical, the allegorical, the moral, and the eschatological – existed simultaneously and were equally valid. The historical city of Jerusalem, to which pilgrims flocked and for which crusaders fought, was conceptually integrated in the allegorical, moral and eschatological interpretations of the city. This holistic idea of Jerusalem made the place vitally significant not only to the course of salvation history, but also to the fate of the Church, the fate of humanity and the fate of each individual soul. Hence material traces, like relics commemorating Christ’s passion, but also stones and even dust and mud from the city’s ground, were tokens of the city’s authority and, in a way, pledges of the validity of exegetical semiosis. Such material substances were portable, and they became the most potent medium to spread Jerusalem’s sanctity to places far away, like the kingdoms at the brim of the *kringla heimsins*.

A late medieval, vernacular poem from Norway, “Forgive me, pure maiden” [*Fyrirlát mér jungfrúin hreina*], illustrates this point. It tells about how the cross went north – not by means of missionaries propagating a religious message, a moral codex, or a programmatic system of thought, as we moderns tend to define religion, but quite literally by means of a relic of the Holy Cross arriving from Jerusalem to Norwegian shores.¹⁹ As holy matter, relics connected to the passion of Christ transmitted the aura of the incarnate God. Christianity had not really arrived in Scandinavia until physical substance connected the land where Christ had suffered and resurrected with the lands in the north. Diffusion of Jerusalem relics remained an acknowledged medium to secure political legitimacy by referring to the divinely sanctioned status of Jerusalem. In two of the chapters in this book, Lukas Raupp and Lena Liepe explore the relations between royal power and Jerusalem relics in the three Scandinavian kingdoms. In the

¹⁷ Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvellous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 39, my emphasis.

¹⁸ Cf. *Prelude*, 5–6.

¹⁹ The poem, which was largely forgotten after the Protestant reformation and survives in one single Icelandic manuscript, probably refers to the cross-relic King Baldwin of Jerusalem offered King Sigurd the Crusader in 1110. The relic finally ended up at the arch see of Nidaros, and was one among several passion relics arriving in Scandinavia during the Middle Ages. For the poem, see Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Vésteinn Ólason, “‘Tilgi meg, jomfru ren’ – et norsk dikt fra senmiddelalderen,” in *Atlantisk dåd og drøm*, ed. Asbjørn Aarnes (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1998).

twelfth century, relics connected to Jerusalem could compensate for weak dynastic claims to the throne, both in Denmark and Norway.²⁰ In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, relics from Christ's crown of thorns were exchanged as gifts between monarchs and bishops in France, Norway, and Sweden, upholding the ideal of divinely sanctioned royal authority and promoting crusade as an aspect of the royal office.²¹

The palpable transfer of relics was one way of moving Jerusalem's sanctity to other places. Another was the conceptual transfer of sacrosanct authority. A basic precondition for what we could call the medieval paradigm of the Jerusalem code is the concept of *translation* – a medieval term used for any act of transfer, be it the shift of power from one polity to another [*translatio imperii*] or the ceremonial movement of relics from place to place. In her short comment on the *translatio* paradigm in the introductory section of this book, Eivor Andersen Oftestad presents the concept *translatio templi* to illustrate how religious authority in Europe was construed as historical transfer.²² From an early stage, Christian chroniclers and theologians in the West generally interpreted the Roman emperor's devastation of Jerusalem and destruction of the Jewish Temple in 70 CE as an act of moving religious legitimacy from Jerusalem to Rome, and, consequently, from the Jews to the Christians. The idea of *translatio templi* is fundamental for Christian anti-Judaism and "othering" of the Jews. Moreover, it legitimized Christian use of Jewish models of authority, like the biblical kings, priests, and patriarchs. Several chapters in this book offer examples of legitimation of authority in medieval Scandinavia by appropriation of Jewish models.

Hence, connecting to Jerusalem meant translation of Jerusalem's sanctity, physically and conceptually. The Scandinavians learned to identify with and *remember* the Judeo-Christian past and the biblical landscapes through diverse strategies of translation, and thereby expanding their cultural memory vastly in time and space.²³ The Danish medievalist Lars B. Mortensen has identified three modes by which medieval European peripheries created semiotic (semiological) relations between themselves and the biblical past, aiming to establish "meaning and coherence between new and old, local and foreign."²⁴ In the context of this book, we may very well consider Mortensen's categories *as modes of the Jerusalem code* in medieval Scandinavia. Simultaneously, we expand Mortensen's scope, as he developed his model of understanding for the study of historiography and other literary genres that prevailed in the medieval North. However, his model is applicable also to visual sources, like ecclesiastical art and architecture. The medieval modes of the Jerusalem Code, hence, are fundamentally multi-medial.

²⁰ Chapter 8 (Lukas Raupp), 140–65.

²¹ Chapter 9 (Lena Liepe), 166–87.

²² Chapter 3 (Eivor Andersen Oftestad), 49–55.

²³ Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory. Ten Studies* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 7.

²⁴ Mortensen, "Sactified Beginnings," 263.

A first mode of semiotic connecting to Jerusalem would be *imitation*: That is to cast persons, events, and places in the North according to authoritative patterns found either in the Bible or in the history, topography, and architecture of Jerusalem and the Holy Land. A conspicuous instance of this is the literary representation of the saintly king Olav Haraldsson's re-entry to Norway after his conversion to Christianity and his victory at the battle at Nesjar, March 25, 1017. This event is praised in contemporary skaldic verse as well as in later chronicles. In his chapter, Bjørn Bandlien unveils ingeniously crafted semiotic imitation in these texts, as he shows how the battle at Nesjar is construed as the entry of Christianity to the kingdom of Norway on the template of Christ's entry in Jerusalem.²⁵ Another intriguing example, also connected to St Olav, is the composite fabric of mimetic Jerusalem references in the urban layout and church buildings at Nidaros, the seat of the Norwegian archbishop, presented in Øystein Ekroll's chapter.²⁶

A second mode of semiotic connection to Jerusalem is *contact* and *contiguity*: that is to establish material, ritual, and interpretative contacts in time and space, between the biblical past and the historical present. This is a way of empowering the lands in the North, which are situated far from the territories where the crucial events in salvation history took place. By emphasizing points of contacts in the biblical (and mythological) past as well as in the historical present, the Northerners could claim that they participated in the grand narrative of salvation history, and that they had always been part of the divine plan. Biörn Tjällén offers striking examples of this from late medieval Swedish hagiography and historiography.²⁷

A third mode is *creativity*: the agency of the authors in selecting elements and build a composition (verbal, visual, or material) that conform to local as well as foreign conventions. An unusually rich composition of this kind is the thirteenth-century Icelandic *Eyrbyggja saga* of Thorolf and his settlement at Thorsnes in Western Iceland, examined in Mikael Males' contribution.²⁸ Set in a pre-Christian past, the narrative employs a selection of templates, *topoi* and singular motifs from Scripture as well as from pagan cultic practices in order to describe an age-old, holy topography in which the heathen past can be understood as a meaningful prefiguration of Christian salvation. Another creative structuring of sacred landscape is discussed in Kersti Markus' chapter on twelfth-century round churches in Västergötaland, Sweden.²⁹

In the examples listed above, any one of the three modes of the Jerusalem code is especially striking. However, all three of them are at work at the same time. The "semiotic triangle" of imitation, contact, and creativity is, according to Mortensen,

²⁵ Chapter 4 (Bjørn Bandlien), 59–85.

²⁶ Chapter 19 (Øystein Ekroll), 270–98.

²⁷ Chapter 24 (Biörn Tjällén), 520–33.

²⁸ Chapter 21 (Mikael Males), 455–75.

²⁹ Chapter 16 (Kersti Markus), 324–39.

necessary components in the *mythopoiesis* – the creation of new myths.³⁰ And this is exactly the means by which peripheries like Scandinavia connected to Jerusalem. Inclusion in the Christian *oikumene* was not about passive reception. *Mythopoiesis* stimulated local agency, “a creative localist response to external impulses.”³¹ This is seen very explicitly in the narratives the Scandinavians established about their own conversion, as we will see in the following paragraphs.

The Conversion of the Evil North

As the Scandinavians embarked on the task of inscribing themselves into the history of salvation and define their place in the Christian storyworld, they entered a cultural sphere in which their regions were regarded as the abode of evil, and the Scandinavian peoples were considered diabolic. *Partes aquilonis* – the lands of the north wind – was the common designation of Scandinavia, from where early medieval Europe was used to expect little more than trouble, plundering and pillaging.³²

The monks at Lindisfarne in 793 and the bishops in the realm of Charlemagne one generation later experienced highly unpleasant meetings with the heathen pirates from the north, and they found some kind of explanation in biblical exegesis.³³ In the book of Jeremiah, the Lord declared, “out of the north evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land” (Jer 1:14). Furthermore, the prophet himself begged the people of Jerusalem to “flee for safety [. . .], for evil looms out of the north, and great destruction” (Jer 6:1). Another of the great Old Testament prophets, Isaiah, claims that Lucifer, “the king of Babel,” plans to rise from his abode in the north to challenge God, but shall be defeated (Isa 14:13–14). In the Song of Songs, the life-giving southern wind, *auster*, is contrasted with the freezing northern wind, *aquilo* (Cant 4:16). In early medieval exegetic commentaries and historiographies, these passages from Scripture were combined and merged with the classical authors’ descriptions of the exotic, alien and even monstrous peoples and animals in the distant Hyperborean.³⁴ The result was a comprehensively negative notion of the

³⁰ Mortensen, “Sactified Beginnings,” 256–66.

³¹ Mortensen, “Sactified Beginnings,” 269.

³² Vegard Skånland, “Calor Fidei,” *Symbolae Osloenses* 32 (1956). Conceptions of the North in classical and medieval continental literature are examined extensively in the recent volume by Dolly Jørgensen and Virginia Langum, eds., *Visions of North in Premodern Europe*, CURSOR MUNDI (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018).

³³ Skånland, “Calor Fidei,” 98–99.

³⁴ Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* et al. Cf. Lewis Webb, “*Inter imperium sine fine*: Thule and Hyperborea in Roman Literature,” in *Visions of North in Premodern Europe*, ed. Dolly Jørgensen and Virginia Langum (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018); Mirela Avdagic, “The North in Antiquity: Between Maps and Myths,” in

North, which medieval authors even explicitly contrasted with Jerusalem through allusions to Isaiah's mention of Babel.

By the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when the Scandinavians eventually acquired and cultivated a Christian outlook of the world, the conception of the diabolic and monstrous North necessarily was a part of that outlook. Consequently, it came to influence the way Scandinavians considered their own conversion. Understood as territories, *aquilo* represented the heathen lands, whereas *auster* represented Christendom. As mission advanced, *aquilo*'s frontier was gradually pushed back and further out towards the periphery. Since *auster* and *aquilo* were also understood as proper winds, the association to breath and spirit was close at hand. The freezing *aquilo* then becomes the spirit of evil, contrary to the warm and tender *auster* which of course is associated with the Holy Spirit. The glacier of infidelity, *glacies infidelitas*, had to be melted down by the heat of faith, *calor fidei*. These tropes prominently occur in the *Passio Canuti regis*, an account of the Danish royal saint King Knud (c.1043–1086), written about 1122. About the same time, Peter the Venerable (1092–1156), famous abbot of Cluny, applies them in his letter to King Sigurd Magnusson of Norway (1090–1130), encouraging his plans for a missionary campaign to Sweden.³⁵ In the second half of the twelfth century, the same tropes are found in Latin historiography written at the arch see of Nidaros in Norway.³⁶ Up until the fourteenth century, Scandinavian authors continued to adapt the figurative language of the biblical North and apply it when writing their own history. Indeed, it was interpreted as scriptural mentions of the Scandinavian countries, constituting semiotic *contact* between the biblical past and the Nordic present.³⁷ The conception of the evil north helped the Scandinavians explain why it had taken such a long time before Christian faith arrived at their shores.

Such strategies inscribed the lands in the north into the storyworld of salvation history, and are related to a central concept in the history of Christianity and a driving force in what we have labelled the Jerusalem code, namely the notion of being God's *elect people*. This notion is an extremely flexible one, and it has informed the group identity of almost every European Christian nation at some point in their history. As Mary Garrison has pointed out, the idea of divine election enables any people converted to Christianity, no matter how distant in time and space from Jerusalem and the age of the apostles, to "affirm their own specialness on a yardstick of ultimate

Visions of North in Premodern Europe, ed. Dolly Jørgensen and Virginia Langum (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018).

³⁵ Skånland, "Calor Fidei," 86–7.

³⁶ Steffen Hope, "The North in the Latin History Writing of Twelfth-Century Norway," in *Visions of North in Premodern Europe*, ed. Dolly Jørgensen and Virginia Langum (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), 116–17.

³⁷ Cf. Mortensen's category explained above, 20.

meaning.”³⁸ By emphasizing their specialness in their inclusion into the *oikumene* of Christendom, Christian northerners were able to demarcate themselves from their non-elect, still heathen neighbours, as Margrethe C. Stang shows in her chapter on the representation of otherness in ecclesiastical art from medieval Norway.³⁹

In Scandinavian medieval historiography, the narrative motor of which is the gradually advancing conversion process, the notion of election or specialness is used, somewhat paradoxically, to secure universalism and inclusion in the commonwealth of Christians.⁴⁰ A learned example is found in the oldest historical account of Norwegian history, the anonymous *Historia Norwegie*, dated to the second part of the twelfth century.⁴¹ Here, the coastal zone of southern and western Norway is called *Decapolis* (ten cities), “because it is renowned for its ten townships.”⁴² As several scholars have noted, this obviously refers to the Gospel, where Decapolis is mentioned twice as name of a geographical region in Galilee (Matt 4:25; Mark 5:20 and 7:31).⁴³ Its ten towns, which enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy, had a mainly Greek population. The crowds gathering around Jesus, as he took up his mission of teaching and healing, came primarily from these areas in the “Galilee of the Gentiles.” Decapolis is thus associated with conversion, and this may be why the author of *Historia Norwegie* parallels the district with the coastal area of Norway. As he does not name the ten townships in his Norwegian Decapolis, historians have come up with alternative lists of towns along the coast.⁴⁴ The rhetorical point here is, however, not the precise identity of these “townships.” Rather, this instance of semiotic *imitation* holds a theological significance that seems to be lost on most modern commentators. What justifies the translation of the Decapolis from the Mediterranean to the North Sea is the *pagan*

38 Mary Garrison, “Divine Election for Nations – a Difficult Rhetoric for Medieval Scholars?,” in *The Making of Christian Myths in the Periphery of Latin Christendom (c.1000–1300)*, ed. Lars Boje Mortensen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2006), 277.

39 Chapter 22 (Margrethe C. Stang), 477–99.

40 The flexible notion of specialness and divine election may very well also serve the opposite: particularism and even chauvinism, cf. Garrison, “Divine Election,” 278.

41 The author, date and provenience of this text is not known. In his edition of the text, Lars Boje Mortensen suggests that the book, incomplete in its present state, was written in Eastern Norway c.1160–75, cf. *Historia Norwegie*, trans. Peter Fisher, ed. Lars Boje Mortensen and Inger Ekrem, Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2003.

42 “Zona itaque maritima Decapolis dici potest, nam x ciuitatibus inclita est,” *Historia Norwegie*, 54–5.

43 The term, which is also found in Pliny’s *Naturalis historia* (5.16.74), referred to the area on the east and south-east of the Sea of Galilee.

44 See for instance Frode Iversen, “The Urban Hinterland: Interaction and Law-Areas in Viking and Medieval Norway,” in *Viking-Age Transformations: Trade, Craft and Resources in Western Scandinavia*, ed. Zanette T. Glørstad and Kjetil Loftsgarden (London – New York: Routledge, 2017), 254.

character of this district.⁴⁵ A strong current in medieval exegesis emphasizes that Jesus first chose to evangelize in the “Galilee of the Gentiles,” and hence the gentiles were converted from outside the Hebrew tradition, without taking part in the Old Covenant and obeying the Mosaic Law. When the anonymous author of *Historia Norwegie* lets the coast of Norway mirror Galilee, he creates a historical typology. Just as the Gentiles in Decapolis had no need of the Hebrew tradition to be converted, the heathens of the North have no need of a long Christian past in order to become incorporated in the grand master narrative of salvation history. By transporting the topography of Palestine to the Norwegian coast, the author inscribes Norway into the Christian storyworld. Hence, the very country is now defined by its separation from heathendom: “On the borders of Norway is an immense wilderness, which divides the country along all its length and separates the Norwegians from the heathens,” the author of *Historia Norwegie* claims.⁴⁶

Through texts like this, and through a range of mimetic cultural and religious practices, Jerusalem and the Holy Land became familiarized as the far-away topographical and moral centre of the world – the *axis mundi*.

The Jerusalem Code at Work: Touring the Storyworld

The twentieth-century Canadian literary critic Northrop Frye (1912–1991) considered biblical language a code to Western literature in a manner similar to our considering the idea of Jerusalem a code to Christian cultures in Scandinavia.⁴⁷ In his 1981 book *The Great Code*, Frye read the Bible as a body of mythological stories that informed the great tradition of Western literature. In this book, Frye points out that the Old Testament myths of the Children of Israel tend to share a common storyline:

The heavy emphasis on the structure, where because of the moral interest we are in effect being told the same kind of story over and over again, indicates that the individual stories are being made to fit that pattern. [. . .] The priority is given to the mythical structure or outline of the story, not to the historical content.⁴⁸

This insight seems to be valid also for extra-biblical mythologies in premodern Christianity. The grand narrative of salvation history, emerging from medieval exegesis, exhibits a *narrative template*, a mythical macrostructure of fall, retribution

⁴⁵ I wish to thank Mr. Eirik A. Steenhoff for drawing my attention to this point, and for stimulating conversations about this issue.

⁴⁶ “Est igitur vastissima solitudo affinis Norwegie dividens eam per longum a paganis gentibus”, *Historia Norwegie*, 58–9.

⁴⁷ Cf. *Prelude*, 3.

⁴⁸ Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (New York – London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1982), 41.



Fig. 1.2: Scenes from the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Altar frontal from Nedstryn Church, Western Norway, 1300–1325. University Museum of Bergen.

and redemption which eminently conditions the Jerusalem code and shapes the Christian storyworld.

In the introductory Prelude to this volume, we listed a set of binary categories which seem to coordinate the movements taking place in this storyworld: Jerusalem/Babylon, legitimate/illegitimate rulership, faith/infidelity, virtue/vice, God/world, life/death.⁴⁹ Together with the mythical macrostructure, these antithetic pairs are components in a dominating mind-set that came to inform political action as well as cultural production in Christian medieval cultures. We claim that a more or less sophisticated conception of this storyworld was an essential and inevitable precondition for medieval Scandinavians' engagement with Jerusalem, be it as travellers, pilgrims, crusaders, political agents, cloistered intellectuals, or lay churchgoers.

To illustrate how the Jerusalem code may work according to these principles, I will give an example of elaborate visual storytelling from medieval Norway: an altar frontal dating from around 1300, probably made in Bergen, the largest and most prominent of Norwegian towns in the Middle Ages. The altar frontal exhibits the legend of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in a particularly elaborate manner (Fig. 1.2). It came to the medieval collection of the university museum in Bergen from Nedstryn

⁴⁹ *Prelude*, 8.

Church, a small parish church in Western Norway; but as several scholars have argued, this was probably not its original context. Rather, the panel seems to have been made to adorn the altar of the Church of the Apostles in Bergen. This was royal chapel built by King Magnus VI Haakonsson (1238–1280), allegedly in order to house the precious gift he had received from King Philip III of France in 1274: a thorn from Christ's crown of thorns.⁵⁰ This relic of course constitutes a material link between Jerusalem and the North, as does the story visualized in the altar frontal, about Emperor Heraclius conquering Jerusalem and rescuing the Holy Cross. The story was known in Scandinavia from different sources, but remarkably in this context, around 1300, the royal court in Bergen possessed a prominent version of it originating in the crusader states of the East. An Old French illuminated manuscript produced in the crusader principality of Antioch around 1260 and containing the story of Heraclius was demonstrably in the ownership of Queen Isabella Bruce of Norway (1272–1358).⁵¹ She resided in Bergen from 1293 until her death in 1358, and she may even have witnessed the production and installation of the altar frontal.

The frontal ingeniously exhibits the binary categories and the narrative template of the Jerusalem code mentioned above. The story presented here is a blend of history and myth, beginning with Chosroes II (579–628), the last king of the Sassanian Empire before the Muslim conquest of Iran. He led a devastating war against the Byzantine emperor Heraclius (610–641), and conquered Jerusalem in 614. In the mythical rendering of what happened next, the precious relic of the Holy Cross, recovered three centuries earlier by Empress Helena (c.246–c.330), was taken as booty. In vain triumph, King Chosroes took the Holy Cross to his capital Ctesiphon, where he became so proud of his victory that he had a tower built with a vault imitating the celestial bodies, took seat there orchestrating himself as a cosmic ruler, and made his people hail him as a god. These events are depicted in the four lower medallions of the Nedstryn altar frontal.⁵²

Emperor Heraclius initiated several successful campaigns against the Sassanian king, defeating his son in battle, and then advancing to the mock heaven on top of Chosroes' tower, where he slaughtered the king after his refusal to convert to the Christian faith. The victorious emperor then intended to bring the Holy Cross back to its right place in Jerusalem, but he was not able to enter the city gate, which

⁵⁰ Cf. above, 19. For the royal relic gift and the Church of the Apostles, see Chapter 9 (Lena Liepe), 168–77.

⁵¹ In addition to the Heraclius story, the manuscript also contains William of Tyre's chronicles about Jerusalem and the Holy land. On the manuscript and its royal, Norwegian ownership, see Bjørn Bandlien, "A Manuscript of the Old French William of Tyre (Pal. Lat. 1963) in Norway," *Studi mediolatini e volgari* 62 (2016).

⁵² It is worth noting that in the Old Norse rendering of this legend, Chosroes is a Saracen (Muslim) ruler, not a Persian. For further discussion of the Nedstryn altar frontal, see Chapter 22 (Margrethe C. Stang), 480–83.

miraculously disappeared in front of him. An angelic apparition teaches him a lesson, reminding him of a greater king who had entered this very gate before, not dressed in armour and with royal pomp, but humble and unarmed on the back of an ass. As Heraclius then leaves his horse behind and enters the city barefoot, the gate now opens to him. And as the Holy Cross is reinstalled on the altar in the church of the Holy Sepulchre, miracles of healing and resurrection are reported. This is what is happening in the four upper medallions of the frontal.

The fundamental storyline here is almost universal: the order of things is disturbed and has to be restored. This is, of course, a storyline shared with the master narrative of salvation history: injustice has to be recompensed. In this story, Jerusalem is the setting: It is the site where the Holy Cross was sanctified by Christ's passion and thus where it rightly belongs, and the story is completed on its return to this site. But Jerusalem is also, besides Chosroes and Heraclius, an acting protagonist. Being violated after Chosroes' sacrilege in the beginning of the story, she turns into action by hiding her gates for yet another armed king blinded by his own pride. When Heraclius puts down his weapons and approaches her gently, she lets him in. The whole biblical cluster of metaphors about the Daughter of Zion and Jerusalem adorned as a bride inevitably comes into play here.

In the Nedstryr altar frontal, the order of "reading" the eight figure medallions is not what we would expect for a straightforward, linear account of the narrative (as in a book), as the lower row of images is to be "read" before the upper. But according to the conventions of visual rhetoric, this order is quite logical: The four scenes with Heraclius, who is the story's hero, *have* to be placed above the villain Chosroes, despite the fact that he is the main protagonist in the first portion of the narrative. The composition of the altar frontal also brings all the binary categories of the Jerusalem Code to the fore. By pairing the medallions vertically, the opposition between the actions and their consequences become evident: The crime of Chosroes has to be punished, and the triumph of the illegitimate ruler is contrasted by the triumph of the legitimate one. The pride (cardinal vice) of Chosroes is juxtaposed by the humility (cardinal virtue) of Heraclius, and finally, the defeat and subsequent death of the Sassadian army (= the children of the world) contrast the resurrection of the Jerusalemites (=the children of God), hence foreshadows the fate of the just and unjust at the Final Judgement.

The contrast between the city of Jerusalem and Chosroes' capital Ctesiphon is also suggested here – Ctesiphon is perhaps vaguely associated with Babylon, the paradigmatic metropolis of the east. Yet another compositional aspect contrasts the two rulers of this narrative by alluding to some of the storyworld's major visual tropes: The contrast of the pagan and the Christian king is enhanced by alluding to the imperial *adventus imperatoris* (Chosroes on horseback) against the biblical *adventus Domini* (Heraclius on foot). Finally, Chosroes' sporting of the cross as a magical device testifies to his pagan idolatry, whereas the Christians adore the cross as a manifest witness to God's sacrifice and hence demonstrate true devotion. In this

way, the very design of the altar frontal produces a dense fabric of didactic, moral, and cultic meaning by means of the Jerusalem code. If we are right to assume that its original setting was the royal chapel housing a thorn from Christ's Holy Crown, the story's authority was enforced by the presence of the Jerusalem relic.

Scandinavians in Medieval Jerusalem, c.1000–c.1500

The interpretative strategies of the Nedstryn frontal and in the other textual and visual examples presented above were nurtured by actual travel from the Nordic countries to the Eastern Mediterranean and Jerusalem during the medieval centuries. The first traces of contact between Scandinavia and the oriental world are imported Byzantine artefacts in Scandinavian (Swedish) graves from the ninth century. Travel to and trade with the Greek and Muslim world continued in the following centuries, as archaeological finds affirm. Moreover, a number of eleventh-century rune stones spread all over Scandinavia carry inscriptions about men who died on expeditions to *Serkland* (Saracen-land).⁵³ From the late tenth century and well into the twelfth, a considerable number of Norsemen served as mercenaries in the imperial palatine force in Constantinople, the so-called Varangian guard.⁵⁴ In Norse tongue, Constantinople was dubbed *Miklagard*, The Great City. In the eyes of the travellers from the north, *Miklagard* in all its imperial glory clearly outshone Jerusalem, which, however holy, remained a minor city in the periphery of the Fatimid caliphate. Practical experience hence contradicted the conceptual and theological centrality of Jerusalem. Yet, a certain urge to go there on pilgrimage may be discernible among Scandinavians in the eleventh century. A case in point could be the already mentioned king and future saint Olav Haraldsson, who purportedly intended to travel to Jerusalem around 1013, but turned home instead to fight for his ancestral lands. Although Olav's aborted pilgrimage may be dismissed as a construction by thirteenth-century chroniclers, it is not at all improbable that a highborn man-at-arms like him, widely travelled and well versed in international politics, had a desire to see Jerusalem at the beginning of the eleventh century. In the wake of the millennium shift, the city saw an increasing number of Western pilgrims

⁵³ Else Roesdahl, *Vikingerne verden. Vikingerne hjemme og ude* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1993), 315; Kurt Villads Jensen, *Crusading at the Edges of Europe: Denmark and Portugal c.1000–c.1250* (London: Routledge, 2016), Chapter 3, note 131.

⁵⁴ Roland Scheel, *Skandinavien Und Byzanz: Bedingungen Und Konsequenzen Mittelalterlicher Kulturbeziehungen*, 2 vols., *Historische Semantik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck Ruprecht, 2015), vol. 1, 77–291.

fuelled by eschatological expectations.⁵⁵ As Bjørn Bandlien argues in Chapter 4, the earliest literary representations of King Olav Haraldsson's authority were indeed fashioned by current eschatological ideas, like the prophecy about the Last Emperor who would defeat Antichrist in Jerusalem at the end of time.⁵⁶

The first crusade (1095–1099) and the Frankish conquest of Jerusalem fundamentally affected Europe's relation to The Holy Land, and the Europeans' relation to the Jewish, Muslim, and oriental Christian population living there. This was also true of Scandinavia. As independent church provinces were established in the North during the twelfth century, the idea of just war against heathens came to play a determining role for ecclesiastical politics. Moreover, the literate culture and religious practices thriving in these young church provinces was also highly influenced by crusade ideology – as several of the contributions to this book clearly show. From the very beginning, the Scandinavian elites were well informed about Pope Urban's initiative, and they seem to have found themselves ideologically obliged to support it.⁵⁷ Contemporary Nordic and Continental sources testify that Danes and Norwegians participated perseveringly in the violent conquest of Jerusalem in 1099. Among them was allegedly a young prince called Svend, said to be one of King Svend Estridsen's many sons and to have been killed by the Seljuk sultan's army on his way to the Holy City.⁵⁸ The martyr-like death of the Danish prince immortalized his memory and spun him into a web of chivalric myth, which peaked in Torquato Tasso's epic poem *Gerusalemme liberata* more than five centuries later (1581).⁵⁹

After Godfrey of Bouillon's establishment of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1099, sources to Scandinavian presence in Palestine become more numerous and reliable. Two Scandinavian kings were among the first Western sovereigns to pay tribute to Godfrey's successor, King Baldwin I of Jerusalem (1058–1118). King Erik the Good of Denmark (c.1056–1103) set out together with his queen Bodil Thrugotsdaughter (c.1056–1103), but died *en route* on Cyprus. Queen Bodil continued the journey, reached the Holy City, and died on the Mount of Olives soon after her arrival in 1103. The already mentioned Norwegian king Sigurd Magnusson went a few years later, with a large fleet of crusaders. He reached Palestine in 1110 and offered military support to King Baldwin in his efforts to expand the borders of his realm. King Sigurd's expedition earned him the epithet "Jerusalem-traveller" or simply "Crusader" [*Jórsalafari*].

The royal crusades from Denmark and Norway paved the way for further Scandinavian pilgrimage and crusading during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

⁵⁵ Karen Armstrong, *Jerusalem: One City, Three Faiths*, Random House Publishing Group (New York: Random House Publishing Group, 2011 [1997]), 266.

⁵⁶ Chapter 4 (Bjørn Bandlien), 71–6.

⁵⁷ Jensen, *Crusading at the Edges of Europe*, 50.

⁵⁸ Jensen, *Crusading at the Edges of Europe*, 139.

⁵⁹ See Janus Møller Jensen's contribution to *Tracing the Jerusalem Code*, vol. 2, 198–231.

Minor expeditions left Scandinavia and the Norwegian settlement at Orkney in the following decades. Travel from the brim of the *kringla heimsins* to its centre remained, however, an elite phenomenon, not least because of the enormous costs of the journey. In 1153, Rognvald, Earl of Orkney (1103–58) organized a campaign on a larger scale together with the magnate Erling Ormsson (1115–79), King Sigurd's son-in-law. Pål Berg Svenungsen discusses this Orcadian crusade in his chapter, showing how the Norse elites developed what may be called a crusading spirit in the aftermath of the First Crusade, and how crusading became a means to consolidate political and ideological power at home.⁶⁰ At the time of Rognvald and Erling's crusade, the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem was adorned with frescoes of St Knud and St Olav, the royal patron saints of Denmark and Norway. This testify to diplomatic connections between the Kingdom of Jerusalem and the Scandinavian countries in the period. Øystein Ekroll presents these images as a palpable demonstration of the inclusion of the Nordic countries in the *oikumene* of Christendom.⁶¹

From the twelfth to the fourteenth and fifteenth century, Scandinavian travellers to Jerusalem, whether they be kings or commoners, lay or clergy, pilgrims or crusaders, seem to have shared certain practices common for western visitors. Their emotional responses at the sight of the city from afar: rejoicing, weeping, or both, tend to conform to the reactions prescribed by former authoritative visitors to Jerusalem, biblical and extra-biblical. Anthony Bale provides examples for this in his short chapter on *Mons Gaudii* or *Mount Joy*, the hilltop from where pilgrims first got a glimpse of their destination.⁶² Arriving in Jerusalem, twelfth-century travellers came to in a city that had reached a certain level of prosperity and flourishing under King Baldwin's rule, despite the desolation and ruin that followed the extreme violence of the Franks' conquest in 1099. During the first half of the twelfth century, the Franks transformed "a provincial Muslim city into the capital of a Western Christian kingdom".⁶³ The *Haram-al-Sharif* (Temple Mount) with its Muslim sanctuaries was now the residence of the Frankish administration and the Knights Templar. A gilded cross on top of the Dome of the Rock clearly signalled the identity of the new rulers, who anachronistically named it Temple of the Lord, *Templum Domini*. Moreover, the Latins rebuilt the churches that were destroyed under Fatimid rule at the beginning of the eleventh century. They even erected a number of new ones within the walls, and also in the Kidron Valley and on the Mount of Olives. The most

60 Chapter 6 (Pål Berg Svenungsen), 95–131. Svenungsen thereby challenges the historiographical tradition, which generally has been reluctant to consider Norse expeditions to the Eastern Mediterranean as proper crusades.

61 Chapter 5 (Øystein Ekroll), 86–93.

62 Chapter 10 (Anthony Bale), 191–97. Ane L. Bysted and Maria H. Oen also discuss pilgrims' emotional responses in their respective chapters.

63 Adrian J. Boas, *Jerusalem in the Time of the Crusades: Society, Landscape and Art in The Holy City under Frankish Rule* (New York – London: Routledge, 2001), 1.

prestigious undertaking in Jerusalem during crusader rule was, however, the re-fashioning of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, inaugurated in 1149. It ingeniously encompassed the entire precinct of passion sites: the Calvary, the Sepulchre, the prison of Christ etc. On the floor in the middle of the building, there was an inlaid ornament called the *omphalos* (navel), a spot marking out the midpoint of the world.⁶⁴ In an itinerary presenting the route from Northern Iceland via Rome to Jerusalem, written shortly after 1150, the Icelandic abbot Nikulás Bergsson (d. 1159) describes the crusaders' newly restored church.⁶⁵ He was part of a growing influx of pilgrims around the middle of the twelfth century, for which the Frankish authorities provided lodgings and other facilities. Accounts from Scandinavian pilgrims and crusaders shed light on the condition of Jerusalem's sanctuaries and infrastructure during this period, as Denys Pringle shows in his contribution to this book.⁶⁶

The Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem suffered, however, from internal conflicts, weak leadership, and increasingly bad relations to its Muslim neighbours. The spectacular failure of the Second Crusade in 1149 undoubtedly embittered the inauguration of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre the same year. Internal struggles continued and intensified in the following decades, bringing the kingdom on the verge of civil war. This was the situation in July 1187, when a unified Muslim army under command of the Kurdish warlord Saladin (Salāḥ ad-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb, 1138–1193) vanquished the Latins at the battle of Hattin in Galilee. In October the same year, Saladin entered Jerusalem, tore down the city walls and the cross at the Dome of the Rock, erased the Christian structures at the Haram, closed a number of churches and monasteries and introduced an entrance fee for Christian pilgrims to the Holy Sepulchre.⁶⁷ He refrained, however, from killing the defeated Christians. A Danish-Norwegian expedition had set out for the Third Crusade in 1187, but came too late and found Jerusalem in Saladin's hands. An account of their journey, probably written at the Premonstratensian monastery in Tønsberg, Norway in the 1190s, laments the western loss of the Holy City. In her chapter, Ane L. Bysted offers a brief but careful reading of this text, pointing out its allusions to the biblical topos of *Jerusalem desolata*, and showing how the journey to Jerusalem, although failed as crusade, still earned glory and legitimacy for the aristocrats who took part.

After a highly pragmatic treaty between the Sultan of Egypt, Al-Kāmil (1177–1238) and the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II (1194–1250), Jerusalem was restored to the

⁶⁴ Joyce Hill, "From Rome to Jerusalem: An Icelandic Itinerary of the Mid-Twelfth Century," *Harvard Theological Review* 76, no. 2 (1983): 194; Robert Ousterhout, "Architecture as Relic and the Construction of Sanctity: The Stones of the Holy Sepulchre," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 62, no. 1 (2003): 11.

⁶⁵ Nikulás' text is examined in Chapter 11 (Denys Pringle), 203–7 and Chapter 12 (Stefka G. Eriksen), 219–43.

⁶⁶ Chapter 11 (Denys Pringle), 198–217.

⁶⁷ Boas, *Jerusalem in the Time of the Crusades*, 18.

Latins for a short intermezzo of ten years. In 1244, however, Frankish rule in Jerusalem ended for good, despite subsequent crusade expeditions from the West. King Louis IX of France (1214–1270), the later saint, conducted yet another unsuccessful crusade 1250–54. At least, he carried home the prominent relic of Christ's crown of thorns from Constantinople, and had the Sainte-Chapelle erected in Paris as a precious reliquary to house it. Later, spines from the crown of thorns were donated as royal gifts to kings and clergy in Norway and Sweden, connecting Scandinavia to Jerusalem via a geopolitical detour to France.⁶⁸

There are also some sporadic sources of Scandinavians travelling in Syria and Palestine in the turbulent time following the Mongol sack of Baghdad in 1258 and subsequent Mongol expansion westwards into Syria.⁶⁹ The Mongols, and their Christian allies in the remaining crusader state of Antioch, were defeated by the Mamelukes, who had recently risen as a new political power at the expense of the Ayyubid sultanate founded by Saladin.⁷⁰ A fragmented itinerary is preserved, written by Maurice, a Norwegian Franciscan, who arrived in Palestine from Western Norway shortly after the Mameluke leader Baybars (1223–1277) had captured the crusader fortress Crac des Chevaliers in 1271. The friar was part of the entourage of the nobleman Andres Nikulasson, who never returned from the expedition.⁷¹ The Swedish chronicler Olaus Magnus (1490–1557), writing in the early sixteenth century, reports that several pilgrims, among them a number of women, went to Jerusalem from Sweden in the last decades of the thirteenth century.⁷²

Acre, the last Latin stronghold in the East, fell to the Mamelukes in 1291. Christian rule in Palestine ended for good, and from this time on, Western pilgrims, among them some Scandinavians, had to obtain permission to visit The Holy Land. When they arrived in Jerusalem, they entered a vulnerable city with no walls around it. The walls of Jerusalem had come down during Saladin's conquest and were not yet rebuilt, as the Mamelukes found the city's strategic importance too small to give priority to its fortifications.⁷³ In Jerusalem, the pilgrims were under the guidance of the Franciscans, appointed by the Pope as custodians of the Holy Land. The Franciscans served in the Holy Sepulchre, and in 1300, they installed themselves on Mount Sion, where they hosted pilgrims arriving from the West.⁷⁴ One of the Scandinavian visitors was the noblewoman Birgitta of Sweden

⁶⁸ Lena Liepe discusses these royal gifts of Jerusalem relics in Chapter 9, 167–8 and 170–3.

⁶⁹ For an overview of the sources, see Paul Riant, *Expéditions et pèlerinages des Scandinaves en Terre Sainte au temps des croisades* (Paris: impr. de A. Lainé et J. Havard, 1865–1869), 368–72.

⁷⁰ Thomas F. Madden, *The Concise History of the Crusades* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), 174.

⁷¹ See Chapter 11 (Denys Pringle), 211. The route of Friar Maurice is visualized in Fig. 11.6.

⁷² Olaus Magnus, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, Rome, 1555 (Liber VI, Cap. 19).

⁷³ Armstrong, *Jerusalem*: 304.

⁷⁴ Valentina Covaci, "Between Traditions: The Franciscans of Mount Sion and their Rituals (1330–1517)" (PhD Thesis, Amsterdam University, 2017). For Scandinavian pilgrims in Jerusalem

(1303–1373), celebrated visionary and ardent political activist. Arriving as a pilgrim to the Holy Land in 1370, ageing Birgitta experienced that the ultimate truth of the mysteries of Christ could only be known *in situ*, Maria H. Oen argues in her chapter.⁷⁵ Birgitta's authority was considered so great at the time and in the years that followed that her visions of Christ's nativity in Bethlehem and his crucifixion in Jerusalem came to have lasting impact on visual representations of these events.⁷⁶

From the fourteenth century on, the Franciscans in Jerusalem had the privilege to bestow knighthood on behalf of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. This order had existed since the time of the crusader kingdom, originally attached to Augustinian Canons Regular. A considerable number of Western aristocratic pilgrims were knighted in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Among them was Erik of Pomerania (1382–1459), who followed Queen Margrethe (1353–1412) as regent of all three Scandinavian kingdoms.⁷⁷ In 1453, six years before Erik's death, the Ottomans conquered Constantinople and eliminated the once glorious Byzantine Empire. This new power rising in the East was to open a new chapter in the history of Jerusalem. In December 1516, the sultan of the Ottomans, Selim I (1470–1520), took over the city without opposition from the inhabitants. The beginning of Ottoman rule in Jerusalem in 1517 coincided with religio-political events in Germany connected to the Augustinian friar Martin Luther. These events came to have wide-ranging consequences and eventually transformed Scandinavian ideas about Jerusalem's significance. This, however, is the subject of the subsequent volume of this series.

Phases in the Mediation of the Jerusalem Code in Medieval Scandinavia

The brief overview given above of Scandinavians travelling to Jerusalem and the Holy Land from c.1000 to c.1500 covers an era of enormous change in the travellers' domestic societies. The historical development of medieval Scandinavia is not rectilinear or uniform in this period. On the contrary, there are large regional and national differences across the geographical area that this book covers. Political

from the late fifteenth and sixteenth century, see Janus Møller Jensen's chapter in *Tracing the Jerusalem Code*, vol. 2, 198–231.

⁷⁵ Chapter 13 (Maria H. Oen), 245–67.

⁷⁶ See for instance Mary Dzon, *The Quest for the Christ Child in the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 2017), 186–245; Maria H. Oen, "Iconography and Visions: St. Birgitta's Revelation of the Nativity of Christ," in *The Locus of Meaning in Medieval Art: Iconography, Iconology, and Interpreting the Visual Imagery of the Middle Ages*, ed. Lena Liepe (Kalamazoo MI – Berlin: Medieval Institute Publications, 2019).

⁷⁷ On Scandinavian nobles knighted by the Franciscans, see Eivor Andersen Oftestad's introduction to *Tracing the Jerusalem Code*, vol. 2, 12–48.

alliances and conflicts between the Scandinavian kingdoms themselves, and with their neighbouring powers, shifted through these centuries. Still, when it comes to the workings of the Jerusalem code, it is possible to discern some chronological phases that largely seem to apply to the whole of this northernmost part of Europe.

The earliest sources mentioning *Jorsalir*, the Old Norse term for Jerusalem, dates from eleventh-century Norway and Sweden. As Klaus Johan Myrvoll conveys in his chapter on etymology in the introductory part of this book, these vernacular sources clearly refer to the actual city in the Holy Land, either as pilgrimage goal or as a desired destination of conquest.⁷⁸ The Latin derivate of Hebrew *Hierusalem* (*Jerusalem*), however, was inherently multivalent. The term must have become familiar to Scandinavians through liturgical texts and practices from the earliest missionary period. In the liturgy and readings of the Holy Mass and in the Divine Office of the monastic orders, *Jerusalem* permanently oscillates between the historical city of the Jews and multiple meanings of allegorical exegesis.⁷⁹ This ambiguity is explicated in exegetical commentaries, for instance in some of the vernacular homilies preserved from twelfth-century Norway.⁸⁰ Indeed, the interpretative dynamics embedded in the metaphorical cluster we call the Jerusalem code was nurtured by the continuous ritual repetition of the Golgotha event not only during Easter, but also in every single Eucharistic celebration. Hence, the liturgy and the church buildings designed to surround it must have been the primary media of the Jerusalem code in Scandinavia in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

During the first half of the twelfth century, the church of the North was consolidated. Rome established three Scandinavian archbishoprics (1104: Lund; 1154: Nidaros; 1160: Uppsala), and eventually, a fixed network of parishes emerged

⁷⁸ Chapter 2 (Klaus Johan Myrvoll), 42–7.

⁷⁹ Cf. *Prelude*, 5–6. Liturgical sources from the missionary period in Scandinavia are non-existent. Obviously, the early liturgy was highly influenced by use in the homeland of the missionaries, who came from England to Western Norway and from the German Empire to Denmark and Sweden. The first monastic foundations seem to have been established in the last decades of the eleventh century or around 1100. Most preserved missals, breviaries and handbooks for the Liturgical Hours preserved in Scandinavia date from the late middle ages. Liturgical commentaries (*expositiones missae*) are however preserved in vernacular manuscripts from ca. 1200 to ca 1400, cf. *Messuskýringar. Liturgisk symbolik frá den norsk-íslandske kyrka í millomalderen*, ed. Oluf Kolsrud, Oslo: Kjeldeskriftfondet, 1952; *Messuskýringar*, trans. Elise Kleivane, ed. Sigurd Hareide, et al., Oslo: St. Olav forlag, 2014.

⁸⁰ One example is found in the homily for the feast of the circumcision of Jesus (January 1): “Fyrir því at sva sem forðum varo born boreð í mysteri í Ierusalém með fornóm eptir scurðar-skrin, sva ganga litillatir in himnesca Iersualém með fornóm goðra værca skilðir ok skilðir fra ollum dæuðlegum ustycðum á domsdæigi” [Just like the children in olden days were carried into the temple of Jerusalem with offerings after their circumcision, thus will the humble enter the heavenly Jerusalem on Domesday with the offerings of their good works, purged and parted with all deadly deficiencies,] *Gamal norsk homilebok: Cod. AM. 619 4º*. Edited by Gustav Indrebø. Oslo: Kjeldeskriftfondet, 1966, 54. This and other homilies are compiled in AM 619 4to, a manuscript from c.1200. The Old Norse texts, however, are dated to the twelfth century.

across these northern church provinces. The cathedral chapters and the numerous monastic foundations fostered a prolific literate culture, providing abundant rhetorical occasions for the application of the Jerusalem code: new literary genres, new liturgical celebrations, and new architectural schemes. Additionally, iconography and ornamental forms in liturgical objects, church architecture, and ecclesiastical furnishings were finely tuned to manifest the relevance of multivalent Jerusalem to the Scandinavians, as several of the chapters in this book show.⁸¹ An ambitiously rapid building of churches radically transformed the Northern landscapes during the long twelfth century. This “mantle of churches” covered most of the Scandinavian territories, and though most of them were of modest size, their design tended to conform to what Line M. Bonde in her chapter labels “architectural commonplaces,” constituting small connecting points to the heavenly Jerusalem scattered about all of Scandinavia.⁸²

Within the highly ritualized and solemn space of the parish churches, Jerusalem was actualized sacramentally during the liturgy of the Holy Mass, in the mystical communion between Christ and his bride, the church, daughter of Zion. A particularly striking visualization of this is the sumptuous gilt altar from Lisbjerg Church in Jutland, Denmark, made in the 1130s (Fig. 1.3). The ensemble of altar frontal and arched retable has a strong Christological axis, on which one of several focal points is the Virgin enthroned with the Christ Child under an arch with the inscription CIVITAS HIERUSALEM. Here, the Virgin is construed as the entrance to the City of God. The altar displays a sophisticated interplay between composite iconography and a selection of Latin metric verse inscriptions along the frames. Together, texts and images communicate a soteriological message in which the multivalence of Jerusalem is constitutive.⁸³

Although the erudite subtleties of the theological message in furnishings like the Lisbjerg altar probably was lost to most parishioners coming to church, it was hard to miss the centrality of Jerusalem in liturgical performance. This was especially true of rituals connected to the individual lives of parishioners, like the Churching of women after childbirth, which is the topic of Margrete Syrstad Andås’

81 For the concept “rhetorical occasion” in this context, see Kristin B. Aavitsland, “Elite Soldiers of Christ: Elevating the Secular Elite on Danish Church Walls (Twelfth to Thirteenth Centuries),” in *Nordic Elites in Transformation, c.1005–1250. Volume III: Legitimacy and Glory*, ed. Wojtek Jezierski, et al. (Routledge, 2021), 175–202.

82 The case of Denmark is especially noticeable: here, more than 3000 stone churches were built, decorated, and sumptuously equipped in the course of one single century, cf. Chapter 15 (Line M. Bonde), 299–323.

83 Kristin B. Aavitsland, “Civitas Hierusalem: Representing Presence in Scandinavian Golden Altars,” in *Image and Altar 800–1300. Papers from an International Conference in Copenhagen 24 October – 27 October 2007*, ed. Grindler-Hansen (Copenhagen: National Museum Studies in Archaeology and History, 2014), 189.



Fig. 1.3: *Civitas Hierusalem*. Central part of the gilt altar frontal from Lisbjerg Church, 1135. Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen.

chapter in this book.⁸⁴ Entering the church as mothers *post partum* just like the Virgin Mary once had entered the Temple, they were themselves to perform rites that explicitly enacted Jerusalem, simultaneously as biblical past, transcendent present and eschatological future. Liturgy, church decoration, and architecture continued to have greater impact on the formation of a Christian storyworld than the written media, whose circulation was exclusive and rather limited.

⁸⁴ Chapter 17 (Margrete Syrstad Andås), 340–74.

The Jerusalem code was, however, never restricted to liturgical space. From the very beginning, ideology-makers like royal *skalds* (court poets) and chroniclers readily applied the metaphors, narratives, and performative templates of the Jerusalem code for political purposes. Simultaneously, political and societal dimensions added to the meaning production of the liturgy. This cross-fertilization between political and liturgical workings of the Jerusalem code seems to increase during the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, when the Scandinavian kingdoms gradually developed more stable and professional state administrations, in parallel with the consolidation of ecclesiastical culture. Since the emergence of a literate culture in Scandinavia largely coincided with the heyday of crusade, the connection to Jerusalem was not only vertical and heaven-bound, but also horizontal. The Northerners were to reshape their past and find their place in Christendom at a point when Christians were obliged to expand its realm, fight its enemies, and defend the faith with armed force. In Scandinavia, whose pre-Christian culture had held the figure of the warrior in particularly high regard, this concept of Christian identity seemed to take root in fertile soil.⁸⁵ Crusading became a vital dimension of Jerusalem reception in Scandinavia, in ideology as well as in practical politics. The archiepiscopal see at Lund was founded only five years after the Franks' conquest of Jerusalem in 1099. According to Kurt Villads Jensen, the rise of Lund to the rank of archbishopric was closely connected to the Danish king Erik the Good's crusade to Jerusalem in 1103.⁸⁶ As mentioned above, King Erik's Norwegian counterpart, King Sigurd the Crusader, went to Jerusalem few years later, and aimed to establish a Norwegian archbishopric in Nidaros. Although this ambition was not fulfilled until 1154, the fact remains that from the early twelfth century and onwards, references to Jerusalem appeared as legitimization strategy for royal authority and for an expansive foreign policy.

A conspicuous instance of theological legitimization of secular politics dates from the reign of Valdemar II of Denmark (r. 1202–1241), whose successful campaign to extend Danish territory into the Baltic earned him the epithet “the Victorious” [*Valdemar Sejr*]. The cathedral of the Valdemar dynasty's preferred residence town, Ribe in southwestern Jutland, carries a remarkable and much-discussed triangular relief above the portal of the southern transept (Fig. 1.4). The relief is added on top of the tympanum representing the Deposition of Christ, exhibiting an iconography not known from any other sources: below a portal with the inscription *Civitas Hierusalem* is Christ and the Virgin Mary, enthroned as the King and Queen of Heaven. Christ is passing a cross to the Virgin, who is passing it on to an earthly king, standing below her, with his earthly queen by his side. The two couples mirror each other – like the sovereignty of earthly princes was to reflect the royal dignity of Christ. The exchange of crosses must, I think, be interpreted as a transfer of authority: Christ, the Lord for ages of ages (*alpha* and

⁸⁵ Aavitsland, “Defending Jerusalem,” 128.

⁸⁶ Jensen, *Crusading at the Edges of Europe*, 112.



Fig. 1.4: Taking the cross for Jerusalem. Relief above the portal of the southern transept, Ribe Cathedral, early thirteenth century. Watercolour by J. Kornerup, 1865. Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen.

omega) authorises his bride, depicted as the Virgin and representing the Holy Roman Church, to take the cross. The church in her turn authorizes the secular ruler. Although the interpretation of this relief is debated, scholars largely agree that the king is meant to portray Valdemar II, whereas the beardless man on the right is generally held to be St Knud Lavard, the Danish crusader saint.⁸⁷ Around the group are hailing angels, carrying long, inscribed ribbons. The inscription to the right alludes to the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:3): *Beati pauperes (s)(piri)tu quoniam (regnum dei) possidebitis* [Blessed [are] the poor in spirit, for you shall possess the kingdom of God]. The angel to the left carries a quotation from the prophet Isaiah: *Venite ascendam(us) ad montem Dei* [Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord] (Isa 2:3). These two selected biblical quotations connect the claim for the heavenly kingdom with the mountain of the Lord – Mount Zion, i.e. Jerusalem. In the relief, *Civitas Hierusalem* is clearly meant to represent the transcendent glory in the heavenly city. But against the background of the royally authorized, contemporary crusading campaigns on the Baltics, a political dimension is also close at hand.

Crusading ideology lived on through the entire medieval period, and the idea of meritorious and just war against Muslims and heathens continued to inform political and religious thought also after the Protestant reformation in the sixteenth century. However, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, other aspects of the Jerusalem code than crusade and holy war seem to be more prominent in written, visual, and built sources. The royal courts, cathedral chapters, and religious houses encouraged learning, and continental texts were increasingly circulated, translated, and commented on in parallel with the rise of an indigenous literary production, both in Latin and the vernacular. Corresponding to this gradually sophisticated literate culture was the accomplishments in painting, sculpture, and architecture, the enhancement of liturgy, and the codification of law. In all these endeavours, Jerusalem is not so often referred to as the legitimate, territorial bequest of Latin Christianity, but rather construed as a model for a true Christian society to be fulfilled in the transcendent glory ahead of humankind. The fourteenth-century Icelandic manuscripts under discussions in the chapters by Stefka G. Eriksen and Kristin B. Aavitsland testifies to a culture in which Jerusalem is a moral compass and a depository of material for spiritual edification, suited for monastic rumination.⁸⁸ During the era of the Kalmar union (1397–1523), which united the three kingdoms of Denmark, Sweden (including most of Finland) and Norway (including Iceland) under one single monarch, individual penance and contemplation of Christ's passion and death at Golgotha were increasingly significant features of lay devotional practices. This process prompted renewed devotion to The Holy Cross, as

⁸⁷ Ane Bysted et al., eds., *Jerusalem in the North: Denmark and the Baltic Crusades, 1100–1522* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2012), xiii.

⁸⁸ Chapter 12 (Stefka G. Eriksen), 218–43, Chapter 20 (Kristin B. Aavitsland), 424–53.

Kaja Merete Hagen shows in her chapter, and came to transform the representations of Jerusalem in ecclesiastical spaces, as Martin Wangsgaard Jürgensen demonstrates in his.⁸⁹

During the fifteenth century, the expanding Ottoman Empire affected the Christian storyworld. With the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1452, the Scandinavians' dream of *Miklagard* came to an end. Forty years later, Christopher Columbus set foot on a continent unknown to the medieval world. The *kringla heimsins* seemed to expand – also from a Scandinavian point of view. In the wake of Spanish expeditions to the new world, King Christian II of Denmark-Norway (1481–1559) planned to lay claim to the North American continent and urged for a crusade to Greenland.⁹⁰ This ambition proved, however, to be one of the dead ends of history. The expansion of the Christian storyworld to new continents in the sixteenth century seemed to imply, however, a transformation – or perhaps rather an implosion – of the storyworld as it was conceived of in the Middle Ages.

The Authority of Jerusalem in Medieval Scandinavia: An Outline of this Book

This book explores the authority of Jerusalem in medieval Scandinavia through four main themes: legitimation of political power, experience and perception of sacred topography, formulation of and interaction with sacred space, and acknowledgment of the scheme of salvation history. These four themes largely correspond to the four parts of the book. Still, the themes are intertwined, and thus addressed in most of chapters. Chapters come in two forms: as brief, explicatory comments on key concepts and short presentations of source material offering illustrative cases for such concepts, or as more comprehensive research papers. Together, the chapters present textual, visual, and material sources from Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Iceland, and cover a time span from the turn of the first millennium up to the early sixteenth century. There is, however, an emphasis on the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and a majority of the chapters centre on Norway.

Following this introduction are two shorter introductory texts (Chapters 2 and 3): Klaus Johan Myrvoll's brief chapter on the Old Norse term for Jerusalem, *Jorsalir*, and its application and associative etymology, followed by Eivor Andersen Oftestad's presentation of the fundamental concept of *translation tempeli*.

The main theme in Part I (Chapters 4–9) is legitimation of political power by means of Jerusalem's authority. When investigating religious and political authority

⁸⁹ Chapter 18 (Kaja Merete Hagen), 373–93; Chapter 19 (Martin Wangsgaard Jürgensen), 394–421.

⁹⁰ Janus Møller Jensen, *Denmark and the Crusades, c.1400–1650* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

in medieval Scandinavia, representations of saintly kingship looms large. Bjørn Bandlien examines the literary representation of St Olav's entry as a Christian king to his realm, and Øystein Ekroll offers a brief introduction to the paintings of St Olav and St Knud in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. Pål Berg Svenungsen and Ane L. Bysted examines sources to Scandinavian crusading to the Levant, whereas Lukas Raupp and Lena Liepe survey relics connected to the Passion of Christ arriving in Scandinavia during the Middle Ages, showing how this holy matter ultimately deriving from Jerusalem played fundamental political roles in the three Scandinavian kingdoms.

Part II (Chapters 10–13) considers pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the travellers' perceptions of and interactions with the Holy City. Anthony Bale discusses the informal, yet ritualized behaviour of Western pilgrims when laying eyes on their sacred destination, be it Jerusalem or Nidaros. Denys Pringle gives a thorough presentation of sources accounting for Northern visitors to Jerusalem and the Holy Land in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries up until the fall of Acre in 1291. Stefka G. Eriksen examines one of them in greater detail: Abbot Nikulás of Munkathvera's itinerary from c.1150. Part II closes with Maria H. Oen's chapter on the most influential of Scandinavian Jerusalem pilgrims of all time, St Birgitta of Sweden, and her highly influential visionary perceptions of Jerusalem's *loca sancta*.

Part III (Chapters 14–19) offers examples of how Jerusalem was transposed and represented architecturally, iconographically, and liturgically in medieval Scandinavia. Øystein Ekroll, Kersti Markus, and Line M. Bonde consider Jerusalem connotations in cityscapes, landscapes, and ecclesiastical architecture in twelfth-century Norway, Sweden, and Denmark respectively. Margrete Syrstad Andås and Kaja Merete Hagen study lay devotional practices re-enacting Jerusalem events in late medieval Norway and Sweden, whereas Martin Wangsgaard Jürgensen describes a transition in Jerusalem representation in ecclesiastical ornamentation from the Romanesque to the Gothic paradigm.

Part IV (Chapters 20–24) concerns outlooks from the North onto a world in which Jerusalem is the undisputable symbolic centre and the inherent aim of history is Christ's salvation of humankind. Kristin B. Aavitsland examines how Jerusalem is the structuring principle in three fourteenth-century encyclopaedic manuscripts from Iceland. Mikael Males investigates means by which the temporal and spatial distance between thirteenth-century Iceland and biblical Jerusalem were negotiated in Old Norse literature. Margrethe C. Stang discusses visual representations of outsiders to the Christian storyworld of the medieval North: the Jews, the Muslims, and the Saami. Jørn Øyrehaugen Sunde shows how the Christian virtues, exegetically connected to the Heavenly Jerusalem, are comprehensively applied as orientation marks in the Norwegian Law Code of 1274. The volume closes with Biörn Tjällén's study of the identification of archiepiscopal Uppsala with Zion in late medieval Swedish historiography.



Fig. 2.1: Wooden stick with runic inscription mentioning Jerusalem [iaurusalem], thirteenth century. Excavated from Trondheim city centre 1973–1985. NTNU, Vitenskapsmuseet, Trondheim.

Klaus Johan Myrvoll

Chapter 2

Re-Naming Jerusalem: A Note on Associative Etymology in the Vernacular North

As is the case with several cities and places that they came in contact with, the Norsemen had their own name for Jerusalem: *Jórsalir*, sometimes expanded and amplified to *Jórsalaborg* “the city of Jerusalem” or *Jórsalaland* “the land of Jerusalem,” that is, “the Holy Land.” This chapter is a brief survey of the name’s etymology and possible connotations in the Old Norse world.

At first glance, the Old Norse (ON) name *Jórsalir* may look like a purely phonetic adaptation of one of the Medieval Latin forms of the city’s name, *Ierusalem*:¹ *Jór-* corresponds to *Ieru-* and *-salir* to *-salem*. Even though phonetic resemblance is one aspect of the Old Norse re-naming process, a closer inspection of the name *Jórsalir* reveals that each part of it carries several layers of meaning. What becomes clear is that the Norsemen, by naming the city *Jórsalir*, on the one hand made it more familiar to them by assimilating it to names for other important places in the North, like *Jórvík* and *Uppsáir*, and on the other hand gave the city a most appropriate name in accordance with its function as a centre of Christianity: I will argue that the name *Jórsalir* may be translated as “the city of the king.” This brings the Old Norse name in line with the concept of Jerusalem as “the city of the great king,” which is attested already in Ps 48(47):3, and is referred to by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.²

We do not know when the name *Jórsalir* came into being, but it must have been in the tenth century at the latest, when the Norsemen were introduced to Christianity. In the case of such an important city as Jerusalem, it is conceivable that the name is a little older. It is first attested in skaldic verse from the second half of the eleventh century,³ as well as in Swedish runic inscriptions from more or less the same

¹ Besides *Ierusalem* and *Hierusalem* (with the aspirate), also the Greek form *Hierosolyma* was used in Medieval Latin, but the ON name is clearly based on the first form.

² “But I say to you not to swear at all, neither by heaven for it is the throne of God: Nor by the earth, for it is his footstool: nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king,” Matt 5:34–35.

³ In *Stúfir* the Blind Thordarson’s *Stúfsdrápa*, st. 2, composed in memory of King Harald Hardruler [harðráði] (d. 1066), where the king is said to have gone “from Greece to lay under him Jerusalem” [und sik leggja . . . Jórsali or Grikkjum,] a clear exaggeration (cf. SkP II:352). Other early citations include Markús Skeggjason’s *Eiríksdrápa* (ca. 1104), st. 26, which relates that the Danish King Erik “set out to explore the settlement of Jerusalem” (*gerði fǫr út at kanna . . . byggð Jórsala*; SkP II:455), and Einar Skúlason’s *Sigurðardrápa I*, st. 4, where it is said that King Sigurd the Crusader “went to visit

period.⁴ On the surface, the name is easily analysable: the first part, *Jór-*, is familiar from the name of another important city for the Norsemen, i.e. *Jórvík* in England (today's *York*, which, in fact, is a continuation of the ON form), whereas the second part, *-salir*, is widespread in Scandinavian place names, but is especially linked to the name *Uppsalar*, the old centre for pagan cult and royal power in Sweden (today's *Uppsala*). It is also found, in the singular *-salr*, in the territorial name *Skíringssalr* in Vestfold, where the far-ranging market place *Kaupangr* was situated.

How, then, should we understand the name *Jórsalir*, in its constituent parts and as a whole? Easiest to explain is the last part, *-salir*, plural of the ON masc. noun *salr*, which is an old Germanic word for 'building, house consisting of one room'.⁵ Especially in the plural, it may in Old Norse carry the more general meaning 'abode, home; farm'.⁶ It corresponds etymologically to German *Saal* and Dutch *zaal*, which have acquired a more specialized meaning 'large hall'. In Old Norse, the word *salr* is mostly restricted to eddic and skaldic poetry, where one may be confronted with a scene taking place, e.g., *í Óðins sali* 'in the halls of Óðinn', i.e. in *Valhöll* (*Eirm* 2, 3). By contrast, the word *salr* is sparsely recorded in ON prose texts,⁷ of which the earliest are from the 1120s, and it is reasonable to assume that the word had disappeared from the spoken language before that. When the word re-appears in the modern Scandinavian languages (Norw., Sw., Dan. *sal*), it is a loanword from German, and it is then only used in the more restricted sense 'large hall'.

In the case of *Jórsalir*, we must assume that the second part, *-salir*, was intended to mean something beyond its already established range of 'farm' to 'village', namely

the settlement of Jerusalem" (*för vitja . . . Jórsala byggðar*; SkP II:540). For these kings' expeditions to Jerusalem, see Chapter 6 (Pål Berg Svenungsen), 105–31, Chapter 8 (Lukas Raupp), 140–65 and Chapter 11 (Denys Pringle), 198–217 in this book.

⁴ The name is found in the inscriptions on two runestones from Uppland, both dated to the mid-eleventh century, in the nom.-acc. form **iursalir** in U 136, and in the gen.-form (**til**) **jursala** in U 605; the first element in both probably resembles Old Swedish *iūr-*, corresponding to ON *Jór-* (for the inscriptions, see SRI 6:202–203, and SRI 8:4–10). It is also found in an inscription on a whetstone from Gotland (G 216), there in the Old Gutnish form **iaursalir**, together with other place names such as **islat** = *Ísland*, "Iceland" and **serklat** = *Serkland*, "the Muslim areas." This inscription is dated to 1050–1100 (Otto von Friesen, "Runinskriften från Timans i Roma," *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 56 (1942); SRI 2:238). There is a historical point to add to these datings: After Jerusalem had been captured by the Turkish Seljuks in 1073, and up to the First Crusade in 1099, it was difficult for pilgrims to get access to the city. This implies that the runic inscriptions mentioning pilgrimage to Jerusalem which are from the eleventh century are most likely older than the year 1073.

⁵ Harald Bjorvand and Fredrik Otto Lindeman, *Våre arveord. Etymologisk ordbok*, third ed. (Oslo: Novus forlag, 2019), s.v. *sal*.

⁶ *Lex.poet.*, s.v. *salr*; NSL, s.v. *sal*.

⁷ The word is found several times in Snorri Sturluson's handbook in skaldic poetry, the *Edda*, but its use, related to stories about the pagan gods, is clearly based on poetic examples. According to ONP, the word is found outside the *Edda* only once in each of *Ynglinga saga* (in *Heimskringla*) and the translated sagas *Karlamagnúss saga* and *Barlaams saga ok Josafats*.

‘city’. Historically, cities often have grown out of farms or villages, and the same is true for many designations for ‘city’, e.g. Norwegian and Danish *by* (originally ‘farm’, ON *býr*, *bær*), and Russian *górod* (cognate to Eng. *yard* and Norw. *gard* ‘farm’). Probably, the name *Uppsalir* served as a model for *Jórsalir*: it is widely held among onomasts that several places in both Sweden and Norway are named after this important cultic centre,⁸ which had developed into a town in the Viking Age at the latest.

What then about the first part of *Jórsalir*? I have already mentioned the model of *Jórvík*, but there is a more obvious connection to a name closer to Jerusalem, i.e. the ON name for the river Jordan, which should be normalized *Jórdán*, not **Jórðán* as it is represented in some sources.⁹ The name *Jórdán* is found even earlier than *Jórsalir* in the Nordic sources, in Sigvatr skáld’s *Erfdrápa* about St Olav from around 1040.¹⁰ There, Christ is called *Jórdánar gramr*, “king of the Jordan.”¹¹ The ON *Jórdán* is of course a more or less accurate phonetic adaptation of the Latin rendering of the Greek name of the river, *Iordānēs* (Greek Ἰορδανῆς), but this does not prevent the first element from being associated with the name element *Jór-*, as is evident in both *Jórvík* and *Jórsalir*. (The second element of ON *Jórdán* is more difficult to explain other than as a phonetic rendering of the original.)¹² Since Jordan was one of the important goals for pilgrims in the Holy Land, it is probable that the name of this river

8 SOL, s.v. *Uppsala*.

9 E.g. Finnur Jónsson, “Fremmede ords behandling i oldnordisk digtning,” in *Festskrift til Vilhelm Thomsen fra disciple udgivet i anledning af hans femogtyveårige doktorjubilæum 23 marts 1869–23 marts 1894* (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandels Forlag, 1894), 209; *Lex.poet.*, s.v. *Jórðán*; SkP I:697, II:353, 477f., III:850 whereas Johan Fritzer, *Ordbog over Det gamle norske Sprog*, second ed., 3 vols. (Kristiania: Den norske Forlagsforening, 1886–1896), II:241 has the correct normalization *Jórdán*. That *Jórdán* is the correct ON form of the name may be seen from the spellings in the earliest extant Old Icelandic manuscripts, where the name is consistently written with <ð>, whereas <þ> would be expected if the underlying form were **Jórðán* (examples from the mss. *Rímbeğla* and the Old Icelandic Book of Homilies, cf. Ludvig Larsson, *Ordförrådet i de älsta isländska handskrifterna* (Lund: PH. Lindstedts Universitets-Bokhandel, 1891), 179). The correct form may likewise be deduced from skaldic rhymes such as *Jórdánar: fjóra* (Sigv *Erfól* 28, ca. 1040) and *Jórdán: stóran* (Ólhf *Árdr* 2, 1256?), where the voiced fricative ð would have had to be included in the rhyme. This implies that the name should be analysed as *Jór-dán*, since **rd*, unlike *rð*, is not a possible consonant cluster in Old Norse, and there has to be a juncture between *r* and *d*.

10 SkP I:697.

11 Both *konungr Jórsala* and *konungr Jórdánar* (and *konungr Griklands!*) are among the kennings for Christ that Snorri Sturluson mentions in his *Edda* (Snorri Sturluson, *Edda. Skáldskaparmál*, 2 vols, ed. Anthony Faulkes, London: Viking Society for Northern Research / University College London, 1998, 1:76).

12 The most obvious choice would be a river-name **Dán*, but no such name seems to exist (cf. Oluf Rygh, *Norske Elvenavne* (Kristiania: Cammermeyer, 1904)). A candidate could have been the river Donau, but the ON name for it is *Dún* (see SkP III:840), cf. “Dun heitir a. er mest [va]ltn er a Europa,” in *Heimlýsning ok helgifræði in Hauksbók. Udgiven efter de Arnamagnæanske håndskrifter no. 371, 544 og 675, 4o, samt forskellige papirshåndskrifter af Det Kongelige Nordiske Oldskrift-Selskab*, ed. Finnur Jónsson, Copenhagen: Thieles Bogtrykkeri, 1892–1896, 150.

played a role in the genesis of the name *Jórsalir*; in *Jórdán* the phonetic resemblance to the original was far greater than it was in the case *Ieru*·: *Jór*.

To establish the exact meaning of the name element *Jór*· in both *Jórsalir* and *Jórdán*, it will be necessary to go further into the historical background of the name *Jórvík*, which is more likely to be the model of the others than vice versa. That name is otherwise a good example of what may happen to a name and its meaning when it wanders from one language to another and undergoes several successive adaptations. The complex linguistic history of Britain is peculiarly relevant for such a study.

York is derived from a British (i.e. Celtic) place name, which is first attested in the Greek cartographer Ptolemy (ca. 150 AD) in the form Ἐβόρακον, later in Latinized form *Eburacum*, *Eboracum*. This British name, **Eburācon*, probably originally designated “the place abounding in yew-trees” (cf. Old Irish *i(u)bhar* ‘yew’), or, alternatively, “the estate of Eburos (a man’s name).”¹³ Supposedly, **Eburācon* had developed phonetically into something like **Evorōg* by the time of the Anglian settlement in the late fifth century,¹⁴ and this was in turn associated by the new settlers with Old English (OE) *efor*, later (with back umlaut) *eofor* ‘wild boar’ and *wīc* probably in the sense ‘town’, or possibly ‘temporary dwelling, camp’ (a loanword from Latin *vīcus* ‘farm; village’), thus the OE name of the city, *Eoforwīc*, ‘boar-town’. This was in turn adapted by the Scandinavian settlers to ON *Jórvík*, at the latest when the Scandinavian chieftains Ívarr and Halfdanr conquered York in 867.

It has been argued that the ON form *Jórvík* came into being by a purely phonetic development from the OE form *Eoforwīc*. This is not very likely for language historical reasons.¹⁵ The Norsemen must instead have re-analysed the name by employing similar words from their own language.¹⁶ The last part of the name, OE *-wīc*, ‘town’, was probably identified with the homonymous ON *vík*, ‘small bay, inlet,’ even though this had no

¹³ For an extensive discussion of the etymology of **Eburācon*, see Gillian Fellows-Jensen, “The Origin and Development of the Name York,” in *Sources for York History to AD 1100*, ed. David Rollason, et al., *The Archaeology of York*, vol. 1 (York: York Archaeological Trust, 1998), 226f.

¹⁴ Kenneth Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain: A Chronological Survey of the Brittonic Languages, First to Twelfth Century A.D.* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1953), 655; “Romano-British Names in the Antonine Itinerary,” *Britannia* 1 (1970): 74; cf. Victor Watts, ed. *The Cambridge Dictionary of English Place-Names* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), s.n. *York*.

¹⁵ *The Cambridge Dictionary of English Place-Names* 2004, s.n. *York*, posits a development from an adapted form of *Eforwīc*, **Éorvīk*, to *Eórvík*, *Jórvík* with a shift of accent from *e* to *o*. This shift of accent, however, did not happen in Old Norse before the mid-twelfth century (see Finnur Jónsson, *Norsk-islandske kultur- og sprogforhold i 9. og 10. årh.* (Copenhagen: Andr. Fred. Høst & Søn, 1921), 257–60), whereas the form *Jórvík* (two syllables) is safely attested already in the tenth-century poem *Arinbjarnarkviða* by Egill Skallagrímsson (*Skj.* A 1:44, B 1:38). There is similar misconceived phonetic reasoning in Eilert Ekwall, ‘How Long Did the Scandinavian Language Survive in England?’, in *A Grammatical Miscellany Offered to Otto Jespersen on His Seventieth Birthday* (Copenhagen: Levin & Munksgaard / London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1930), 26–27, and in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), s.n. *York*.

¹⁶ Similar reasoning by Fellows-Jensen 1998, ‘The Origin and Development of the Name York:’ 232f.

support in the topography.¹⁷ Since the Norsemen did not possess a cognate with the Latin etymon of OE *wīc*, the meaning of the last, central part of the name thus changed from ‘town’ to ‘small bay’. The first element, OE *eofor*-, ‘wild boar’, the Norsemen must have identified correctly as a cognate with their own word for the same animal, which at that time most likely was **jórr* (stem **jór*-), from Proto-Germanic **ebura*-.¹⁸ This stem is recorded in Old Norse in personal names only, such as *Jóreiðr*, *Jórunn* and **Jórunlf*r (the last one as a part of a place name). A related word, however, is *jöfurr*, which is used in skaldic poetry in the meaning ‘prince, king’. This word should also be traced back to Proto-Germanic **ebura*-, like **jórr* and OE *eofor*, and scholars have struggled to explain the exact relationship between the two ON forms, *jöfurr* and **jórr*. It will lead too far afield to go into these complicated matters here, but the most probable explanation posited so far is that the two words have originated in different case forms.¹⁹

This raises the important question about the *semantic* development of the word forms **jórr* and *jöfurr*. There is no doubt that Proto-Germanic **ebura*- must have meant ‘wild boar’, and this is also the only meaning attested for its cognates in the West Germanic languages (Old English *eofor*, Old Saxon *ebur*-, Old High German *ebur*). Nevertheless, from the aristocratic custom of wearing helmets crowned with the figure of a wild boar, which was widespread in the Germanic area during the sixth and seventh centuries, the word came to be used for these helmets – this stage is attested for Old English – and eventually, as *pars pro toto*, for the warrior king himself in the poetic tradition of the North Germanic peoples.²⁰ Behind this equation of the king with the wild boar – which is also inherent in the helmet custom – one may suggest a more immediate identification between the king and the fierce animal he hunts down.

Even though ‘prince, king’ is the only meaning attested for ON *jöfurr*, it is probable that the older word **jór*-/*jöfr*-, then forming a single paradigm, could mean both ‘wild boar’ and ‘prince, king’ when *Jórvík* and *Jórsalir* got their ON names. As a tentative guess, this could have happened in the ninth century for *Jórvík*, and in the tenth century for *Jórsalir*. If this is correct, it would justify attributing the meaning “the city of the king” to *Jórsalir*, a most suitable name for the city where the king of all kings taught and suffered the death on the cross.

¹⁷ Fellows-Jensen, “The Origin and Development of the Name York,” 233.

¹⁸ Jan de Vries, *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1962) s.v. *jöfurr*.

¹⁹ According to this theory, the stem *jór*- would be the regular outcome in the nom., acc. sg. (cf. ON *bjórr* m. ‘beaver’ < Proto-Nordic **bebura*-), whereas *jöfr*- would be expected in the dat. sg. (*jöfri*), and in the pl. (nom. *jöfrar*, acc. *jöfra*, dat. *jöfrum*, gen. *jöfra*). Secondly, a new stem in nom.-acc. sg., *jöfur*-, turned up through analogy (cf. Assar Janzén, “De fornvästnordiska personnamnen,” in *Personnamn*, ed. Assar Janzén (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers Förlag / Oslo: H. Aschehoug & Co’s Forlag / Copenhagen: J. H. Schultz Forlag: 1948), 83; Fellows-Jensen 1998, “The Origin and Development of the Name York,” 232). A similar process probably underlies ON *höfuð* n. ‘head’, cf. *Våre arveord. Etymologisk ordbok*, s.v. *hode*.

²⁰ Both IED, s.v. *jöfurr*, and Bugge in NIÆR, explain the semantic development along these lines.

Eivor Andersen Oftestad

Chapter 3

Translatio Templi: A Conceptual Condition for Jerusalem References in Medieval Scandinavia

The present volume traces Jerusalem references in medieval Scandinavia. An important condition for these references is the idea of Christians' continuity with the biblical Jerusalem and the Children of Israel. Accordingly, as part of an introduction to the topic, an explanation of this idea is useful and is given in the following.

According to the Bible, God revealed himself to the Jews and ordered a house to be built for his dwelling among his people.¹ The high priest was the only one allowed to enter His presence in the innermost of the Temple – the Holy of Holies was the exclusive meeting place between God and man. This was where the Ark of the Covenant was preserved, and it was the place for the offering at the Atonement day. The Old Testament temple cult is of fundamental significance for the legitimation of the Christian Church. Although this legitimation has always depended on the idea of continuity between Jewish worship and Christian worship, the continuity has been described variously throughout history. To the medieval Church, a transfer of both divine presence and sacerdotal authority from the Old to the New Covenant was crucial. At the beginning of the twelfth century, which was both in the wake of the first crusade and the period when the Gregorian papacy approved the new Scandinavian Church province, a certain material argument of continuity occurred in Rome that can be described according to a model of *translatio templi*.²

The notion of *translatio* can be used to characterize a wide range of phenomena and has been one of several related approaches to establish continuity over time in western history.³ The “translation of the empire,” *translatio imperii*, was defined by

1 1 Kgs 6:8.

2 The term *translatio templi* was not an established term in medieval exegetical literature; it does not occur explicitly in the sources, but is a construction which enables the comprehension of a certain phenomenon over time, cf. Eivor Andersen Oftestad, *The Lateran Church in Rome and the Ark of the Covenant: Housing the Holy Relics of Jerusalem with an edition and translation of the Descriptio Lateranensis Ecclesiae (BAV Reg. Lat. 712)* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2019), 11.

3 Aleida Assmann, *Zeit und Tradition: Kulturelle Strategien der Dauer* (Cologne – Weimar – Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1999), 111. Cf. also Herbert Grundmann, “Sacerdotium – Regnum – Studium. Zur Wertung

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medieval historiographers as the continuum of a single imperial authority throughout history, transferred from the East to the West. The “translation of knowledge,” *translatio studii*, was a parallel concept that referred to the transfer of culture.

The aim of *translatio* was to maintain continuity through discontinuity. According to Aleida Assmann, *translatio imperii* was a strategy to continue an imperial time-construction by means of an epoch-making transfer.⁴ As described by medieval historians, it guaranteed that imperial authority would continue despite shifting historical reigns. In the imperial myth, the idea of *translatio* thus covered the history of the rise of one empire and the corresponding fall of another, of the conquerors and the vanquished in wars. It also guaranteed the installation of a new, legitimate empire. As the aim was to legitimize the one and only imperial authority, another characteristic of the concept of *translatio* was exclusivity: exclusive centers of authority followed one another. A simultaneous blossoming of several cultures was unthinkable.⁵ Applied on the sacerdotal authority, *translatio* meant that as there could be only one God and one chosen people, so there could be only one temple. The notion of *translatio* also determined the Church’s reciprocal but asymmetrical relationship to the Jews.⁶

A *translatio* of the Temple as a general idea is found in the very earliest Christian texts. St Paul and Christ himself connected the temple to the body of Christ and, by allegorical interpretation, to the Christians and the Church.⁷ The Church Fathers and the medieval exegetes continued this allegorical interpretation. The Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70 likewise shaped the understanding of a *translatio* from the Jewish temple to the Christian Church.⁸ The Temple in Jerusalem was not rebuilt after its destruction in AD 70, and the physical site of the Temple Mount lost its importance to the tradition of the church. The destruction was regarded as the fulfilment of the prophecy of Jesus: “As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not

der Wissenschaft im 13. Jahrhundert,” *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 34 (1952): 5–21; Werner Goetz, *Translatio imperii. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Geschichtsdenkens und der politischen Theorien im Mittelalter und in der früheren Neuzeit* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1958); Frans J. Worstbrock, “*Translatio artium*. Über die Herkunft und Entwicklung einer kulturhistorischen Theorie,” *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 47 (1965): 1–22; Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century: Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West*, trans. J. Taylor and L.K. Little (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 162–210.

⁴ Assmann, *Zeit und Tradition*, 111.

⁵ Assmann, *Zeit und Tradition*, 112.

⁶ Jews differed from the Gentiles because they had been the chosen people but were now “blinded” and “deprived” of God’s grace.

⁷ John 2:19–21 and 1 Cor 3:16–17.

⁸ For example, Augustine’s tractates on the Gospel of John, nos. 10.11; 12.7,8; 15.25, in Augustine of Hippo, *In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus CXXIV*, ed. R. Willems, CCSL 36, Turnhout: Brepols, 1954.

be thrown down.”⁹ The Temple Mount thus signified the ruins of Judaism. Peter Damian’s (1007–1072) explanation is representative for this medieval mindset:

For Jerusalem was the royal city where a most renowned temple had been constructed for God; but after that [city] came that which was the true temple of God, and the heavenly Jerusalem began to reveal the mysteries, the earthly one was destroyed where the heavenly one appeared.¹⁰

Although the earthly temple was in ruins and the Temple Mount had been laid waste, the old Temple, described in the sacred texts, was still allegorically interpreted as a figure of the Church and the heavenly truth – on which it was modelled. Through the means of language, rituals, and signs derived from Jewish worship, every church became a sign of the true and uncorrupted Jerusalem which was above. This was expressed not least in the dedication rite. The church building was to represent the *Urbs beata Hierusalem*: “Blessed city of Jerusalem, called the vision of peace, which is constructed in heaven from living stones . . . newly come from heaven.”¹¹

Before the first crusade the heavenly Jerusalem was conceived of quite independently of the earthly city. Most of the descriptions of Jerusalem before 1099 do not express any relationship between the earthly and the heavenly city. The first crusade, however, caused a shift from allegorical to literal interpretation of Jerusalem. When the crusaders climbed the walls of Jerusalem in 1099 and expelled those whom they viewed as infidels, what had earlier been said about the heavenly Church could now be applied to the earthly Jerusalem. The Al-Aqsa mosque was turned into the temple of Solomon, *Templum Salomonis*, and a royal palace, while the Dome of the Rock was integrated into the liturgical life of the newly established Latin Church of Jerusalem and became known as *Templum Domini*.¹² The physical site of the supposed temple of Jerusalem was thus changed in Christian topography from non-existence to importance – and its status in some respects could compete with that of the Holy Sepulchre.¹³ The new situation suggested an identification of

⁹ Luke 21:6. Cf. Matt 24:2 and Mark 13:2.

¹⁰ “Erat namque Hierusalem urbs illa magna regalis, ubi templum famosissimum Deo fuerat constructum; postea vero quam venit illa, qui erat verum Templum Dei, et caelestis Hierusalem caepit aperire mysteria, deleta est illa terrena, ubi caelestis apparuit,” quoted after Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture II*, trans. M. Sebanc (Edinburg: Eerdmans, 1998), 184 (Latin original in n.59).

¹¹ Louis I. Hamilton, *A Sacred City: Consecrating Churches and Reforming Society in Eleventh-Century Italy* (Manchester – New York: Manchester University Press, 2010), 5.

¹² The name seems to have been established during the very first year of the conquest according to the earliest descriptions.

¹³ Not in the eyes of the pilgrims, but according to hierarchical relation. The chapter of *Templum Domini* was established shortly after the conquest in 1099–1100. Denys Pringle, *The City of Jerusalem. The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem: A Corpus*, vol. III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 401. Rudolf Hiestand reports that in the middle of the century the prior and abbot of *Templum Domini* was second after the patriarch, and ranked before the prior

the Dome of the Rock/*Templum Domini* with Solomon's Temple. In Jerusalem, during the first years after the conquest, several arguments were put forth.¹⁴ Did the shrine still hide the Holy of Holies? Was the Ark of the Covenant hidden below the surface? At the same time, another position in the discussion occurred in Rome. A description of the Lateran basilica (*Descriptio*), probably written shortly after the first crusade, presents a physical *translatio templi* from Jerusalem to Rome:

[. . .] and the principal <altar> of that same church is the Ark of the Lord's Covenant; or rather, as they say, the Ark is on the inside, and on the outside it is hidden by an altar, which measures the same as the Ark in length and width [. . .] Inside the altar, indeed, which is small and made from wood covered in silver, is a holy object of the following kind, a seven-branched candelabra which had been in the earlier tabernacle, of which Paul says: "the first tabernacle was made, etc." In that place there is also the rod of Aaron, which had put forth leaves, and the tablets of the testament, and the rod of Moses, with which he struck the granite twice, and the waters flowed.¹⁵

The *Descriptio* explains that the Roman emperors Titus and Vespasian brought the Temple objects to Rome after the destruction of the Temple (Fig. 3.1).¹⁶ The insistence on the physical presence of the Ark and the other Temple objects was a new phenomenon strikingly different from the previous exegetical tradition, also in Rome. This literalization can be explained as a response to the new interpretation of Jerusalem and especially of the newly established *Templum Domini*. In the new situation after the first crusade, it did not suffice to claim the allegorical significance of the Old

of the Holy Sepulchre within the charters. Cf. Rudolf Hiestand, "Gaufridus abbas Templi Domini: An Underestimated Figure in the Early History of the Kingdom of Jerusalem," in *The Experience of Crusading, 2: Defining the Crusader Kingdom*, ed. Peter Edbury and Jonathan Phillips (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 51.

14 These arguments, in early pilgrims' guides and crusader chronicles, are presented in Oftestad, *The Lateran Church in Rome*, 84–120.

15 "[. . .] et eiusdem ecclesie principalis est archa federis domini, vel ut aiunt archa est interius (et altare ad mensuram longitudinis latitudines et altitudinis arche conditum est exterius), [. . .] In altari vero quod parvum est et ligneum de argento coopertum, est tale sanctuarium, septem candelabra, que fuerunt in priori tabernaculo, unde paulus dicit, Tabernaculum primum factum, et cetera. Est ibi etiam virga aaron que fronde[du]erat, et tabule testamenti et virga moysi, qua percussit bis silicem et fluxerunt aque." *Descriptio Lateranensis Ecclesiae*, according to Reg.la 712, cf. *Descriptio Lateranensis Ecclesia*, ed. and trans. Eivor Andersen Oftestad, *The Lateran Church in Rome and the Ark of the Covenant*, Appendix III, (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2019), 220.

16 "This very Ark, with the Menorah and other temple objects, Titus and Vespasian carried off from Jerusalem, or rather, they caused them to be carried away by the Jews themselves, just as it still can be seen until this day on the triumphal arch celebrating the victory, their monument, built by the senate and the Roman people," *Descriptio*, LII. ("Hanc autem archam cum candelabro et ceteris utensilibus templi tytus et vespasianus asportaverunt immo ab ipsis iudeis asportari fecerunt de iherosolimitanis partibus sicut in triumphali fornice ob victoriam et monumentum eorum a senatu et populo romano constructum usque hodie cernitur."). Cf. *Descriptio* 2019. What is here interpreted as a reproduction of the Ark on the Arch of Titus is probably a table with utensils from the temple. Cf. Diana E.E. Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 187.



Fig. 3.1: Roman soldiers carrying the *menorah* from the Temple of Jerusalem. Relief from the Arch of Titus, Rome, 81–85 CE.

Covenant. A new attitude to earthly Jerusalem demanded a new visualization of the Church as the legitimate successor of the Old Covenant and the Jewish temple. To secure its status as the legitimate successor, the papal cathedral of Rome claimed the physical heritage of the Temple. The discussion in Jerusalem soon adapted the same conclusion as in Rome.¹⁷

What was also new in mid-twelfth-century Rome was the explicit interpretation of the papal liturgy of Maundy Thursday as a realized imitation of the high priest's entrance to the Holy of Holies of the Temple, and likewise the explicit interpretation of the papal chapel, *Sancta Sanctorum* as the Holy of Holies.¹⁸ All these expressions can be understood according to what can be characterized with the construct *translatio templi*, which meant that the place of God's grace was relocated from Jerusalem to Rome.

What can be characterized as *translatio templi* at the Lateran, was more than a local strategy of promoting holiness. The legitimization of papal authority in twelfth-

¹⁷ Oftestad, *The Lateran Church in Rome*, 109–12.

¹⁸ Described in a sermon by Nicolaus Maniacutius in a twelfth/thirteenth-century manuscript now preserved in Vatican City, BAV, MS Fondo S. Maria Maggiore 2, fols 237v–244r., ed. Maniacutius 1709. Parts of the sermon are published in Gerhard Wolf, *Salus populi Romani. Die Geschichte römischer Kultbilder im Mittelalter* (Weinheim: VCH, Acta Humaniora, 1990), 321–25.

century Rome was at the centre of a wider structure reaching as far as the new Church province in Scandinavia. The entire priesthood of western Christianity was understood in accordance with, but also as superior to, the figures of the Jewish priesthood. In the tradition, all the early regular canons were described according to the model of the Old Testament Levites and their service at the sanctuary.¹⁹ What legitimated the authority of the pope was his cultic function according to the high priest. It has been argued that this cultic self-awareness determined the wide-ranging reform of the canons in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, a reform that was also introduced in Scandinavia with the founding of the archsee at Lund in 1104 and later at Nidaros (Trondheim) in 1152.²⁰

While the particular argumentation concerning the Lateran Ark of the Covenant related to a certain discussion in Jerusalem after the first crusade, it was also conditioned by the general importance of physical *translatio*. Towards the Renaissance and the Reformation other understandings of continuity defined the strategy of legitimation. This becomes clear in the legitimation of the new St Peter's in Rome in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It was promoted as a rebuilding of the temple and a fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies.²¹ What is particularly striking, compared to the previous traditions from the Lateran, is that it is no longer the Ark of the Covenant that is important as a guarantee of the *translatio templi*, but the seven-branched candlestick, the *menorah*. Moreover, the candlestick was promoted as a physical *sign* rediscovered in ancient sources – not as a present holy object.²² This underlines the difference between the two concepts of the *translatio templi* in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. While the Lateran basilica was conceived of in terms of a physical succession, which was a feature of the contemporary religious culture in the twelfth century, the new St Peter's of sixteenth century can be described as an ideal reconstruction of the temple.²³ The humanist Lilio Tifernate (1417/8–1486), who described the history of the candlestick, also described his rediscovery of the candlestick at the relief on the Arch of Titus (Fig. 3.1) in accordance with his rediscovery of ancient texts. His description thus seems to fit the characteristics of the period's idea of *rebirth*, just as St Peter's was conceived of as a *reconstruction*. The concept of *translatio templi* in these sources differs, therefore,

¹⁹ Isidore of Seville, *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, ed. C.M. Lawson, CSEL 113, Turnhout: Brepols, 1989; Amalar of Metz, *Institutio canonicorum. De regula canonicorum*, ed. A. Werminghoff, MGH Concilia, 2, I, Hanover–Leipzig: MGH, 1906.

²⁰ Johannes Laudage, *Priesterbild und Reformpapsttum* (Cologne–Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1985), 300. Laudage refers to Alfons Becker, “Urban II und die deutsche Kirche,” in *Investiturstreit und Reichsverfassung*, ed. J. Fleckenstein (Sigmaringen: 1973), 241–75.

²¹ Charles L. Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 201–26. On the rebuilding of the temple cf. e.g. Giles of Viterbo (1507), Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome*, 220.

²² Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome*, 224–5; Oftestad, *The Lateran Church in Rome*, 190.

²³ Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome*, 222–6.

from the concept of a physical *translatio* in the medieval period. The common feature, however, is the legitimizing argument for the summit of sacerdotal authority. In both strategies, this is linked exclusively to the papal basilicas, St John the Lateran or St Peter's, by means of the localization of God's grace according to the model of the Jewish temple. This concept of *translatio templi* was a stumbling block to the Protestant reformers, like Martin Luther. According to him, it was not sacerdotal continuity that secured the legitimated presence in front of God, but rather a spiritual *translatio*. While it was still the true worship that was transferred, true worship was defined by the true distinction of Law and Gospel – from the *protogospel* in the Garden of Eden, through the promises to the Jewish people, to the Church. A new understanding of the establishment of continuity had severe consequences for the interpretation of Jerusalem in Scandinavia after the Protestant Reformation, as will be commented on in the second volume of this series.



Fig. 4.0: Mail-clad knights fighting sword in hand below a scene from the life of St Nicholas. Murals in the nave of Aal Church, Jutland, c. 1200–1225.

**Part I: Kings, Crusaders, and Jerusalem Relics:
Strategies of Legitimation, Models of
Authority**

Bjørn Bandlien

Chapter 4

Jerusalem and the Christianization of Norway

The Christianization of Norway spanned over centuries and covered much of what is now known as the Viking Age (late eighth to early eleventh centuries). At the turn of the first millennium, this process was in the phase of institutionalization: churches were built, and church laws were introduced. People who failed to meet basic regulations concerning food and fasting, baptism of children, exogamous marriages, etc., were sanctioned with outlawry. This punishment was also found before Christianization, banishing those who violated the balance in the farming society based on notions of honour. In spatial terms, the new church legislation challenged the farm as the focal point in society and world view, but at the same time used established terminology and conceptions.

The opening of the Christian law section for the district Borgarting in Eastern Norway states that: “This is the foundation of our law; that we shall bow to the east and give ourselves to Christ, and venerate churches and clerics.”¹ This constructs an orientation and a physical posture of humility (*luta*) of Christians towards the “east,” i.e. to the Holy Land. The spatial orientation is moved from the traditional centres of the (chieftains’) households and the thing assemblies to churches and Jerusalem. In this passage, the community in the Norwegian kingdom appropriated the geographical orientation of European Christianity; seeing itself as part of the west that directs its devotion to east. In its most concrete form, this orientation was expressed through the attendance of mass in the Church, as well as the west-east orientation of burials. The altars became compasses of religious geography and bestow authority on the Church’s servant as they were positioned in the east, representing Jerusalem.

For the conversion kings, Olav Tryggvason (r. 995–1000) and Olav Haraldsson (r. 1015–1028), Christianity would imply potential new ways of legitimizing power, connecting themselves to a new centre of devotion and authority. On the other hand, Viking-Age Scandinavia may have shared – and in some cases integrated into – many aspects of the political culture with kingdoms elsewhere in Christian Europe, such as the importance of building network through gift-exchange, feasts, oaths, and using

¹ *De eldste østlandske kristenrettene*, ed. Eyvind Fjeld Halvorsen and Magnus Rindal, *Norrøne tekster*, 7, Oslo: Riksarkivet, 2008, 122: *Þet er uphaf lagha uarra. at austr skulum luta oc gevaz Kristi røkia kirkiur oc kenne men.* (My translation.)

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rituals as displays of power. These traits of early medieval rulership crossed confessional borders and did not necessarily disappear with the conversion of society.

Here, I will discuss the importance of Jerusalem in spatial, ritual and ideological contexts in Norway during the conversion, especially during the reign of King Olav Haraldsson. Olav had spent much of his youth on the continent and in England, at a time when Europe was giving increased attention to Jerusalem as the pivotal centre. Three elements in contemporary European theology, rituals and politics can be interpreted as distinctly related to the new awareness of Jerusalem at this time. First, the *adventus* of a ruler was an important pre-crusade reference to Jerusalem modelled on the entry of Christ into the Holy City on Palm Sunday. Second, eschatological ideas on the second coming of Christ to the earthly Jerusalem, with central roles played by Charlemagne and St Michael, became widespread in Europe at the turn of the millennium. To what extent and in what contexts do such motives appear in Norway?

Contemporary sources that narrate the travels and the reign of Olav Haraldsson are few, scattered and often difficult to interpret. The point of departure is the skaldic poetry related to King Olav Haraldsson, and then comparing these to the use of the Jerusalem code among the rulers Olav visited and served during his travels in 1007–1015, mainly in England and Normandy. Thus, we may at least catch some glimpses of the impact contemporary European ideas of Jerusalem had on Olav's legitimation of authority in Norway.

The *Adventus* of Olav Haraldsson

In the late summer of 1015, Olav Haraldsson returned to Norway after spending eight years of his youth abroad.² The rulers of Norway were at this time the earls of Lade in Trøndelag, foremost among them Eirik and Svein, sons of Earl Haakon Sigurdsson (d. 995). At the arrival of Olav in Norway, Eirik had recently gone to England in the company of Knud the Great (d. 1035). Olav surprised Eirik's son

² Due to the lack of contemporary sources and the differences in later saga accounts, many aspects of Olav's journeys – concerning both place names and chronology – are much disputed. These details do not concern the analyses or conclusions in this study, but it is presumed that Olav took part in warfare and met rulers in the Baltic Sea area (probably including visits to Sigtuna, Gotland and Novgorod), Holland, Normandy, England, and Iberia before his return in 1015. A fundamental study of the itinerary of Olav Haraldsson before he became king is Oscar Albert Johnsen, *Olav Haraldssons ungdom indtil slaget ved Nesjar 25. mars 1016: En kritisk undersøkelse*, vol. 2, Videnskapsselskapets Skrifter. II. Hist.-Filos. Klasse (Kristiania: Videnskapsselskapet, 1916), but some aspects of his conclusions have been criticized and modified in for example Judith Jesch, "Viking on the European Continent," in *Scandinavia and Europe 800–1350: Contact, Conflict, and Coexistence*, ed. Jonathan Adams and Katherine Holman (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004) and Helio Pires, "Nem Tui, nem Gibraltar: Óláfr Haraldsson e a Península Ibérica," *En la España Medieval* 38 (2015) (see further below).



Fig. 4.1: Mølen, a portion of the coastline in Vestfold, South-Eastern Norway, identified with Old Norse Nesjar, site of the battle between King Olav Haraldsson and Svein Haakonson at Palm Sunday 1016. The beach of rolling stones has large cairns raised centuries before Olav Haraldsson was victorious here.

Haakon and sent him in exile to England. Olav then met Svein in a large sea battle outside Nesjar, probably close to Helgeroa and Mølen in Vestfold, at Palm Sunday (25 March) 1016 (Fig. 4.1). Olav won the battle and secured his rule of Norway for the next decade, while Svein fled to Sweden and died shortly after.

This battle of Nesjar was commemorated by the Icelander Sigvat Thordsson, who probably was an eyewitness, in his poem *Nesjavísur*. Sigvat had travelled from Iceland to Norway in 1015, and soon became the chief skald of Olav, as well as one of the king's closest advisors. Sigvat's father, Thord Sigvaldaskald, had accompanied Olav on his early travels from the Baltic Sea to England in 1009, and most likely provided his son with information from these travels.³

In the preserved stanzas of *Nesjavísur*, Sigvat did not depict the battle as a fight between Christians and heathens. On the contrary, Svein was portrayed as an able

³ On Sigvat's poetry and career, see Frederik Paasche, "Sigvat Tordsson: Et skaldeportræt," *Edda* 8 (1917); Lee M. Hollander, "Sigvat Thordson and his Poetry," *Scandinavian Studies* 16 (1940).

warrior and respected opponent. Still, there are some distinct traits of presenting the battle in Biblical and theological terms. The most obvious allusion springs from the day the battle was fought:

Olav's warband won a hard battle on Palm Sunday, and thus I had to await Easter; I put on a Poitou-made helmet.⁴

The emphasis on the special status of the day is hardly by chance. In fact, it is the earliest appearance of a weekday in any Old Norse text.⁵ The awareness that this was Easter is emphasised by Sigvat by his statement that the battle is a prelude to the celebration of *páska*. This might mean the Easter vigil, a rite that was particularly popular to baptise converts. Moreover, the repeated mentions of the sun throughout the poem might point to the importance of this Sunday.⁶ In a recent study on this poem, Russell Poole has pointed out another allusion to Palm Sunday in stanza 4 of *Nesjavísur*. It is imbedded in the complicated system of metaphors usual in Old Norse skaldic poetry known as *kenningar*, where there are poetic transliterations of for example battles, weapons and warriors:

There was no cause [*lit.* it was not] to reproach Svein {for the din of swords} [BATTLE], nor the battle-glad Olav {for the good storm {of the osprey {of the battle-moon}}} [SHIELD > RAVEN/EAGLE > BATTLE], because both parties had to strive for the maiming of each other, where men attacked; the army never came into a worse place.⁷

Here, Sigvat used a usual skaldic kenning for men or warriors, namely trees. But his use of *kvisting* (lopping of a branch or twig) in relation to slaying warriors is unique, and Poole argues that this may have been motivated by the poem's Easter theme; when Christ entered Jerusalem at Palm Sunday, some cut boughs or branches of the trees. This would be reminiscent of those who attended the Palm Sunday liturgy. It would also be a meaningful image to warriors that cut down their opponents in honour of their ruler.

⁴ “Hirð Áleifs vann harða/ hríð, en svá varðk bíða/ (peitneskum feltk) páska,/ palmsunnudag (hjálmi)” Sigvatr Þórðarson (Sigvat Thordson), *Nesjavísur* 15, ed. and transl. Russell Poole, in Diana Whaley, ed. *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c.1035*, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 578.

⁵ Lasse C.A. Sonne, “The Origin of the Seven-Day Week in Scandinavia (Part 1): The Theophoric Day-Names,” *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 10 (2014).

⁶ Russell Poole, “*Cyningas sigefæste þurh God*: Contributions from Anglo-Saxon England to Early Advocacy for Óláfr Haraldsson,” in *Old English Literature and the Old Testament*, ed. Michael Fox and Manish Sharma (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 270.

⁷ “Vasa sigmána Sveini/ sverða gnýs at frýja,/ gjóðs né góðrar hríðar/ gunnreifum Óleifi,/ þvít kvistingar kosta/ – koma herr í stað verra – / öttu sín, þars sóttusk/ seggir, hváirtveggja.” Sigvatr Þórðarson (Sigvat Thordson), *Nesjavísur* 4, ed. and transl. Russell Poole, in Whaley 2012, *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1*: 578. In this new standard edition, there are extensive notes and comments to the stanzas and the kennings used in them.

In a stanza that may have been the climax in *Nesjavísur*, Poole points out another possible link between Christ's entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and the establishment of a new law under the victorious ruler:

{Inhabitant {of the loft {of the draught-animals of the wave}}} [(lit. 'loft-inhabitant of the draught-animals of the wave') SHIPS > AFTER-DECK > SEAFARER], you are able to establish the law of the land which shall remain in force among the troop of all men.⁸

Sigvat's unique kenning for ship, and, in extension of this, Olav Haraldsson himself, includes *eykja* – draught-animals. This may have been a carefully chosen word to allude to Christ riding into Jerusalem on an ass. Furthermore, the 'law of the land' seems to refer to the new law under Christ, according to the Gospel of John during Easter (John 13:34–35). Poole points out that the wording of Sigvat in this stanza indicates that he may have been familiar with the *West Saxon Gospels*; his choice of *á miðli* ("among" or "between") seems closer to the Anglo-Saxon *betwýnan* than the Latin *in-icem* in the Vulgate.⁹ One might add that Sigvat's *unnar* further alludes to Christ's new commandment "that you love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12).

Sigvat's reference to the "law of the land" is vague, but may refer to an early, possibly oral, version of the Christian law code. The preserved written versions date only from the late twelfth century. The dating of the different sections within the law codes and which, if any, parts of the legislation can be dated to the rule of Olav Haraldsson is disputed. However, the orientation towards the east seems to be a principle from early on. In the regional law code for Gulating in Western Norway, this idea is linked to rulership as well as piety. Bowing towards the Holy Land showed friendship to the king and secured *ár ok frið* ("prosperity and peace") for all. This is a political ideology widespread in Europe in the early Middle Ages, and something Olav Haraldsson would have encountered during his stay in England.¹⁰

⁸ "Loptbyggvir, mátt leggja/ lands rétt, þanns skal standask,/ unnar, allra manna,/ eykja, liðs á miðli." Sigvatr Þórðarson (Sigvat Thordsson), *Óláfsdrápa* 1, ed. and transl. Judith Jesch, in Whaley 2012, *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1*: 614. This stanza is found only in Snorri Sturluson's *Edda* (c.1225), separated from *Nesjavísur*. In most editions of skaldic poetry, it is presented as the single preserved stanza from an otherwise lost poem by Sigvat, labelled *Óláfsdrápa* a century ago by Finnur Jónsson. However, there are strong indications that this stanza originally belonged to *Nesjavísur*, indeed making it the climax of the poem, see Russell Poole, "The *Nesjavísur* of Sigvatr Þórðarson," *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 15 (2005).

⁹ Poole, "Cýningas sigefæste þurh God," 272. On the meaning of *á miðli*, see also the note to Sigvat's *Víkingavísur* st. 4, line 6, in Whaley 2012, *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1*: 539.

¹⁰ *Den eldre Gulatingslova*, ed. Bjørn Eithun, et al., *Norrøne tekster*, 6, Oslo: Riksarkivet, 1994, 32: *Pat er upphaf laga varra at ver scolom luta austr oc biðia til hins helga crist ars oc friðar. oc þess at vér halldem lande varo bygðu. oc lánar drotne varom heilum. se han vínr varr. en ver hans. en Guð se allra varra vínr.* ("This is the foundation of our law; that we shall bow to the east and pray to Holy Christ for prosperity and peace, and venerate churches and clerics, to keep our land settled and give our ruler well-being. He will be our friend and we his, and God the friend of us all." My translation.) On the phrase *til árs ok friðar* and its relation to especially *De duodecim abusivis*,

Poole argues that the references to Christ's entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday in Sigvat's *Nesjavísur* derive from specifically Anglo-Saxon theological writings about war and legitimation of rulership. However, the liturgy and rituals of *adventus* was widespread in early medieval Europe. According to the biography of Bishop Ulrich of Augsburg (d. 973), written shortly after his death, the saintly bishop and the people of the city re-enacted the entry of Christ at Palm Sunday. Those who attended the procession carried banners, crosses, and palm branches, as well as an effigy of Christ riding on a donkey. They were met by the cathedral choir and others, who had strewn clothing on their path.¹¹ Palm Sunday processions were widespread in Western Europe from the Carolingian times, with blessings of the palms and a ceremonial entrance into the city.¹² *Regularis Concordia*, reflecting especially Winchester practice, gives antiphones for the procession and envisage St Martin's Church as a simulacrum of the Mount of Olives, from where Christ headed at the gate of Jerusalem.¹³ Lay people seems also to have been central in the procession (although only involved at the completion of the antiphon). In the illustration of Palm Sunday in the Benedictional of Æthelwold of Winchester (BL Add MS 49598, fol. 45v), the same Bishop Æthelwold who was the main contributor to the *Regularis Concordia*, the laity of Jerusalem is depicted as processing behind Christ in the Palm Sunday (Fig. 4.2). In the Anglo-Saxon homily of Ælfric of Eynesham (d. c.1010) on Palm Sunday, the congregation were supposed to carry palm twigs, or representations of these.

Sedulius Scotus and the Anglo-Saxon translation of this work by Abbot Ælfric of Eynsham (d. c.1010), see Bjørn Bandlien, "Coinage and Kingship in the Late Viking Age: The *Facing Bird* Pennies of King Olaf Haraldsson," in *Royal Ideology in the Viking Age*, ed. Jakub Morawiec and Rafal Boryslawski (Katowice: University of Silesia Press, 2018).

¹¹ Henry Mayr-Harting, *Ottonian Book Illumination*, second ed., 2 vols. (London: Harving-Miller, 1999), I, 119–25; David A. Warner, "Ritual and Memory in the Ottonian Reich: The Ceremony of Adventus," *Speculum* 76 (2001): 264–66. Gerhard of Augsburg, *Vita Oudalrici episcopi Augustani* MGH SS 4: 377–428 (391).

¹² See Craig Wright, "The Palm Sunday Procession in Medieval Chartres," in *The Divine Office in the Latin Middle Ages: Methodology and Source Studies, Regional Developments, Hagiography*, ed. Margot E. Fassler and Rebecca A. Baltzer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); James Forse, "Religious Drama and Ecclesiastical Reform in the Tenth Century," *Early Theatre* 5, no. 2 (2002); Colin Morris, *The Sepulchre of Christ and the Medieval West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 108–11; "Memorials of the Holy Places and Blessing of the East: Devotion to Jerusalem before the First Crusade," in *The Holy Land, Holy Lands, and Christian History*, ed. R.N. Swanson, *Studies in Church History* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000), 100–5. Chadd has noted several similarities between the liturgy in Norman houses influenced by the reforms of William of Volpiano, as well as in Rouen where Olav Haraldsson spent considerable time (and where he was either baptized or confirmed), with the Nidaros ordinal, David Chadd, "The Ritual of Palm Sunday: Reading Nidaros," in *The Medieval Cathedral of Trondheim: Architectural and Ritual Constructions in the European Context*, ed. Margarete Syrstad Andås, et al., *Ritus et artes* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007).

¹³ Helen Gittos, *Liturgy, Architecture, and Sacred Places in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 124–34.



Fig. 4.2: Full-page miniature of Christ's entry into Jerusalem, preceding the benediction for Palm Sunday, in the Benedictional of St Æthelwold, Bishop of Winchester 963–984. British Library, Add MS 49598, f. 45v.

The Palm Sunday processions celebrated the majesty of Christ the king, with reverence for the cross. In a classic study, Ernst Kantorowicz argued that the ritual of the ruler's *adventus* in early medieval Europe used the processions of the triumphal Roman emperors and combined this with the idea of the prosperity of the ruler's realm. Moreover, Christ's entry into Jerusalem provided a Biblical model and a Christian meaning to this ritual, providing an archetype of the *adventus* ritual that conferred meanings to those participating in it. The ruler who entered a city or monastery would often be preceded with royal banners, being greeted with signs of submission or hymns praising his accomplishments, virtues and lineage.¹⁴ This ritual was not only preserved for emperors and kings, but also nobles, bishops and others who confirming or establishing a bond with a community. In a pre- or proto-state society, with few or weak institutions, visible signs of acceptance and royal reception would be even more important.¹⁵ David Warner has argued that many of the entries of rulers in Ottonian Germany, in addition to their importance in the ritualized context itself, interplayed with the narratives and memories of other performances of *adventus* – whether they were successful or failures. Chroniclers could use the communicative aspects of this ritual to either show the willingly subjection to a ruler, or how such events could act as an opportunity for communities to oppose the authority of a wicked king. Thus, the ritual of *adventus* would be important not only as a display of power, but also to negotiate the positions and status of those involved.¹⁶

At the Ottonian court, the celebration of Easter was not a day of war but an opportunity for the rulers to invite the most prominent men to show their loyalty and hosting foreign princes at their table. On Palm Sunday 1016, on the very same day as the Battle of Nesjar, Emperor Henry II attended mass at Merseburg, then moving on to his most important center Bamberg for the celebration of Easter (Thietmar of Merseburg VII.27). At the celebration of Easter in 986, the young Otto III had four dukes with him who ministered him at the table, as well as exchanging gifts with the dukes Boleslaw II of Bohemia and Mieszko I of Poland, the latter even offering a camel to the king (Thietmar of Merseburg IV.9).

Perhaps even more strikingly, Lent and the celebration of Easter in the year 1000 was intimately linked the Passion of Christ and Christian rulership. Otto III went to Gniezno during Lent this year for several purposes. He venerated Saint Adalbert of Prague (d. 997), negotiated peace with the Polish Duke Boleslaw Chrobry, elevated Gniezno to an archbishopric, as well as established new dioceses. Otto III gave a replica of the Holy Lance to Boleslaw, a relic associated to Good Friday, while the rotunda

¹⁴ Ernst H. Kantorowicz, "The 'King's Advent': The Enigmatic Panels in the Doors of Santa Sabina," *The Art Bulletin* 26 (1944). See also Sabine MacCormack, "Change and Continuity in Late Antiquity: The Ceremony of Adventus," *Historia* 21 (1972).

¹⁵ This has been argued by for instance Karl Leyser and Gerd Althoff, see for instance Gerd Althoff, *Otto III* (University Park: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2003), 16–22.

¹⁶ Warner, "Ritual and Memory in the Ottonian Reich".

church at Wawel Hill in Cracow, modelled on the Holy Sepulchre as well as the rotunda in Aachen, was probably built shortly after to create a new palatial and sacral centre in the Slavic province of the Empire.¹⁷ After the Congress of Gniezno, Boleslaw accompanied Otto III to Germany, celebrated Easter with him, before going to Aachen where the famous discovery of the tomb of Charlemagne took place at Pentecost.¹⁸

Bishop Bernward of Hildesheim (993–1022), Otto III's tutor, seems to have been central in linking imperial rulership with the authority of Jerusalem as a sacred space. This is indicated by Bernward's construction of his diocese as a New Jerusalem. Among the many artworks he commissioned in Hildesheim was a column made for the Church of St Michael, containing scenes in a helix of the life of Jesus that culminated with the Entry of Jerusalem (a now lost cross or crucifix would originally have been placed on top of the column). Bernward's column was clearly inspired by the Trajan column in Rome, as well as by the twisted columns allegedly from the Temple of Solomon recovered by Helena in the fourth century.¹⁹

Considering the close dynastic, economic and political relations between the Polish realms, Germany and Scandinavia at the time, the events at Gniezno and Aachen in the year 1000 would most likely have been well known in Norway. Indeed, the kings' sagas placed King Olav Tryggvason in the Polish realm, before he lost the battle of Svolder on his way back to Norway.²⁰ Furthermore, there were strong

17 Zbigniew Pianowski, "Wawel Hill as a Place of Power in the Early Middle Ages: 10th–12th Centuries," in *Places of Power – Orte der Herrschaft – Lieux du Pouvoir*, ed. Caspar Ehlers, Deutsche Königspfalzen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007).

18 Among the many studies on Otto III's relations to and use of Aachen, see Ernst-Dieter Hehl, "Aachen an der ersten Jahrtausendwende: Ein Bistumsplan Ottos III. im Zeichen Karls des Großen und Adalberts von Prag," *Geschichte im Bistum Aachen* 6 (2001–2002); Ludwig Falkenstein, *Otto III. und Aachen*, Studien und Texte (Hannover: Hahn, 1998); Eliza Garrison, *Ottonian Imperial Art and Portraiture: The Artistic Patronage of Otto III and Henry II* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012). See further on Charlemagne's tomb below.

19 The literature on Bernward of Hildesheim and his artwork is extensive. Recent studies Adam S. Cohen and Anne Derbes, "Bernward and Eve at Hildesheim," *Gesta* 40 (2001); Bernard Gallistl, "Bernwards Stiftung St. Michael in Hildesheim: Liturgie und Legende," *Concilium medii aevi* 14 (2011); Jennifer P. Kingsley, *The Bernward Gospels: Art, Memory, and the Episcopate in Medieval Germany* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014); Bernard Gallistl, "Der Tanz im Hildesheimer Dom," *Concilium medii aevi* 19 (2016); Joanna Olchawa, "Die Trajanssäule als Vorbild für die Bernwardsäule: Ein Beitrag zur Antikenrezeption im 11. Jahrhundert," in *Columna Traiani – Traianssäule: Siegesmonument und Kriegsbericht in Bildern*, ed. Fritz Mitthof and Günther Schörner (Vienna: Holzhausen, 2017).

20 According to the kings' sagas, Olav Tryggvason was married to Tyre, the sister of Svend Forkbeard of Denmark. She had previously been married to the King Burisleifr, traditionally identified with Boleslaw I (albeit with semi-legendary traits). Olav went to Poland either in the year 999 or 1000 to settle the disputes over Tyre's property. He was killed on his way home at the battle of Svolder. It would of course be tempting to place Olav at Gniezno during the meeting of Boleslaw and Otto III in March, but there are no contemporary sources confirming this, see Jakub Morawiec, *Vikings among the Slavs: Jomsborg and the Jomsvikings*, *Medievalia Septentrionalia* (Vienna: Fassbaender, 2009).

connections between Hildesheim and the important church of Dalby, the predecessor of the archdiocese of Lund, in the early and mid-eleventh century.²¹ The most prominent missionary bishop of King Olav Haraldsson, Grimkell, was English (presumably with a background from Winchester and/or Canterbury). However, King Olav also sent Grimkell to submit to Archbishop Unwan of Bremen.²² This was probably shortly after 1022, the year Pope Benedict VIII supported Bremen's superiority over the bishops in Scandinavia.²³

In his panegyric poem for Olav Haraldsson after the Battle of Nesjar, Sigvat may have found the narrative scheme *adventus* especially useful for an audience of warriors since the significance of a ruler's entry seems already to have been important in Viking Age Scandinavia. Andreas Lundin has argued that the recurrent images of warriors on horseback on Gotlandic picture-stones are inspired by the continental motif of a ruler's *adventus* in Carolingian times. The dating of these picture-stones is disputed, but the stones depicting horsemen are usually dated to the late eighth or early ninth

21 Ralf M.W. Stammberger, "Paris, Hildesheim and Dalby: The Migrations of Christian Culture – Scania in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," in *Locus Celebris: Dalby kyrka, kloster och gård*, ed. Stephan Borgehammar and Jes Wienberg (Lund: Makadam, 2012). Other studies in the anthology *Locus Celebris* refer to the influence of Hildesheim on Dalby, and to bishop Eginio of Dalby (1059–1071/72) who probably had a background from Hildesheim. There should also be added the mention of bishop Thietmar, or Tymmo, of Hildesheim (1038–1044), who was born in Denmark, had been Knud the Great's chaplain, and probably had met Olav Haraldsson, see Hans Olrik, "Biskop Tymme (Thietmar) af Hildesheim," *Historisk Tidsskrift* 3rd ser., no. 6 (1891). As a bishop, Thietmar met King Magnus the Good, son and successor of Olav Haraldsson, at Schleswig, along with Archbishop Adalbrand of Bremen, Duke Bernard II of Saxony and his son Ordulf (Adam of Bremen II.75). Magnus' sister, Ulvhild, was married to Ordulf in 1042. In the chronicle of Thietmar of Merseburg, there is a mention of a certain Göttrik, who came from the "Arctic" region. He was educated as a cleric in the monastery of Verden, attaining the rank of deacon, during the time of Bishop Erp (976–993). He turned out to only pretend to be Christian and left for his homeland and was raised to his hereditary honour, see Thietmar of Merseburg, *Ottonian Germany: The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg*, trans. David A. Warner, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001. It has been suggested that this may have been the petty king Gudrød of Gudbrandsdalen, whom Olav Haraldsson later defeated, see Alexander Bugge, "Norges historie, 1:2: Tidsrummet ca. 800–1030," (Kristiania: Aschehoug, 1910), 359. The identification of Göttrik with Gudrød is of course tenuous, but Thietmar's story suggests that some members of the leading families in Scandinavia would return with some learning from the continent – such as Earl Haakon of Lade (d. 995), who was baptized in Denmark, fought in the army of King Harald Bluetooth (d. c.986), but later became known for his heathen sacrifices.

22 Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, ed. Bernard Schmeidler, MGH, Hannover & Leipzig: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1917.

23 See Henrik Janson, "Hamburg-Bremens kyrkorättsliga ställning i Norden från grundläggningen till upprättandet av Lunds kyrkoprovins," in *Kyrklig rätt och kyrklig orätt – Kyrkorättsliga perspektiv: Festskrift till professor Bertil Nilsson*, ed. Martin Berntson and Anna Minara Ciardi (Skellefteå: Artos, 2016), 292–94 on Unwan's claim for superiority over the dioceses in Scandinavia, and Torgeir Landro, *Kristenrett og kyrkerett: Borgarkristenretten i eit komparativt perspektiv* (Bergen: Universitetet i Bergen, 2010) on the complexities of the existing versions of the early Christian law codes of Norway – including the possible influence of the *Decretum* of Burchard of Worms (d. 1025).

centuries. Lundin argues that the image of these horsemen was an adaptation of the idea of ruler who would will bring peace and fertility, while the meaning linked to Christ's entry into Jerusalem and the expectation of the Heavenly Jerusalem remained lost for the Gotlandic audience.²⁴

The *adventus* of the ruler in this sense is not restricted by to Gotland, as it is also a ritual found in Old Norse literature. Conventionally, a woman would greet the ruler with a cup of mead and lead him to a seat of prominence in the hall. By this act she acknowledged the status of the ruler and conferred authority to him.²⁵ This is also linked to the conceptions of the after-life, expressed in the memorial poem *Eiríksmál* composed for King Eirik Haraldsson (d. c.954), nicknamed "blood-axe." After his death, he is said to have been greeted to the hall of gods by a *valkyrie* with a cup of wine.²⁶ There are many differences between the Christian ritual of *adventus* and the Scandinavian link between war, bravery, commemorative poetry or images, and the greeting of the ruler. Still, the associations to the *adventus* of Christ made in Sigvat, would be meaningful both to an audience with knowledge to rituals of authority outside Scandinavia, and to the community of warriors who were accustomed to narratives such as found in *Eiríksmál*. Olav showed bravery in a traditional manner but was bestowed authority by Christ rather than a *valkyrie*, and he was a friend of God rather than part of a community of gods.

Still, the fact that Olaf Haraldson's battle was fought on Palm Sunday, a holy day, seems to be contradictory to the more peaceful performances of the *adventus* rituals elsewhere in Europe. In the early eleventh century, the peace of God-movement attempted to end bloodshed on holy days. This seems to have met some acceptance early on; for example, Emperor Henry II did not want to shed blood in the Holy Week on his Italian campaign in 1004.²⁷ Another example is the Battle of Clontarf outside Dublin on Good Friday 1014, where King Brian Boru fought a Norse-Irish army. The

24 Andreas Lundin, "The Advent of the Esteemed Horseman-Sovereign: A Study of Rider-Motifs on Gotlandic Picture-Stones," in *Old Norse Religion in Long-term Perspectives: Origins, Changes, and Interactions*, ed. Anders Andrén, et al. (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2006). Olaf Haraldsson had probably visited Gotland during his first year on his journey abroad, i.e. in 1007 or 1008, and again in 1030 on his way back to Norway from his exile in Russia.

25 See most recently Nanna Løkka, "Kvinner med drikkebeget," in *Dronningen i vikingtid og middelalder*, ed. Karoline Kjesrud and Nanna Løkka (Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, 2017), with references. She also discusses the woman on the Gosforth Cross. This figure, a woman holding a drinking cup in a similar way as the *valkyrie* in *Eiríksmál* or the women on the Gotlandic picture stones, has been suggested to represent Ecclesia greeting Christians, or the converted Mary Magdalene.

26 Agneta Ney, "Välkomstmotivet på gotländska bildstenar i jämförelse med litterära källor från vikingtid och medeltid," in *Gotlands bildstenar: Järnålderns gåtfulla budbärare*, ed. Maria Herling Karnell, Gotländskt arkiv (Visby: Gotlands museum, 2012); *Eiríksmál* 1, ed. R.D. Fulk, in Whaley 2012, *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1*: 1006.

27 Adalbold II of Utrecht, *Vita Henrici II imperatoris*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH, Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1841, 679–95.

Irish chronicler Marianus Scotus (d. 1082), who studied and worked at Cologne, Fulda and Mainz, stated that the pious Brian Boru preferred to pray instead of fight on this most holy of days. The author of the text *Cogadh Gáedhel re Gallaibh*, written at the turn of the twelfth century, expanded on this theme and said that he was slain by an apostate during prayer, and thus became a royal martyr.²⁸

In the many accounts of the Battle of Clontarf, the issue of fighting on Good Friday gained in significance later in the eleventh century when the opponents of the pious ruler were depicted as most vile and often as heathens and apostates. This might be connected to the growing impact of notions of holy war and the development of a theology of warfare associated to the first crusade. Still, there are found relevant ideas linking piety and the battlefield in the early eleventh century, especially in England. King Æthelred II of England, Ælfric of Eynsham and Archbishop Wulfstan of York linked the defence of the realm from Viking raids with liturgical prayers, rituals of humility and fasting closely together.²⁹ In the contemporary *Blickling Homily VI* on Palm Sunday humility is perhaps emphasized to a lesser degree, but clearly associated to Christ's victory over death. The Blickling homilist did not stress the contrast between humility and triumph, but stated that palm branches (which are, in Sigvat's poem, the slain warriors) are signs of victory.³⁰ Here, the discourse of war, battle and victory includes acts of piety rather than opposing them.

Poole argues that Sigvat's *Nesjavísur*, when including theological references, "marks an abrupt shift" from memorial poems of rulers composed a few years before, such as in Einarr skálaglamm's *Vellekla* for Earl Haakon Sigurdsson (d. 995) or Hallfreðr vandrœðaskáld's memorial poem for Olav Tryggvason.³¹ Still, while Sigvat put more emphasis on the theological significance of a battle, he also played on themes and images from these same memorial poems of Einarr and Hallfreðr, especially concerning depictions of bravery, battle, corpses, cowards, and the king's generosity.³² Among the traditional values emphasised by Sigvat was the generosity of the king towards his followers, thus depicting his close bonds to his retinue. This was a community of warriors that even his opponent's warriors could be a part of, if they shifted their loyalty to the new ruler. The fact that Sigvat did not label the

²⁸ Seán Duffy, *Brian Boru and the Battle of Clontarf* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2013), 220–21, 65. The theme of the king refusing to fight on Good Friday is even more developed in the account of the battle in Icelandic *Njáls saga*. It is of some interest that, according to the main source for the battle, *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh*, Brian Boru's son, Donnchad, only returned to the battle scene two days later, at the hour of vesper on the night of Easter Sunday, appearing as a resurrected king.

²⁹ See for instance Simon Keynes, "An Abbot, an Archbishop, and the Viking Raids of 1006–7 and 1009–12," *Anglo-Saxon England* 36 (2007). On Olav Haraldsson's possible use of liturgical discourse of authority, see Bandlien 2018, "Coinage and Kingship."

³⁰ Clare A. Lees, "The Blickling Palm Sunday Homily and its Revised Version," *Leeds Studies in English* 19 (1988).

³¹ Poole, "Cýningas sigefæste þurh God," 290.

³² Paasche, "Sigvat Tordsson: Et skaldeportræt."

victorious king's opponents as heathens, apostate, or enemies of God, but rather as brave warriors and worthy opponents of King Olav, confirm the poem's traditional perceptions of war.³³

In *Nesjavísur*, Sigvat seems to have balanced his poetry towards both the community of warriors, his own relation to the king, the survivors of the opposing army who would be tempted to shift side and be loyal to the generous ruler, as well as to the theology of the missionary bishops and the king himself. The new king, Olav Haraldsson, would have witnessed the Palm Sunday processions and encountered other rituals of war and religious notions of community before his return to Norway. The battlefield itself became a sacral place in Sigvat's poem, where the victorious entry into the realm of Norway was compared to Christ's entry into Jerusalem. After becoming a royal martyr at the Battle of Stiklestad in 1030, the analogy to Christ's entry to meet passion and death would be a more important part of the narrative. In 1016, however, Sigvat's version of the Battle of Nesjar served as a part of King Olav's royal ideology. At the same time, the theme of the advent of a ruler used by Sigvat clearly interplayed with a traditional discourse of rulership and the entry of the king, as shown in for example *Eiríksmál*.

Eschatology and the Legend of the Last Emperor

The period around the millennium has been connected to an increased eschatological awareness and apocalyptic ideas.³⁴ First, 25 March, the date of the battle of Nesjar, was widely held to be both the date of the Annunciation as well as the date of the Crucifixion of Christ.³⁵ There was a widespread belief that when Good Friday fell on this date, it signalled the Last Judgement. Such ideas tended to be contested by the learned, but still remained widespread.³⁶ The Annunciation was when the *fortitudo Dei*, the strength of God was made manifest. In the Old English

³³ Poole, "Cyningas sigefæste þurh God," 274.

³⁴ See for example the comprehensive study of Johannes Fried, "Endzeiterwartung um die Jahrtausendwende," *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 45 (1989).

³⁵ Of nineteen liturgical calendars that survive from England in the tenth and eleventh centuries, sixteen include this tradition, see Éamonn Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood: Liturgical Images and the Old English Poems of the 'Dream of the Rood' Tradition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 311.

³⁶ In the tenth century, 25 March fell on Good Friday in 908, 970, 981 and 992, but Abbo of Fleury (d. 1004) refuted the idea of an apocalypse on these dates, see Elizabeth Dachowski, *The Career of Abbo of Fleury* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University Press of America, 2008), 53–5. The large pilgrimage of 1065 seems to have been inspired by the conjunction of Easter Sunday and the Annunciation, see Morris 2005, *The Sepulchre of Christ and the Medieval West*: 140. The combination of Crucifixion and the Annunciation occurs also on the Ruthwell cross (in the runic inscription on the cross, as well as the cross itself, and on the scene on the shaft of the cross). See Ó Carragáin

poem *Dream of the Rood* this theme was linked to the idea of the Crucifixion as a war against the power of darkness; an act of triumph no less than humility. 25 March was also the eighth day of creation. As explained by Augustine and used for example by Byrthferth of Ramsey, a contemporary of Olav Haraldsson, 25 March was not only linked to the Christ's Entry into Jerusalem, but also the day the archangel announced Christ's entry to the world, and signaled the Second Coming of Christ.³⁷ A conjunction between Easter Sunday and the Annunciation did not occur in 1016, but such symbols and images could be paired in various combinations. The Battle of Nesjar thus may have been associated to apocalyptic traditions in a broader sense.

On the continent, eschatological ideas were linked more closely to Jerusalem through the millennialist ideas of the Last Emperor. The Last Emperor was first mentioned in the Syriac text of Pseudo-Methodius of the seventh century, a work translated into Greek a century later and then into Latin. The Latin version became popular in Western Europe. It prophesied that a Christian leader would lead the fight against the enemies of God, and, after defeating the ancient foes Gog and Magog, will go to Jerusalem and rule his kingdom in peace there, handing over his power to God. Then Antichrist appear, and the events described in the Book of Revelation begin.³⁸ In the version of the Tiburtine Sibyl (originally a Greek work from the late fourth century and translated into Latin shortly after) written in Northern Italy c.1000, it is the king of the Romans, with his imperial authority, that will convert or fight Jews and pagans, vanquish Gog and Magog and hand over the Christian kingdom to God in Jerusalem. The Tiburtine Sibyl thus had a particular relevance to the circle of Otto III (996–1002). Otto's personal library contained prophetic books (Bamberg Staatsbibliothek MSS 22 and 76), as well as the Bamberg Apocalypse (Bamberg Staatsbibliothek Msc. Bibl. 140) that had been produced, probably at the emperor's request, at Reichenau.³⁹

2005, *Ritual and the Rood* on the relations between the Ruthwell cross, the Anglo-Saxon poem *Dream of the Rood*, and the Annunciation in *The Old English Martyrology*.

³⁷ Byrthferth of Ramsey, *Byrthferth's Enchiridion*, In *Supplementary Series*, ed. and trans. Peter S. Baker and Michael Lapidge, Early English Text Society, 15, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995: "The eight day then came after the seventh, and it arrived on the day that fell on 25 March. That day was singled out especially in God's providence. On that day the angels were created; on that day the archangel Gabriel was sent to St Mary; on that day Christ arose from death; on that day God's spirit came to mankind. It is holy Sunday; when all days fail, it will endure forever in its festiveness. It is the joy of angels and eternal benefit to all the saints." Byrthferth of Ramsey was a pupil of Abbo of Fleury, and composed *Enchiridion* in the years 1010–1012, at the time when Olav Haraldsson was in England.

³⁸ Paul J. Alexander, "The Medieval Legend of the Last Roman Emperor and its Messianic Origin," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 41 (1978).

³⁹ Mayr-Harting, *Ottonian Book Illumination*: II, 10–24, 215–28.

However, the Italian version of the Tiburtine Sibyl seems to have been directed against Otto III during his campaigns south of the Alps.⁴⁰ The Sibyl thus reflects the interest in and negotiations of such apocalyptic ideas beyond the Ottonian imperial court. Another writer, whose work became widespread in the late tenth century, linked the Last Emperor to the Franks. This was Adso of Montier-en-Der's *De ortu et temporu antichristo*, written in the early 950s as a response to the concerns of the West Frankish Queen Gerberga, wife of King Louis IV (936–954) and sister of Emperor Otto I (936–973). Adso explained to Gerberga that although the Roman imperial authority of their own times seemed to be in ruins, one of the kings of the Franks would be the greatest and last of kings. He will unite the world's kingdoms under the banner of Christ and go to Jerusalem to lay down his crown and sceptre on the Mount of Olives, handing his authority over to God.⁴¹

Shortly after Adso had written his response to the apocalyptic concerns of Queen Gerberga, Benedict of Monte Soracte included the story of Charlemagne's own voyage to Jerusalem and Constantinople in his *Chronicon*. According to Benedict, both the Greeks and the Saracens subjugated to Charlemagne, who thus managed to unite East and West under his rule, brought the Holy Land under his jurisdiction, and protected and bestowed gifts to the holy sites in Jerusalem. Benedict of Monte Soracte did not only depict Charlemagne as a ruler who had already defeated the Eastern empires, but also emphasised that did he brought back many relics from the East, especially from Constantinople, thus conferring authority to the many abbeys and cathedrals who owned such relics. However, Anne Latowsky has recently argued that Benedict was not identifying Charlemagne as the Last Emperor. The latter should not resign his regalia in Jerusalem, as Charlemagne intended to do. For the Last Emperor, his journey to Jerusalem was supposed to be the beginning of his rulership.⁴²

Still, Matthew Gabriele has argued that the idea of the Last Emperor was indeed linked to Charlemagne, even if they not were identified as the same character. This is partly based on the famous Otto III's opening of his tomb in Aachen at Pentecost in the year 1000. In Adémar of Chabannes' account from the early eleventh century,

40 Matthew Gabriele, *An Empire of Memory: The Legend of Charlemagne, the Franks, and Jerusalem before the First Crusade* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 109–10; Anke Holdenried, "Many Hands without Design: The Evolution of a medieval Prophetic Text," *The Medieval Journal* 4, no. 1 (2014).

41 Daniel Verhelst, "Adso of Montier-en-Der and the Fear of the Year 1000," in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950–1000*, ed. Richard Landes, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Simon MacLean, "Reform, Queenship and the End of the World in Tenth-Century France: Adso's 'Letter on the Origin and Time of the Antichrist' Reconsidered," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 86 (2008); Brett Edward Whalen, *Dominion of God: Christendom and Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 13–15. One redaction of Adso's work was dedicated to Heribert of Cologne (d. 1021), the Chancellor of Otto III.

42 Anne A. Latowsky, *Emperor of the World: Charlemagne and the Construction of Imperial Authority, 800–1229* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 62–8.

Otto III found Charlemagne sitting on his throne, as sleeping, holding a sceptre and a sword of gold, “literally larger than life, untouched by death, ruling even beyond the grave, seemingly ready to spring back to life at a moment’s notice to battle the enemies of Christ.”⁴³ One year later, during Lent in 1001, Otto III promised to rectify his errors in the next three years before retiring to Jerusalem to live as a monk, a pledge that most likely alluded to Charlemagne’s role in the legend of the Last Emperor.⁴⁴ To some degree, this became a stock theme in depictions of pious rulers. In the saga tradition of twelfth and thirteenth centuries, also Olav Haraldsson considered to renounce his royal title to go to Jerusalem (Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla, Óláfs saga helga*, ch. 187).

Of the apocalyptic texts flourishing on the continent in early eleventh century, the Tiburtine Sibyl was probably known in Scandinavia. It has been regarded as a possible source for the Old Norse visionary poetry, including the Eddic poem *Völuspá* [*Prophecy of the Seeress*]. In *Völuspá*, a *völva* or prophetess tells the story of the world from the creation of humans, towards chaos until the coming end, and finally the new world that rises after Ragnarök. Most scholars consider the Christian influence on the poem undisputable, but it is debated if it should be dated to a pagan milieu influenced by Christianity in late tenth or early eleventh centuries, or rather be the work of a literate “antiquarian” in the twelfth century (considering it being preserved in late medieval Icelandic manuscripts).⁴⁵ Several scholars have pointed at the circle of Haakon Sigurdsson, earl of Lade (d. 995), as a probable context for the poem. He had contact with Christian rulers and missionaries during his stay in Denmark and Germany. Although considered an apostate, he and his warriors knew basic theology that may have influenced traditional notions of the pagan pantheon, time and space, as well as traditional perceptions of the creation and the end of the world. In this case, the poem and its use of the Sibylline tradition around the year 1000 would also tell us about the ideas of the world and rulership prevalent in Norway at the time of Olav’s return in 1015.

The quite specific sources scholars have identified for *Völuspá* include the Book of Apocalypse, the Tiburtine Sibyl, some of the writings of Wulfstan of York (d. 1023), and the Vercelli homily 2 from the late tenth century. Moreover, there are allusions to Adso’s work as well as the Easter Vigil as reflected in the Missal of Robert of Jumièges, written before 1016 in a religious house in the English Danelaw, perhaps Ely or Peterborough.⁴⁶ This point towards a rather intimate knowledge of the apocalyptic

⁴³ Gabriele, *An Empire of Memory*, 121.

⁴⁴ Levi Roach, “Emperor Otto III and the End of Time,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 23 (2013): 98–9.

⁴⁵ See Chapter 20 (Kristin B. Aavitsland), 449–52.

⁴⁶ Of the more recent contributions to this debate, with close comparisons of *Völuspá* with insular and continental texts, see Richard North, “End Time and the Date of *Völuspá*: Two Models of Conversion,” in *Conversion and Colonization in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Catherine E. Karkow and

discourse at the turn of the millennium, reflecting pressing issues in the early years of the eleventh century. Some of the images on contemporary rune-stones from this time may substantiate this claim. For example, the images on a group of runic stones made c.1000 in Hunnestad, Scania, have been interpreted as the wolf Fenrir who devours the sun at Ragnarök. The Vang runestone in Oppland, Norway may depict Fenrir during the Last Days, and thus allude to the narrative in *Völuspá* and thus probably also the Sibylline literature.⁴⁷ These images are designed in the Ringerike style, characteristic for early eleventh century and associated to the imagery of power during Olav Haraldsson's reign.⁴⁸

Levi Roach has argued that the most likely origin of the Italian redaction of the Tiburtine Sibyl from c.1000 was the abbey of Fruttuaria, north of Turin. This abbey was founded by William of Volpiano in the year 1000, or in 1001. William's reputation grew rapidly, and he was shortly after invited by Duke Richard II of Normandy (996–1026) to reform the abbeys in his duchy, among them the important houses of Fécamp and Mont-Saint-Michel. Indeed, one of the earliest preserved manuscripts containing the Sibyl was written at Fécamp in the second half of the eleventh century, along with Adso's tract on the Antichrist and Raoul Glaber's biography of William of Volpiano. At the time Olav Haraldsson stayed at the court of Duke Richard II and prepared to be baptised or undergoing a *confirmatio* under supervision of the duke's brother, Archbishop Robert of Rouen (989–1037), the Tiburtine Sibyl, as well as other eschatological and liturgical texts dealing with the end of time, would have been well known in Normandy.⁴⁹

Nicholas Howe (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006); John McKinnell, "Völuspá and the Feast of Easter," *Alvíssmál* 12 (2008); Karl G. Johansson, "Völuspá, the Tiburtine Sibyl, and the Apocalypse in the North," in *The Nordic Apocalypse. Approaches to Völuspá and Nordic Days of Judgement*, ed. Terry Gunnell and Annette Lassen, Acta Scandinavia (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013). For a balanced and updated discussion on such questions, see Terry Gunnell and Annette Lassen, eds., *The Nordic Apocalypse. Approaches to Völuspá and Nordic Days of Judgement*, Acta Scandinavia (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), with extensive references to previous studies and debates. Fragments of a missal now in the Norwegian National Archives (Mi 11) are closely related to the Missal of Robert of Jumièges, as well as showing affinities to the liturgy of Winchester. A scribe educated in Normandy or England added marginal comments to the missal in the late eleventh century. This has led scholars to believe that the missal must have been brought to Norway after c.1100, but Olav Haraldsson could have brought educated scribes who had learned professional script with him to Norway. On this missal, see K.D. Hartzell, "An Early Missal Fragment in Riksarkivet, Oslo," in *Latin Manuscripts of Medieval Norway: Studies in Memory of Lilli Gjerløw*, ed. Espen Karlsen, Nota bene (Oslo: Novus, 2013).

⁴⁷ See Magnus Källström, "Bär den norska Vangstenen ett Ragnaröksmotiv?," *Formvännan* 111 (2016), who also include a few other examples and references.

⁴⁸ See the arguments and references in Bandlien, "Coinage and Kingship."

⁴⁹ Levi Roach, "The Legacy of a Late Antique Prophecy: The Tiburtine Sibyl and the Italian Opposition to Otto III," *The Medieval Journal* 5, no. 1 (2015). On the baptism or *confirmation* of Olav

The combination of apocalyptic discourse and rulership may be reflected in the naming of Olav Haraldsson' son, born c.1024. According to the saga writer Snorri Sturluson, writing in the early thirteenth century, it was Olav's skald Sigvat who presented the king's son for baptism and named him Magnus. Sigvat explained to Olav that he named the boy after "Karla-Magnus," or Charlemagne, which met the king's full approval (*Heimskringla, Óláfs saga helga*, ch. 122). Even if Snorri's account might be a bit fanciful for dramatic effect, Magnus was indeed an unprecedented name in Scandinavia at the time. A parallel to such symbolic naming of the son of a king is seen in 1052, when Queen Anne of Kiev gave birth to the first son of King Henry I of France. The boy was named Philip, a Greek name that was unprecedented for a king in Latin Europe. The name points to Anne's origins and knowledge of Greek, but also alluded to Roman Emperor Philip the Arabian (r. 244–249). Philip the Arabian was, according to several chroniclers, the first Christian Emperor. Moreover, he presided over the thousandth anniversary of Rome's foundation, signalling the end of the pagan Rome and the creation of a new era of Christian emperors. King Henry I was himself influenced by Adso's version of the legend of the Last Emperor and was convinced that the end of the world was near. The new-born prince was then fittingly named after Philip the Arabian as one who should rule in an age of transition into apocalyptic era.⁵⁰ The choice of Magnus as the name of Olav's son may in a similar fashion have had eschatological associations in Norway.

Of more immediate context was the connection of Charlemagne with the establishment of sacred places in Western Europe. In Poitou, for example, the cults of relics at the abbeys of Charraux and Saint-Maixent were linked to the legendary travels of Charlemagne, who brought precious items from the Holy Land back to Europe.⁵¹ Olav Haraldsson may also have spent time in Poitou during his service to Duke Richard II of Normandy, although admittedly as more of a warrior than a pilgrim. Still, the mention of the weaponry from Poitou in *Nesjavísur* st. 15 may point to a consciousness of weapons of a ruler supported by Christ and linked to the legend of the Last Emperor were potential relics.

in Rouen, see Egil Kraggerud, "Hellig-Olavs dåp i Theodoricus Monachus og i hans kilder," *Collegium Mediaevale. Interdisciplinary Journal of Medieval Research* 25 (2012). See also Elisabeth Van Houts, "Countess Gunnor of Normandy, c.950–1031," *Collegium Mediaevale. Interdisciplinary Journal of Medieval Research* 12 (1999) on the dynastic and cultural relations between Scandinavia and Normandy at this time.

⁵⁰ Jean Dunbabin, "What's in a Name? Philip, King of France," *Speculum* 68 (1993).

⁵¹ Gabriele, *An Empire of Memory*, 25–51; Gwenaëlle Augry, "Reliques et pouvoir ducal en Aquitaine (fin Xe s.–1030)," in *Reliques et sainteté dans l'espace médiéval*, ed. Jean-Luc Deuffic, Resources en Médiévisstique (Saint-Denis: Pecia, 2006).

A Planned Pilgrimage to Jerusalem?

According to Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla* (*Óláfs saga helga*, ch. 18), Olav Haraldsson travelled south from England and Normandy, heading for Jerusalem. Before reaching Gibraltar, he had a vision of a handsome, yet terrifying, man who told him to abandon his plans of going to distant lands. Instead he should return to his ancestral lands and become king over Norway for ever. Clearly, this story has all the marks of being a legend interpreted by Snorri's contemporaries in light of Olav being the patron saint of Norway.

Still, a journey of Olav into the Mediterranean and to the Holy Land in c.1013, while he was in the service of Duke Richard II, does not seem all that improbable. In his poem *Vikingavísur*, Sigvat enumerated the battles of Olav during his travels abroad. The poem mentions Olav's fight against the Bretons at Dol, close to Mont-Saint-Michel, as well as battles in Aquitaine, whose duke was a rival to the Normans. Furthermore, Olav is conventionally associated with an attack on Tui, close to Santiago de Compostela. Still, this is doubtful, as the chronology does not seem to fit the years Olav travelled along the Iberian Peninsula. The place names in the Norse skaldic verses and sagas do not really allow us to place him at specific places and events in Iberia.⁵² Local chronicles mention the raids of the *Normanni* in Iberia on several occasions in this period, but this is a term that could refer to both Normans and Scandinavians at the time.

It is thus possible that Olav's journey to Iberia was related to other Normans who travelled into the Mediterranean, perhaps as part of his service of Duke Richard II of Normandy. Other sources indicate that Normans were starting to gain a significant military and political role both in Southern Italy and further east. According to Amatus of Montecassino, Norman pilgrims travelling through the Mediterranean had assisted Salerno in their fight against the Saracens around the year 1000.⁵³

An important pilgrimage location for the Normans was Monte Gargano in Apulia, the most prominent sites for the cult of St Michael. The popularity of the archangel increased in the late tenth century, something that should be seen in relation to both the eschatology of the time and to the role of Charlemagne. The Archangel Michael was supposed, for instance in Adso's work, to have a vital role during the Last Days,

⁵² For a recent discussion of the source problems connected to the travels of Olav beyond the Pyrenees, but perhaps with a too stern rejection of his presence in Iberia, see Pires, "Nem Tui, nem Gibraltar: Óláfr Haraldsson e a Península Ibérica."

⁵³ Amatus of Montecassino, *The History of the Normans*, trans. Prescott N. Dunbar and Graham A. Loud, Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2004. See discussion in John France, "The Occasion of the Coming of the Normans to Southern Italy," *Journal of Medieval History* 17 (1991); Graham A. Loud, *The Age of Robert Guiscard: Southern Italy and the Northern Conquest* (Harlow: Longman, 2000), 60–6.

announcing Christ's arrival and then slay the dragon, or Antichrist. According to Benedict of Monte Soracte, Charlemagne himself had stopped at Monte Gargano on his way Jerusalem, in order to receive the peace of St Michael. Otto III seems to imitate the route of the great emperor when he undertook a penitential pilgrimage to Monte Gargano during Lent 999, where he expressed his desire to travel to Jerusalem and lay down his imperial crown.⁵⁴

Among the prominent pilgrims visiting Monte Gargano in the late tenth century, Odo of Cluny, John of Gorze, and William of Volpiano. William reformed the Mont-Saint-Michel, along with other Norman Abbeys, and here the imagery of St Michael was transformed from that of a prince in a Byzantine manner to a warrior piercing a dragon with a spear or lance. In 1016, a group of Norman pilgrims visited Monte Gargano and met the Lombard Melus of Bari, who recruited them as warriors against the Byzantines in Apulia. Thus, Olav might also have been part of such a group of Normans who sought to combine pilgrimage with military engagement.

The cult and legend of the Archangel Michael in Norway is only recorded after Olav's death.⁵⁵ Still, it must have been known to him and his fellows both from his stay in Normandy and England. In a poem about the battle of his son Magnus the good against the Wends in 1043, the skald Oddr kikinaskáld associated the fight with Michaelmas. This feast day thus seems established at the time, and the link to just war is similar to how Æthelred II and Wulfstan of York initiated fasting, mass and prayers before Michaelmas in 1009, as a pious program against the Vikings.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Daniel F. Callahan, "The Cult of St Michael the Archangel and the 'Terrors of the Year 1000'," in *Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950–1000*, ed. Richard Landes, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 185. See also Althoff, *Otto III*, 93; Roach, "Emperor Otto III and the End of Time," 86–87. The centrality of Saint Michael in the Last Days is emphasized in the Bamberg Apocalypse, prepared c.1000, but later offered by Henry II to his new ecclesiastical centre at Bamberg.

⁵⁵ Frederik Paasche, "St. Michael og hans engle," *Edda* 1 (1914); Lilli Gjerløw, "Le Culte de Saint Michel en Norvège," in *Millénaire monastique du Mont Saint Michel, vol. 3: Cult de Saint Michel et pèlerinages au mont*, ed. Marcel Baudot (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1971). St Michael is first mentioned by name in Old Norse sources in skaldic stanza by Arnórr jarlaskáld from the mid-eleventh century, where he weighs souls. Arnórr also seems to have known and used *Vǫluspá*. On the last judgement and Saint Michael in eleventh-century Norway, see Olav Tveito, *Ad fine orbis terrae – like til jordens ender: En studie i primær trosformidling i nordisk kristningskontekst* (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, Det historisk-filosofiske fakultet, 2005), 193–97, and for references in skaldic poetry, see Diana Edwards, "Christian and Pagan References in Eleventh-Century Norse Poetry: The Case of Arnórr jarlaskáld," *Saga-Book* 21 (1982): 40–1.

⁵⁶ Edwards, "Christian and Pagan References" 41; Callahan, "The Cult of St Michael the Archangel," 189–92, who points out how Michael and Beowulf are compared as dragon-slayers in the sermon in *Blickling Homilies*, treating the dedication of the Saint Michael's church at Monte Gargano. Callahan also points to the link between the depictions of King Knud's donation and Saint Michael at the Last

What distinguished the skalds' mention of the battle against the Wends in 1043, from Sigvat's treatment of the battle of Nesjar in 1016, is foremost the depictions of the opponents – the Wends are depicted as evil pagans, while Sigvat shows sympathy to the bravery of Olav's opponent. This is somewhat appropriate, as Sigvat acknowledged that all significant rivals of Olav for the rule of Norway, including the earls of Lade, indeed were Christians. In this way, the Entry into Jerusalem at Palm Sunday a more fitting parallel for the entry into an old, established kingdom that Olav had a right to enter, and the people were expected to open the gates for him. The Wends, on the other hand, were perceived as pirates, attackers and foes to the Christian society in a more fundamental way, and the legend of Saint Michael was thus more appropriate.

If we follow this argument even further – that Olav intended to follow the same route to Monte Gargano and southern Italy as contemporary Normans did, it is of some interest that the pilgrims defending Salerno in 999, had, according to Amatus, already been on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and were about to return home. There are also a number of other sources indicating that Jerusalem attracted an increasing number of pilgrims in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. According to Raoul Glaber, writing in the 1040s, the pilgrims to the Holy Land involved greater numbers and various kinds of people:

. . . an innumerable multitude of people from the whole world, greater than any man before could have hoped to see, began to travel to the Sepulchre of the Saviour at Jerusalem. First to go were the petty people, then those of middling estate, and next the powerful, kings, counts, marquesses, and bishops: finally, and this was something which had never happened before, numerous women, noble and poor, undertook the journey. Many wished to die there before they returned to their own lands.⁵⁷

Amongst the prominent men who went to Jerusalem shortly after the millennium, we find Count Guy of Limoges along with his brother bishop Hilduin. They brought a large party of pilgrims with them, although they were outnumbered by the massive flock of pilgrims who accompanied Count William of Angoulême in 1026. Fulk Nerra of Anjou (987–1040) travelled to Jerusalem at least three times, probably four.⁵⁸ Duke Robert of Normandy (1027–1035), accompanied by Count

Judgement in the *Liber Vitae* of the New Minster of Winchester – a book that was certainly to be expected to have a say when the archangel weighted souls at the Last Days.

57 Rodulfus Glaber then includes the accounts of a certain Lethbaud of Autun and of Bishop Ulric of Orléans (1021–1035) who both undertook journeys to Jerusalem, Rodulfus Glaber, *The Five Books of Histories*, trans. John France, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.

58 According to Bernard Bachrach, Fulk Nerra undertook his first pilgrimage in 1003–1004, his second in 1009, his third in 1035, and his fourth in 1040, Bernard S. Bachrach, "The Pilgrimages of Fulk Nerra, Count of the Angevins, 987–1040," in *Religion, Culture, and Society in the Early Middle Ages: Studies in Honor of Richard E. Sullivan*, ed. Thomas F.X. Noble and John J. Contreni (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, Medieval Institute Publications, 1987).

Drog of Vexin, left for Jerusalem in 1034 and died at Nicaea on his return in 1035. Robert's father, Duke Richard II, whom Olav served for several years, sponsored the cost of the pilgrimage to the Holy Land of Abbot Richard of Saint Vannes in 1026–1027, who is said to have been accompanied by 700 pilgrims.⁵⁹ In 1002, Emperor Henry II gave money to a hermit of Bamberg to go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, with instructions to wash a precious chalice in the river Jordan.⁶⁰ Presumably, the chalice was to be brought back to the Emperor and to be used in the recreation of Jerusalem at the religious centres of Hildesheim, Bamberg or elsewhere. A similar idea is found in Sigvat's memorial poem for King Olav, composed shortly after the king had been martyred in 1030. Here the holy river Jordan is linked to an angelic anointing of the king himself:

The prince of the Jordan [Christ] once sent four angels from the sky; a waterfall washed the holy hair of his *hersir*.⁶¹

The term *hersir* usually means “lord” or “(district) chieftain,” and this must be interpreted as Olav who is ruling Norway on behalf of Christ. The verse alludes to the baptism of Olav, but may also point at how some of his hair was put on fire after his death to prove his sanctity. Of importance here is the statement that Olav only submitted his rule over Norway to the overlord of the land of Jordan, or Jerusalem.

At the influential Fleury Abbey, which had close contact with the leading houses in England, Frederick, a former monk at Fleury, but later a schoolmaster of Marmoutier, led a revolt against the abbot but later undertook a penitential pilgrimage to Jerusalem.⁶² In 995, Bernard of Beaulieu, son of a lord of Aquitaine and given to Fleury as oblate, decided to leave his monastery and live in Jerusalem as hermit. He was dissuaded by Abbo of Fleury, who advised him to make a shorter

⁵⁹ Jonathan Sumption, *The Age of Pilgrimage: The Medieval Journey to God* (Mahwah NJ: Hidden Spring, 2003 [1975]), 127–28, 66; Morris 2005, *The Sepulchre of Christ and the Medieval West*: 138. For a more comprehensive list and discussion, see Françoise Micheau, “Les itinéraires maritimes et continentaux des pèlerinages vers Jérusalem,” in *Occident et Orient au Xe siècle: Actes du IXe congrès de la Société des historiens médiévistes de l’enseignement supérieur public (Dijon, 2–4 juin 1978)* (Paris: Les belles lettres, 1978).

⁶⁰ Among other pilgrims to Jerusalem from the Holy Roman Empire north of the Alps were Poppo of Stavelot (1020–1048) in the year 1000, Archbishop Poppo of Trier (1016–1047) who accompanied the Symeon of Syracuse in 1028, and Abbot Eberwin from Trier who had met Symeon on a pilgrimage a few years earlier.

⁶¹ “Endr réð engla senda/ Jórðánar gramr fjóra/ fors þó hans á hersi/ heiglagt skopt – ór lópti.” Sigvatr Þórðarson (Sigvat Thordsson), *Erfidrápa Óláfs Helga* 28, ed. Judith Jesch, in Whaley 2012, *Poetry from the Kings’ Sagas* 1.

⁶² Thomas Head, *Hagiography and the Cult of Saints: The Diocese of Orléans, 800–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 223.

pilgrimage to Monte Gargano instead.⁶³ However, the connections between abbeys in southern Italy and Jerusalem were close at the time, perhaps most so at the abbey of Monte Cassino.⁶⁴ A pilgrimage to Monte Gargano was shorter than to Jerusalem, but still linked with the Holy Land through eschatological expectations in the areas where Olav spent much time before he returned to Norway.

One of the issues raising awareness of Jerusalem at the time Olav was in Normandy, was the destruction of the Holy Sepulchre ordered by Caliph al-Hakim in September 1009. John France has shown that there are few references to the destruction of the Holy Sepulchre in eleventh-century Europe, and it had been largely forgotten by the time of the First Crusade.⁶⁵ However, the chronicles of Northern and Western France show that the destruction was well known among some of the learned monks and scholars in these regions. The chronicler Adémar of Chabannes (d. 1034) and his younger contemporary Raoul Glaber (d. 1047) seem to have had received quite detailed information on the destruction of the Holy Sepulchre, and both interpreted the event as an apocalyptic sign. Adémar and Raoul claimed that the destruction was partly motivated by al-Hakim's wish to end the flow of pilgrims from Latin Europe (in this context, Raoul Glaber accused the Jews to encourage the Caliph to destroy the Holy Sepulchre), and partly to how al-Hakim, 'the ruler of Babylonia', had the traits of the Antichrist.⁶⁶ Adémar himself was so inspired by this that he went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and the knowledge of the destruction probably caused Duke Richard II of Normandy to send money to the Holy Land and to the monastery at Mount Sinai, including one hundred pounds of gold for the restoration of the Holy Sepulchre (Rodulfus Glaber, I.21).

According to Raoul Glaber, Duke Richard II had an intimate relation to Mount Sinai, unique among Western rulers. In his chronicle, Raoul claimed that "each year monks came to Rouen even from the famous Mount Sinai in the east and took back with them many presents of gold and silver for their communities." (I.21). It is difficult to maintain when this tradition started, but another witness to this is

63 On his pilgrimage, Bernard met some relatives who reproached him for leaving behind disorder during his travels, indicating that also these relatives were on pilgrimage, see Marco Mostert, *The Political Theology of Abbo of Fleury* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1987), 60–1. The *Chronicle of Saint-Maixent* mentions several pilgrimages to Jerusalem made by the abbots of Maillezais, in the Vendée region in Aquitaine, see *La Chronique de Saint-Maixent, 751–1140*, ed. and trans. Jean Verdon, Paris: Les belles lettres, 1979.

64 John France, "The Destruction of Jerusalem and the First Crusade," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 47 (1996): 16–7.

65 France, "The Destruction of Jerusalem and the First Crusade," 14.

66 Daniel F. Callahan, "Al-Hakim, Charlemagne, and the Destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem in the Writings of Ademar of Chabannes," in *The Legend of Charlemagne in the Middle Ages: Power, Faith, and Crusade*, ed. Matthew Gabriele and Jace Stuckey (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

Eberwin of Tholey's life of St Symeon. Symeon was born in Syracuse during Muslim rule, but as a young boy he was sent to Constantinople where he received education. Partly inspired by Westerners travelling through the Byzantine Empire on their way to the Holy Land, he set out on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem himself. He stayed there for seven years, making his living as a guide for pilgrims to the holy sites. When drawn to a more pious life, he first stayed some time as a recluse in a tower on the bank of the river Jordan, and then moved to the monastery of Virgin Mary in Bethlehem and later to St Catherine's monastery on Mount Sinai. In 1026, the abbot of this monastery sent him and another monk to Normandy. After encountering many trials, Symeon met Eberwin of Tholey in Antioch. Eberwin was a pilgrim in the company of Abbot Richard of Saint Vannes, and Symeon accompanied him back to Trier. Later, probably in 1026, Symeon went on to Rouen only to learn that Duke Richard II had recently died. He then moved to Trier, where he died in 1035 as a recluse.⁶⁷

Before leaving Rouen, however, Symeon had probably met Adémar of Chabannes. He could thus have been Adémar's informant concerning the destruction of the Holy Sepulchre, as well as of some other episodes of Byzantine matters he included in his chronicle.⁶⁸ One of these episodes relates to the battles between Normans and 'Russian' troops fighting for the Greeks in southern Italy in 1017–1018. These Russians would most likely be Varangian troops of Emperor Basil II that also included Scandinavians.⁶⁹

From the evidence of contemporary sources, it appears likely that Olav Haraldsson, during his stay in Normandy, would have had intentions to visit Monte Gargano, and even Jerusalem, partly as a pilgrim and partly as part of Norman forces in Southern Italy. He must also have known about the Varangian guard in imperial service before he left Norway as a young man – Scandinavia and the Baltic Sea had for centuries been an important region in the communication and trade between Byzantium and Russian realms on the one hand and Western Europe on the other.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ See Elisabeth Van Houts, "Normandy and Byzantium in the Eleventh Century," *Byzantion* 55 (1985) on Symeon of Trier in the context of Norman-Byzantine relations. Eberwin's life of Symeon was written the same year he died, and soon spread to Normandy – one copy in Rouen was used by Hugh of Flavigny in the early twelfth century.

⁶⁸ Robert Lee Wolff, "How the News was brought from Byzantium to Angoulême; or, The Pursuit of a Hare in an Ox Cart," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 4 (1979).

⁶⁹ Sigfús Blöndal, *The Varangians of Byzantium: An Aspect of Byzantine Military History*, ed. Benedikt S. Benediktz, trans. Benedikt S. Benediktz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 40–41 on the Varangians in southern Italy fighting Melus of Bari and the Normans. Olav's half-brother Harald Hardruler (d. 1066) stayed in Constantinople and led the Varangian troops from 1032 to 1042, and certainly went to Jerusalem – possibly in connection to the rebuilding of the Holy Sepulchre.

⁷⁰ See for example Lucien Musset, "La Scandinavie, intermédiaire entre l'Occident et l'Orient au Xe siècle," in *Occident et Orient au Xe siècle: Actes du IXe congrès de la Société des historiens médiévistes*

Had he continued on this, admittedly hypothetical journey, into the Mediterranean along with Normans, Olav may in fact have had the opportunity to encounter Scandinavians fighting in Byzantine Italy for the Greek emperor.

Olav kept his contact with Duke Richard II also after his return to Norway. In c.1024, Sigvat appeared in Rouen, mentioned in one of his own stanzas.⁷¹ The visit was said by Snorri Sturluson to be a trading voyage, but may well also have had a diplomatic mission.⁷² In any case, this was the time when Duke Richard II received regular visits from Mount Sinai, and Sigvat would have had the opportunity to meet these far-travelling monks and Normans arriving from, or on their way to, the Holy Land.

Conclusion

In the early eleventh century, the Norwegian kingdom had no Aachen or Hildesheim as a royal centre where Jerusalem was reconstructed in a manifest way. However, during his travels as a young warrior, Olav Haraldsson encountered ideas, narratives, symbols, and practices that connected rulership to Jerusalem. The influence of these discourses is observable in Sigvat Thordsson's commemoration of the Battle of Nesjar on Palm Sunday 1016. Using the conventions of skaldic metre and metaphors in both a traditional and innovative way, Sigvat presented the battle as a royal *adventus* with allusions to Christ's entry into Jerusalem. Creating a link between the victory of Olav Haraldsson at Nesjar and the foundation of a Christian law, Sigvat assisted the new king to connect royal power to the most holy city, Jerusalem. Sigvat's poetry and images are innovative, but not isolated. There are indications that Olav Haraldsson associated his rule to the legend of the Last Emperor and Charlemagne, a story intimately connected to both the heavenly and earthly Jerusalem.

This is not to say that Olav Haraldsson's rulership of Norway did not depend on traditional political culture, such as alliances, gift-giving and martial skills. Still, as a king with ambitions outside the Norwegian realm, his kingship needed

de l'enseignement supérieur public (Dijon, 2–4 juin, 1978) (Paris: Les belles lettres, 1978) for an overview. More recent research on Viking Age Scandinavia has substantiated and extended this claim.

⁷¹ Sigvatr Þórðarson (Sigvat Thordsson), *Vestrfararvísur* 1, ed. Judith Jesch, in Whaley 2012, *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas* 1: 615.

⁷² Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, 3 vols, trans. Alison Finlay and Anthony Faulkes, London: Viking Society for Northern Research, University College London, 2016, vol. 2, *Óláfs saga helga*, ch. 146. See also Jesch 2004, "Viking on the European Continent," 264–6 for a discussion of the context of this stanza. Later in the poem, Sigvat came to England and the court of Knud the Great and was asked to come in his service. He has been seen as defecting from Olav, but his service and praise for Knud necessarily mean that Sigvat shifted side permanently.

other forms of legitimation. This must have been especially important in his Olav's relations to foreign rulers and rivals. During his travels in Europe, the young Olav had met ambitious kings and nobles who rivalled over the hegemony of Christian rulership. The imperial authority had largely been transferred from the Carolingian Franks to the Ottonians during the tenth century, and especially Otto III and his advisor Bishop Bernward of Hildesheim placed the idea of the heavenly and earthly Jerusalem at the heart of their ideology. Also, the Normans were identifying themselves as the most able defenders of Christianity and as supporters of the Holy Land. According to Dudo of Saint-Quentin, writing his chronicle on the Normans during the time Olav served the Norman duke, the Normans descended both from the Franks and the Norsemen. According to this foundation story, their ancestry brought the best from both peoples – as heirs of the Vikings they were fierce warriors, while also inheriting the zeal to protect Christianity from the Franks.⁷³ Connecting themselves to the defence of Christianity and the Holy Land was thus central also for Norman rulers, something that can be seen in the support to pilgrims going to Jerusalem, to Mount Sion, and the rebuilding of the Holy Sepulchre.

For the new reign established by King Olav, interpreting his victory 25 March 1016 in light of the narrative of Christ's entry into Jerusalem, the analogy with Christ alluded to a religious image of authority among the kingdoms in Christian Europe. Situating himself within such a discourse may have been crucial when he sought support from rulers abroad. His most prominent rival, King Knud the Great, had established his rule in England at the same time as Olav ascended to power in Norway. Knud's large donations to churches after 1016 are well documented, as well as his attempts to build some similar structures and institutions in Denmark in the 1020s. Knud seems to have performed such a strategy with considerable success also on a European scene. Not only did he balance his relations to the powers in Germany, France, Spain, and Poland, he also went on a pilgrimage to Rome in 1027 and presumably had discussions on policies in northern Europe with Pope John XIX.⁷⁴

When Olav Haraldsson led an attack on Denmark, his royal rhetoric may have helped him receiving support from Danish noblemen as well as his Swedish brother-in-law, King Anund Jacob. After losing the Battle of Helgå in 1026, however, he lost supporters to Knud the Great, perhaps even (at least for a while) his chief advisor, envoy and skald Sigvat. However, Sigvat is the one who travels to Normandy and even to Rome, possibly as an envoy of King Olav who found himself in a desperate situation in the late 1020s. Whatever his ambitions for rulership beyond the kingdom

⁷³ Latowsky 2013, *Emperor of the World*: 72; Katherine Cross, *Heirs of the Vikings: History and Identity in Normandy and England, c.950–c.1015* (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2018), 65–81.

⁷⁴ Timothy Bolton, *Cnut the Great* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 158–71.

of Norway actually may have been, King Olav's construction of authority in relation to Jerusalem did not in itself secure his position and support during his lifetime. Still, the case of the impact of Jerusalem during his reign point at a more complex use of religious symbols, narratives, and rituals in the period of early Christian kingship in Norway than often assumed.



Fig. 5.1: Tadeus Rijchter, *St Olav*. Copy of mural on column in the Nativity Church, Bethlehem. Gouache on paper, 180X110 cm © Frederiksborg Castle, Museum of National History.

Øystein Ekroll

Chapter 5

Scandinavian Holy Kings in the Nativity Church of Bethlehem

In the Nativity Church in Bethlehem, one of the holiest Christian sites, built over a grotto which has been identified since the fourth century as the birthplace of Jesus, are the oldest extant images of St Knud of Denmark and St Olav of Norway. During the Crusader period in the twelfth century, these two saintly kings from the far end of the world were painted on two of the columns in the church. Why were images of Scandinavian royal saints given such prominent places in this prestigious church, and who stood behind the execution of this work of art?

The Church

The Church of the Nativity was originally constructed by Emperor Constantine the Great in the early fourth century. It consisted originally of an atrium, a nave with five aisles and an octagon over the grotto of the nativity towards the east. In its centre, the octagon had a circular opening in the floor giving a view of the grotto from above. Probably in the fifth century, the large atrium was demolished and replaced by a short narthex, and the octagon was replaced by a new triconchal east end with three apses.¹ The nave's five aisles are supported by four parallel rows of eleven monolithic columns each, 44 in total, and 28 of the columns are decorated with paintings of 29 saints and a possible Crucifixion. All the 22 columns flanking the central nave are decorated, while only six of the remaining 22 columns are painted (Fig.10.1). The paintings are executed in an encaustic technique. The art historian Gustav Kühnel has studied and published these paintings in great detail, and the following description is based on his seminal work from 1988.² The image of St Olav was also described and analyzed by Anne Lidén in 1999.³

¹ Gustav Kühnel, *Wall Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*, Frankfurter Forschungen zur Kunst 14 (Berlin: Mann, 1988), 2.

² Kühnel, *Wall Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*.

³ Anne Lidén, *Olav den helige i medeltida bildkonst. Legendmotiv och attribut* (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, 1999).

The saints can be divided into several groups. There are four different representations of St Mary, one of the prophet Elijah, one of St John the Baptist, three apostles and evangelists (St James the Greater, St Bartholomew and St John the Evangelist). Furthermore, there are three holy bishops (St Brasius, St Leo and St Catald), two holy deacons (St Stephen and St Vincent), two soldier-saints (St George and St Leonard), six ascetics (St Onuphrius, St Macarius, St Theodosius, St Euthymius, St Sabas and St Anthony), the two *anargyroi* (St Cosmas and St Damianus),⁴ three female saints (St Fusca and twice St Marina/St Margaret) and, finally, two holy kings (St Knud of Denmark and St Olav of Norway). Painted inscriptions, mostly in Latin but some in Greek, identify all the different figures.

The paintings on the columns and the remains of mosaics on the walls above them are elements of a comprehensive decoration of the church executed during the Crusader period. One painting of St Mary is dated to 1130, and a mosaic inscription states that the work was completed in 1169. Most authors agree that the work was executed between these two dates. Kühnel regards the paintings on the columns as an entity and dates them to the 1150s, especially the paintings of the Scandinavian kings, which he believes were executed c.1154.⁵

The Royal Saints

When entering the central nave of the church, the two holy kings are painted on the fourth and fifth columns from the west on the right hand (south) side. They are flanked by the two deacon saints St Stephen and St Vincent, on the third and sixth columns respectively. Across the nave, on the two columns opposite the kings, there are paintings of the two soldier saints St George and St Leonard.

St Olav is identifiable through the inscription SCS OLAUUS REX NORWAGIE (St Olav king of Norway) (Fig. 5.1). His figure is 149 cm high and stands inside a frame measuring 162x79–84cm.⁶ At the right hand side of Olav's feet, but outside the frame, is a kneeling woman, her hands raised in supplication to the saint. Only two other saints have a similar figure at their feet, St James the Greater and St Mary *Glykophilusa*. St Olav is depicted frontally, dressed in a *skaramangion* (tunic) tied at the waist and an ermine-lined *chlamys* (cloak) fastened with a pin on his right shoulder. On his head, he wears a ring-shaped crown set with jewels. He has a

⁴ The Greek word means “silverless” and derives from the practice of these two physicians of not accepting payment for their services from poor patients.

⁵ Kühnel, *Wall Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*, 145.

⁶ Kühnel, *Wall Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*, 116.

moustache, a short, pointed beard and large eyes. His light-coloured hair falls to his shoulders. In his right hand, Olav holds a staff or scepter with a figure, perhaps a cross, on the upper end.⁷ His left hand rests on the rounded top of a pointed shield, as used by the Norman knights. No other weapon is today visible, but it is possible that Olav wears a sword under the *clamys*.⁸

Kühnel and Lidén notice that Olav is dressed like a Byzantine emperor on important occasions, but that the inclusion of a shield points to him as a warrior in the Western manner.⁹ Their shields are richly coloured and decorated with floral elements, but these cannot be interpreted as heraldry.

The figure of St Knud is identical in height to St Olav and is identified by the inscription SCS CHNVTUS REX DANORUM (St Canute king of the Danes) (Fig. 5.2). His tunic reaches down to his feet and is fastened at the waist with a black belt. Over the tunic, he wears a long, ermine-lined *chlamys*, closed near the right shoulder with a pin. He holds a long spear in his right hand and his left hand grasps the rounded top of a pointed shield. Like St Olav, he wears a cylindrical crown set with gems, similar to the burial crown of St Erik of Sweden from c.1160.¹⁰ Like St Olav, his attire is a mixture of Byzantine court dress and Western arms. The ermine lining their cloaks is definitely a Western element.

Kühnel concludes that the artist who painted the two royal saints was a Westerner, but that he tried to represent them in the spirit of Byzantine art.¹¹ The paintings of St Knud and St Olav are unusual in combining the two aspects of conqueror and ruler in the same representation. They are dressed in the ceremonial robes of a ruler, but the spear and shields depict them as Christian victors and warriors.

The Kneeling Woman

Who was the woman kneeling at St Olav's feet? All authors seem to agree that she was the donor of the painting, and that she was a Scandinavian pilgrim. The sources describing Scandinavian travellers to the Holy Land are meagre, but one possible candidate is Kristin (c.1125–1178), the daughter of King Sigurd the Crusader (1103–1130) and his Russian queen Malmfrid. Between 1108 and 1111, King Sigurd

⁷ Kühnel, *Wall Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*, 117.

⁸ The painting is today heavily worn, but until it has been cleaned and restored, this possibility cannot be entirely excluded.

⁹ Kühnel, *Wall Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*, 122f.; Lidén, *Olav den helige i medeltida bildkonst*, 51.

¹⁰ Kühnel, *Wall Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*, 123.

¹¹ Kühnel, *Wall Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*, 125.



Fig. 5.2: Tadeus Rijchter, *St Knud*. Copy of mural on column in the Nativity Church, Bethelam. Gouache on paper, 180X110 cm © Frederiksborg Castle, Museum of National History.

led a Norwegian fleet of 60 ships on a crusade to the Holy Land, and he returned with a relic of the True Cross that eventually was brought to Nidaros Cathedral.¹²

Kristin was the first cousin of King Valdemar the Great of Denmark (1131–1182), and she grew partly up in Denmark. She married Earl Erling Skakke, who was one of the leaders of the Norwegian-Orkadian crusade 1153–55. It is uncertain if they were married before the crusade, but the *Orkneyinga Saga* gives an indication that they were: In the Holy Land, Earl Rognvald of Orkney composed a verse calling Erling *kongsmåg* – royal relative – which he became after his marriage to Kristin.¹³

Judging by the few certain facts we know about her life, she was not likely to stay at home while her new husband went off on adventures in the Holy Land. Kristin played a political role in the peace negotiations between Erling and King Valdemar, and c.1170 she eloped to Constantinople with a young lover and had children with him there.¹⁴ Given Kristin's close ties with the Danish royal family, it is possible that she could have donated the paintings of both the royal saints, but chose to be depicted at the feet of St Olav who was her father's kin.

Why These Two Saints?

Some of the 29 saints depicted on the columns of the Nativity Church were venerated all over Christendom, while some were best known in the Latin West and some in the Greek East. By comparison, in the middle of the twelfth century the two Scandinavian royal saints enjoyed a rather limited cult. St Knud was canonized in 1101 and his cult never spread far outside the kingdom of Denmark. The cult of St Olav quickly spread inside Scandinavia and to the Norse colonies in the British Isles, and before 1100, Scandinavians in Novgorod and Constantinople had churches erected and dedicated to him.¹⁵ It was not until the late fourteenth century that his cult spread to the Low German region.

Still, it was a major leap to be included in the gallery of saints in one of the two holiest churches in the Holy Land. All the other saints painted on the columns belong either to the Bible or to the first centuries of Christianity, the latest of them being St Leonard (d.559) and St Catald (d. 685). Moreover, other and better-known royal

¹² Cf. Chapter 8 (Lukas Raupp), 156–63, and Chapter 11 (Denys Pringle), 201–2.

¹³ *Orkneyinga Saga: The History of the Earls of Orkney*, trans. Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards, London: Penguin Classics, 1978, ch. 88. For Rognvald's crusade, see Chapter 6 (Pål Berg Svenungsen), 95–131.

¹⁴ Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, 3 vols, trans. Alison Finlay and Anthony Faulkes, London: Viking Society for Northern Research, University College London, 2016, vol. 3, *The Saga of Magnus Erlingsson*; NBL VIII:8.

¹⁵ *Passio Olavi. Lidingsoga og undergjerningane åt den heilage Olav*, trans. Eiliv Skard, Oslo: Det norske samlaget, 1930.

saints in Europe in the middle of the twelfth century would perhaps be closer at hand, e.g. St Edmund of England or St Wenceslas of Bohemia. It was, however, only in the 1160s, shortly after the images in the Nativity Church were painted, that a range of new royal saints became popular in Western Europe. St Edward the Confessor was canonized in 1161, and in 1164, Emperor Frederick Barbarossa gave the relics of the Holy Three Kings (the Magi) to Cologne Cathedral after having conquered them in Milan two years before. Not to be outdone, the archbishop of nearby Aachen had Charlemagne canonized and enshrined in 1165. King Erik of Sweden was killed in 1160 and immediately venerated as a saint, and in 1170 Duke Knud Lavard of Denmark was canonized, 39 years after he was murdered. Perhaps the images of St Olav and St Canute should be regarded as an early symptom of this new interest in holy kings.

In 1153, the Archbishopric of Nidaros was established, encompassing the Norse cultural sphere. The presence there of the shrine and relics of St Olav was clearly the reason why the distant Nidaros (Trondheim), the northernmost diocese in medieval Europe, was elevated to the rank of metropolitan see. This started a period of hectic activity in Nidaros, with the double aim of constructing both a large new cathedral and a new liturgy as a framework for the cult of St Olav. These initiatives boosted the popularity of the royal martyr, so the creation of a votive image of him in Bethlehem would fit well into this picture.

However, this presupposes that the secular and religious authorities in the Crusader kingdom found it acceptable to include not just one but two little-known royal saints from the opposite end of the Christian world into the gallery of saints in this important church. It is today impossible to say whether similar images were painted in other churches in the Crusader kingdom of Jerusalem, but that could possibly be the case. The most likely candidate would be the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which became the model for the octagonal *martyrion* built around the grave and shrine of St Olav one generation later.¹⁶ The cult of St Olav was clearly built on a Christological model, and it would be more appropriate to place an image of the martyr king in the Holy Sepulchre Church than in the Church of the Nativity.

It is possible that the connection between the Nativity Church and Nidaros Cathedral is another. As mentioned, the two royal saints are flanked by the images of two holy deacons, St Vincent and St Stephen, and next to St Vincent stands St John the Baptist. The same group of saints – Vincent, Stephen, and John the Baptist – were venerated in the south transept of Nidaros Cathedral, constructed in the 1150s. Here, a double (two-storey) chapel protrudes towards the east. The ground-level chapel is jointly dedicated to St John the Baptist, St Silvester and St Vincent, and according to a carved wall inscription, Archbishop Eystein inaugurated its altar on 26 November 1161. The upper chapel is jointly dedicated to St Olav and St Stephen *protomartyris*. In the local context, it was certainly understood that St Olav, being the

¹⁶ See Chapter 14 (Øystein Ekroll), 293.

Norwegian protomartyr, was a clear parallel to St Stephen. A second link uniting them was the date 3 August, feast day not only for the *translatio* of St Olav's body, but also for the *inventio* of St Stephen's relics in Jerusalem.¹⁷

Conclusion

Was it a coincidence that the two martyred kings St Olav and St Knud were flanked by the images of exactly these saints? If it was, it demonstrates that the liturgical development of Nidaros and Bethlehem was perfectly synchronized in the 1150s. If not coincidental but intentional, there may be a common commission behind the paintings of St Olav and St Knud along with Vincent, Stephen, and John the Baptist, five saints who stand in a continuous line along the pilgrim's way alongside the church's nave to reach the birthplace of Jesus. The two kings also look towards the north and face two soldier-saints across the aisle. In my view, it is hard to regard the images of the Scandinavian kings as isolated and "accidental" figures among the other saints, paid for by an individual pilgrim. On the contrary, their images should be understood as an integrated part of a comprehensive decorative scheme for the church's nave, most which was executed in the 1150s. This was a crucial decade for the development of the cult of St Olav, his elevated status as the main saint of the new archbishopric of Nidaros, and his new role as *rex perpetuus Norvegiae* – the eternal king of Norway. As such, it was a strategic masterstroke to have him and St Knud – at the time the only two Scandinavian royal saints – placed in a church that virtually every pilgrim to the Holy Land would visit, creating a direct link between the birthplace of Christ and the Nordic kingdoms. There could be no better way of demonstrating the full integration of Scandinavia into the Christian world.

¹⁷ I am most grateful to Mr Eirik Steenhoff for pointing this out to me.

Pål Berg Svenungsen

Chapter 6

The Saint and the Wry-Neck: Norse Crusaders and the Second Crusade

During the twelfth century, a Norse tradition developed for participating in the different campaigns instigated by the papacy, later known as the crusades.¹ This tradition centred on the participation in the crusade campaigns to the Middle East, but not exclusively, as it included crusading activities in or near the Iberian Peninsula and the Mediterranean. By the mid-1150s, the tradition was consolidated by the joint crusade of Earl Rognvald Kolsson of Orkney and the Norwegian magnate and later kingmaker, Erling Ormsson, which followed in the footsteps of the earlier crusade of King Sigurd the Crusader in the early 1100s. The participation in the crusades not only brought Norse crusaders in direct contact with the most holy places in Christendom, but also the transmission of a wide range – political, religious and cultural – of ideas. One of them was to bring back a piece of the holiness of Jerusalem, by various means, in order to create a Jerusalem in the North.

In 1152, a fleet of fifteen large ships from Norway, Orkney and Iceland sailed out from Orkney towards the Holy Land.² The fleet, commanded by the earl and later saint of Orkney, Rognvald Kali Kolsson (r.1136–1158), and the Norwegian “landed man” [*lendir*

1 For a general overview of the development of the crusades, see Jonathan Riley-Smith, *What Were the Crusades?*, fourth ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Norman Housley, *Fighting for the Cross: Crusading to the Holy Land* (New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 2008); Christopher Tyerman, *God's War: A New History of the Crusades* (Cambridge MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006). For the early Scandinavian involvement in the crusades, see Ane Bysted et al., eds., *Jerusalem in the North: Denmark and the Baltic Crusades, 1100–1522* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2012); Janus Møller Jensen, *Denmark and the Crusades, c.1400–1650* (Leiden: Brill, 2007). For Norway, see: Pål B. Svenungsen, “Norge og korstogene: En studie av forbindelsene mellom det norske riket og den europeiske korstogsbevegelsen, ca. 1050–1380” (PhD Thesis, University of Bergen, 2016). See also the comprehensive, but outdated study by Paul Riant, *Expéditions et pèlerinages des Scandinaves en Terre Sainte au temps des croisades*, 2 vols. (Paris: impr. de A. Lainé et J. Havard, 1865–1869) (also in Danish translation *Skandinavernes Korstog og Andagtsreiser til Palæstina (1000–1350)* (Copenhagen: Schubothes Boghandel, 1868)).

2 The main source to the expedition is the *Orkneyinga saga* (ch. 85–89) *Orkneyinga saga*, ed. S. Nordal, Copenhagen: Samfund til Udgivelse af gammel nordisk Litteratur, 1913–1916; *Orkneyinga Saga: The History of the Earls of Orkney*, trans. Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards, London: Penguin Classics, 1978. Several Icelandic sources date the journey to 1151, but Arne Odd Johnsen argued, based on the chronology of the *Orkneyinga saga*, that this date must refer to the fleet's departure from Norway, not

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maðir] and later kingmaker Erling Ormsson *skakki* (“Wry-neck”, d. 1179), was hence a representation of the widespread Norse community.³ The expedition followed a pattern of religious motivated journeys from Western Europe to the Levant during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, later referred to as the crusades. The two Jerusalems, earthly and heavenly, had a central place in the sacred topography of Christendom, and following the First Crusade in the late eleventh century, the notion of Jerusalem was to dominate the religious, political and cultural life in Europe for centuries.⁴ The crusades began when Pope Urban II (r. 1088–1099) called for a new kind of pilgrimage at a council in Clermont in 1095, namely an armed pilgrimage to liberate Jerusalem.⁵ The following campaign culminated four years later with the capture of Jerusalem and the establishment of a Latin kingdom.

Pope Urban II tapped into strong religious undercurrents in Europe, such as eschatological ideas and the pilgrimage tradition, with a strong focus on Jerusalem and notions of imitating Christ (*imitatio Christi*).⁶ By this, the crusades represented a fusion between different Christian traditions, especially the pilgrimage tradition with the twin notions of holy and just warfare, and in this way transforming warfare into a penitential act.⁷ The new ideas were strongly connected with the reform movement within the church, but its message transcended societal boundaries and became immensely popular. However, the first crusaders only got rudimentary guidance from the Pope and adapted the crusade according to their own fears, ambitions, and motivations.⁸ From early on, the crusades became associated with powerful images such

Orkney, where the fleet first wintered, see Arne Odd Johnsen, *Studier vedrørende kardinal Nicolaus Brekespears legasjon til Norden* (Oslo: Fabritius & Sønners Forlag, 1945), 387–414.

3 The terms “Norse community” and “Norse” are used here to denote the areas with strong historical and political ties, as well as cultural and linguistic connections, to the Norwegian kingdom in the Middle Ages. In medieval Norwegian law the Norse community is defined as consisting of two parts: the Norwegian king’s realm [*Noregs veldi*] and his tax lands [*skattland*]. Besides the Norwegian mainland, this included Iceland, Greenland, Orkney, the Faroe Islands, the Isle of Man, Shetland and the Hebrides. For an overview, see Jón Viðar Sigurdsson, “The Norse Community,” in *The Norwegian Domination and the Norse World c.1100–1400*, ed. Steinar Imsen (Trondheim: Tapir Academic Press, 2010), 59–73.

4 For the long tradition of pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre, see Colin Morris, *The Sepulchre of Christ and the Medieval West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

5 Cf. Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986).

6 William J. Purkis, *Crusading Spirituality in the Holy Land and Iberia, c.1095–c.1187* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008), 35–58. For the eschatological backdrop of the First Crusade, see Jay Rubenstein, *Armies of Heaven: The First Crusade and the Quest for the Apocalypse* (New York: Basic Books, 2011).

7 Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade*; Carl Erdmann, *The Origin of the Idea of Crusade*, trans. M.W. Baldwin and Walter Goffart (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977); Frederick H. Russell, *The Just War in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

8 Housley, *Fighting for the Cross*, 2–3.

as love, vengeance, or even feudal service to Christ.⁹ Starting as a series of campaigns authorised by the papacy and preached by the church, it took nearly a century before the crusades matured into a coherent and streamlined movement.¹⁰ Nevertheless, by the mid-twelfth century crusade-like expeditions were already exported to new arenas such as Iberia, the Baltic, and other places in Europe.

In early Norse crusading history, there are two major campaigns that set out from Norway in the first half of the twelfth century and share strong narrative parallels: the crusade of King Sigurd *jórsalafari* (literally “Jerusalem-traveller”) in 1108–1111 and that of Earl Rognvald in 1152–1155. These campaigns brought back relics and new ideas that underline the important place of Jerusalem in Norse lay religiosity in the twelfth century.¹¹ The aim of this chapter is hence twofold. First, it aims to study how the expedition of Rognvald and Erling fits within the wider context of twelfth-century crusading as well as in the narrow context of their region. Second, it aims to study how participation in the crusades brought Norse crusaders in contact with new ideas – especially connected to Jerusalem – and how their impressions were absorbed and given a Norse expression. I will start, however, with a short overview of the historiography of the crusades in Norway.

The Historiographical Tradition – or Lack Thereof

The crusades have been described as one of the major forces in European history.¹² The First Crusade began as a predominantly Frankish undertaking, with the majority of the preaching and recruitment carried out in French speaking areas.¹³ Nevertheless, contemporary chroniclers like the Norman Ordericus Vitalis (d. 1142), underlined the universal character of the enterprise and emphasised how Pope Urban’s speech resonated “throughout the world.”¹⁴ Scandinavians participated in the crusades from an early stage, and were perhaps even among the first armies

⁹ Riley-Smith, *What Were the Crusades?* 9, 11, 27, 43, 55, 81; Housley, *Fighting for the Cross*, 86–98.

¹⁰ Riley-Smith, *What Were the Crusades?*; Christopher Tyerman, *The Invention of the Crusades* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998).

¹¹ Cf. Chapter 8 (Lukas Raupp), 140–65.

¹² Riley-Smith, *What Were the Crusades?*, 1.

¹³ Pope Urban II descended from a minor noble family in the Champagne region of France. After the council of Clermont ended, he continued to tour the French domains attending local festivals and markets, preaching and recruiting to the crusade. For an itinerary of Urban’s recruitment tour, see Alfons Becker, *Papst Urban II. (1088–1099). Teil 2: Der Papst, die griechische Christenheit und der Kreuzzug*, Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1988.

¹⁴ “. . . per totum orbem,” Ordericus Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of Ordericus Vitalis*, 6 vols, ed. and trans. M. Chibnall, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969–1975.

that set out towards Jerusalem in 1096.¹⁵ In a reference to a group of Scottish crusaders participating in the First Crusade, the Benedictine abbot and historian Guibert of Nogent (d. 1124), also included a reference to another group of crusaders he regarded as unintelligible “barbarians.”¹⁶ These “barbarians” might very well have been Scandinavian crusaders.¹⁷

Despite many references to Scandinavian involvement in the crusades in a wide range of medieval sources – including in Scandinavian, European, and even Arabic sources – the crusades have received little attention in Scandinavian, and especially in Norwegian, historiography.¹⁸ During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the crusades did not fit well within the nation-building project which dominated the historiography of this period.¹⁹ There was a need to create a history for the young Norwegian state, recently independent from centuries of Danish and Swedish rule, which fostered a national paradigm, coloured by Protestant inclinations, within which historians sought to prove how Norway differed not only from neighbouring Sweden and Denmark, but also from Europe in general. In this Norwegian *Sonderweg*, European (i.e. Catholic) influence on the medieval Norwegian kingdom was downplayed. In the first half of the twentieth century, Marxist materialistic theory of history was very influential on Norwegian historiography. One would perhaps expect that the Marxist influence would make Norwegian historians more likely to frame the Norse crusade expeditions as military-economic endeavours. However,

15 In his chronicle of the First Crusade, Albert of Aachen included the tragic story of the Danish prince Svend. He was a son of the Danish King Svend Estridsen, who, accordingly, killed in an ambush in Anatolia along with his fiancé Florina, a daughter of the Duke of Burgundy, and 1500 of his men, see Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, ed. and trans. Susan B. Edgington, Oxford Medieval Texts, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007. See also Chapter 1 (Kristin B. Aavitsland), 29.

16 It was only when these barbarians made the sign of the cross with their fingers, that the Franks understood they had come to participate in the Crusade, see Guibert av Nogent, *The Deeds of the Franks Franks [Gesta Dei per Francos]*, trans. R. Levine, Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1997.

17 In an often quoted passage, the English chronicler William of Malmesbury (d. 1143), recalled how Urban’s call had left forests and fields empty across Europe, “the Welshman gave up hunting in his forests, the Scotsman forsook his familiar fleas, the Dane broke of his long drawn-out potatoes, the Norwegian left his diet of raw fish”, William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum: The History of the English Kings*, 2 vols, ed. and trans. R.M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

18 Until quite recently the only comprehensive academic study of Norwegian involvement and participation in the crusades, was the doctoral thesis the French count Paul Riant submitted at Sorbonne in 1865, see Riant, *Expéditions et pèlerinages des Scandinaves en Terre Sainte*. For an overview of Norwegian crusade historiography, see Svenungsen, “Norge og korstogene,” 16–20. For an overview of Danish crusade historiography, see Jensen, *Denmark and the Crusades*, 1–24.

19 For a general overview of Norwegian historiography, see Sverre Bagge, “The Middle Ages,” in *Making A Historical Culture: Historiography in Norway*, ed. W.H. Hubbard, et al. (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1995).

they did not.²⁰ An evaluation of Norwegian historiography, commissioned by The Research Council of Norway (RCN) in 2008, concluded that much of Norwegian historical research was still in the vein of methodological nationalism.²¹ The conclusion of this evaluation was hotly debated among Norwegian historians,²² but even if the evaluation might exaggerate tendencies within recent Norwegian historiography, it may serve as an indicator as to why such an international topic as the crusades still receives so little attention in Norway. For whatever reason, the fact remains that the crusades are only treated in passing or anecdotally – if mentioned at all – in most studies on Norwegian medieval history.²³

Another tendency concerning the Norse expeditions to the Holy Land in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries has been that Norwegian historians generally emphasize Constantinople, not Jerusalem, as the primary destination of expeditions to the Eastern Mediterranean.²⁴ This tendency, however, places the expeditions within the context of the longstanding tradition of Scandinavians seeking mercenary service in the Byzantine army rather than within a crusade context.²⁵ In crusade historiography in general, the earlier materialistic explanation has come under attack.²⁶ Instead, ideology and religion are now taken seriously as important motivational factors in their own right.²⁷ This revision does not entail, however, that historians

20 As Norman Housley points out, Marxist historians in general did not engage with the subject of the structural explanations of the crusades, see Norman Housley, *Contesting the Crusades* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006), 77–8.

21 Anette Elisabeth Warring et al., eds., *Evaluering av norsk historiefaglig forskning: bortenfor nasjonen i tid og rom: fortidens makt og fremtidens muligheter i norsk historieforskning* (Oslo: Norges forskningsråd, 2008).

22 Cf. Knut Kjeldstadli, “Å evaluere evaluatørene,” *Historisk Tidsskrift* 88 (2009).

23 The tendency becomes evident when one studies the indexes in recent overviews in medieval Norwegian history, research journals or conference programs for words like “crusades” or “crusading”, which are close to non-existing.

24 Geir Atle Ersland, “Eit statsbesøk til Konstantinopel via Jerusalem,” in *Fragment frå fortida*, ed. Geir Atle Ersland and Øystein H. Brekke (Bergen: Dreyers forlag, 2013), 24–37. See also Arved Nedkvitne, “Why Did Medieval Norsemen Go on Crusade?,” in *Medieval History Writing and Crusading Ideology*, ed. T.M.S. Lehtonen, et al. (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2005).

25 For the Varangian Guard, see Roland Scheel, *Skandinavien Und Byzanz: Bedingungen Und Konsequenzen Mittelalterlicher Kulturbeziehungen*, 2 vols., *Historische Semantik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck Ruprecht, 2015); Sigfús Blöndal, *The Varangians of Byzantium: An Aspect of Byzantine Military History*, ed. Benedikt S. Benedikz, trans. Benedikt S. Benedikz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

26 For recent tendencies in the international historiography on the crusades, see Christopher Tyerman, *The Debate on the Crusades, 1099–2010*, *Issues in Historiography* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011). See also Housley, *Contesting the Crusades*.

27 Marcus Bull’s study of lay piety pointed out the deep religious sentiments within the European aristocracy already before the crusades in the eleventh century, see Marcus Bull, *Knightly Piety and the Lay Response to the First Crusade: The Limousin and Gascony c.970–c.1130* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

see participation as solely driven by religious sentiments. Rather, it implies a recognition of the need to re-evaluate the evidence and present a more nuanced view of the role of the crusades in Norwegian medieval history.

This chapter will mainly focus on the ideological perspective of Norse twelfth-century Mediterranean expeditions. It argues that Rognvald's expedition must be situated within the context of the crusades, perhaps as a late Norse response to Pope Eugenius III's call for a general crusade (*passagium generale*) which is now known as the Second Crusade.²⁸ But before the expedition of Earl Rognvald and Erling can be discussed, it is important to look at the issue of terminology and how crusading should be understood, both within an international and a Norse context.

The Issue of Definition: Crusading in a Norse Context

The question of whether the joint expedition of Earl Rognvald and Erling Ormsson falls within the definition of a crusade is not easy to determine. There are two main challenges for this situation. First, there is the challenge of terminology. The novelty of the First Crusade is evident by the fact that contemporaries, including Pope Urban II, lacked a clear vocabulary to draw on. As several scholars have pointed out, there was no single word that can be translated as “crusade,” either in Latin or in the vernaculars, until quite late in the history of the crusades.²⁹ Urban II had

28 For a further discussion of the Second Crusade and Scandinavia, see Janus Møller Jensen, “The Second Crusade and the Significance of Crusading in Scandinavia and the North Atlantic Region,” in *The Second Crusade: Holy War on the Periphery of Latin Christendom*, ed. J.T. Roche and Janus Møller Jensen (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2015), 155–81.

29 Instead, the early vocabulary of the crusades borrowed from terms associated with pilgrimage [*peregrinatio*] or with certain aspects of crusading, such as indicating movement or travel [*iter*, *via*, *expeditio*, and later *passagium*], or corresponding verbs combined with a reference to Jerusalem, the holy sites or the cross [*negotium Terrae Sanctae* or *Christi*]. Often, they expressed a religious engagement or desire [*negotium*, *bellum*, *causa*, *opus*, *voluntas*, or *crux*], and referred to its sacred character or to God, Christ or Jerusalem. Not until the early thirteenth century did terms like *crozada* appear in Spain and south-western France, but its use remained rare, as did *croiserie* and *croisade*, while the English *crusade* was not common before the seventeenth century, see Giles Constable, “The Historiography of the Crusades,” in *The Crusades from the Perspectives of Byzantium and the Muslim World*, ed. A.E. Laiou and R.P. Mottahedeh (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2001), 11–12. In Old Norse, the term usually used to refer to a crusade was *jórsalaferð* (a travel to Jerusalem) and other words associated with travel [*ferð* or *útferð*], even if these could also refer to a pilgrimage. It was only in the thirteenth century that more specific terms associated with the act of taking the cross, such as *krossa sik* (to take the cross), appear in the sources. The modern Norwegian term for a crusade, *korstog*, did not appear in Danish and Norwegian until the second half of the eighteenth century as a direct translation of the German *Kreuzzug*, see Svenungsen,

called for an armed pilgrimage, but he did not exactly know what he had created. It would take nearly a century before scholars and theologians had fully mapped out the concept of the crusades, as an idea and in practice, judicially and spiritually.³⁰ Somewhat related to the challenge of terminology are the historiographical problems caused by the volatile character of the First Crusade.

The second challenge is the lack of consensus in modern crusade studies. Traditionally, only campaigns to conquer or defend Jerusalem during the Middle Ages were regarded as “real” crusades. Nevertheless, historians always knew crusades were directed to other places as well, but these campaigns were seen as mere “perversions” of the original idea. This traditionalist paradigm, however, came under attack in the 1970s, and a revision led to a fragmentation of the field into different historiographical “schools,” each emphasizing different aspects of the phenomenon. Currently, there is no consensus for one undisputed definition of what the crusades actually were.³¹ The leading definition in most modern studies, the so-called “pluralist” definition, requires certain key elements in the sources: the presence of papal authority, to which at least some of the participants swore an oath, the presence of certain insignias (cloth crosses), and the promise that the participants were granted certain legal and spiritual privileges by the church.³² If understood in its most rigid form, the pluralist definition would exclude labelling the expedition of Earl Rognvald and Erling Ormsson as a proper crusade.³³

However, some historians associated with this pluralist definition have pointed out that too strict of an application runs the danger of neglecting a wide range of phenomena that contemporaries clearly associated with the “essence of crusading.”³⁴ This is especially the case during the formative twelfth century, when crusading was largely a series of incoherent campaigns, before it matured into a more

“Norge og korstogene,” 11–14; Janus Møller Jensen, “Denmark and the Holy War: A Redefinition of a Traditional Pattern of Conflict, 1147–1169,” in *Scandinavia and Europe 800–1350: Contact, Conflict and Coexistence*, ed. Jonathan Adams and Katherine Holman (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2003).

30 Cf. Tyerman, *The Invention of the Crusades*.

31 For an overview of the different terms associated with crusading and the different historiographical “schools,” see Constable, “The Historiography of the Crusades,” 11–2; Housley, *Contesting the Crusades*, 2–23.

32 Riley-Smith, *What Were the Crusades?*.

33 While the terminology used in the pluralist definition is mostly lifted from Latin chronicles from the continent written by clergymen and using the vocabulary of the Church, the Norse sagas were mostly written by and for a secular audience, employing the vernacular vocabulary of a mainly warrior aristocracy.

34 Constable, “The Historiography of the Crusades,” 12–3. Another historian is Norman Housley, who has pointed out that it might be possible to combine elements of pluralism with that of another school of thought, generalism, which “softens pluralism’s edges,” see Housley, *Contesting the Crusades*, 20–1.

coherent and streamlined movement around 1200.³⁵ It may then be more reasonable to apply a broader understanding of the pluralist definition. Again, the paucity of the sources makes this difficult to determine, but in order to get closer to an answer, I will apply William Purkis's simple, yet very functional, distinction. Purkis argues that when an individual's travel is known to be primarily devotional, he or she was a pilgrim, and when primarily military, a crusader.³⁶ I will come back to how this distinction might help us to get a better understanding of the character of Rognvald and Erling's expedition, but before turning to the sources, it is relevant to present a short overview of the early period of the Norse involvement in the crusades.

Was There a Norse Crusade Tradition in the Twelfth Century?

Different conceptions of Jerusalem were featured throughout the history of the crusades, mainly as a set of biblical metaphors, in what could be conceived of as the medieval *Jerusalem code*.³⁷ Perhaps the most powerful concept was that of "the two Jerusalems," which combined the geographical centre of the Christian storyworld with eschatological expectations. The first was the earthly Jerusalem, the physical place where Christ had lived, died and, according to the faithful, resurrected. The other city was the eternal Jerusalem, a heavenly copy of the earthly city. With all its holy places and shrines, Jerusalem had long been a goal for pilgrims and pilgrimage from the Latin West from the fourth century and onwards.³⁸ While crusading was a devotional act on par with the pilgrimage, it was also a form of warfare directly connecting the crusader to the two Jerusalems – by fighting for the earthly city, the crusader gained entry into the heavenly Jerusalem.³⁹

Scandinavians had a long history of undertaking long voyages. The earliest history of Scandinavian travel to Jerusalem is not recorded, but might well predate the

³⁵ Tyerman, *The Invention of the Crusades*, 6.

³⁶ Purkis, *Crusading Spirituality*, 6.

³⁷ Cf. *Prelude*, 3–6, and the introduction in Chapter 1 (Kristin B. Aavitsland), 17–24. Norman Housley points out the difficulty to fully grasp the phenomenon, as "[s]ome of the 'Jerusalems' that this entailed – the allegorical (representing the Church), anagogical (prefiguring heaven) and tropological (symbolizing the individual's soul) – overlap and defy precise analysis," see Housley, *Contesting the Crusades*: 87.

³⁸ The first known pilgrimage from Western Europe to Jerusalem, was a pilgrimage from Bordeaux in 333, see John Wilkinson, Joyce Hill, and W. F. Ryan, eds., *Jerusalem Pilgrimage 1099–1185* (London: Hackluyt Society, second series 167, 1988). See also Morris, *The Sepulchre of Christ*.

³⁹ Housley, *Fighting for the Cross*, 26–7.

Christian conversion of Scandinavia.⁴⁰ Journeys from Scandinavia to the Levant were probably undertaken for a wide range of reasons. The motivation could be religion, trade, military service, or simply exploration out of curiosity – as is reflected in the later saga accounts of Norse long distance travellers.⁴¹ Christian Krötzel argues that there was a period of transition in which these kinds of multi-purpose travels were transformed into Christian pilgrimages.⁴² While Rome was the most important destination for Scandinavian elite pilgrims in the eleventh century, due to political circumstances,⁴³ other destinations, such as Santiago de Compostella and Jerusalem, became more popular in the following century. By the mid-twelfth century there even was a literary genre of “travel guides” for pilgrims in the Old Norse vernacular, the so-called *leiðarvísir*.⁴⁴ The development of an indigenous cult of local saints increased the number of pilgrimages within Scandinavia, such as to the shrine of St Olav in Nidaros. In the thirteenth century, the Mamlukes’ conquest of the Levant made pilgrimage to Jerusalem, at least for a time, more difficult.

So when did Scandinavian pilgrimage transform into armed pilgrimage, or crusade? In the first half of the thirteenth century there seems to be a memory in the Norse sagas of Norse crusading to Jerusalem even predating the First Crusade. According to the two Norse kings’ sagas, *Morkinskinna* (c.1220) and Snorri’s *Heimskringla* (c.1230), the famous Norwegian king and Varangian Harald *harðráða* (Hard-ruler, r.1047–1066) had undertaken an armed pilgrimage to liberate Jerusalem before he became king.⁴⁵

40 Short inscriptions on Swedish rune stones dating from the tenth and eleventh century, refer to journeys to Jerusalem, see Rune Edberg, “Spår efter en tidlig Jerusalemfärd,” *Fornvännen* 101 (2006): 343. For an overview of the Scandinavian pilgrimage tradition, see Christian Krötzel, *Pilger, Mirkalen und Alltog. Formen des Verhaltens im Skandinavischen Mittelalter (12.-15. Jahrhundert)* (Helsinki: Serie: Studia historica, 1994).

41 In many of the saga accounts of Norse far travellers there are references to pilgrim sites, see John D. Shafer, “Saga-Accounts of Norse Far-Travellers” (PhD Thesis, Durham University, 2010). See also Chapter 12 (Stefka G. Eriksen), 218–43.

42 Krötzel, *Pilger, Mirkalen und Alltog*, 102–3.

43 In 1027, Knud the Great travelled to Rome, where he combined a pilgrimage with partaking in the imperial coronation of Conrad II.

44 A few years prior to the earl’s expedition, the Icelandic monk and later abbot of Þverá, Nikulás Bergsson (d. 1160), made a journey to Jerusalem and wrote about his travel. See Chapter 11 (Denys Pringle), 203–7 and Chapter 13 (Stefka G. Eriksen), 218–83.

45 None of the sagas date the expedition. Allegedly, it must have occurred in the 1030s or 1040s, when Harald was in employment of the Greek emperor, see Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, 3 vols, trans. Alison Finlay and Anthony Faulkes, London: Viking Society for Northern Research, University College London, 2016, vol. 3, *Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar; Morkinskinna: The Earliest Icelandic Chronicle of the Norwegian Kings (1030–1157)*, trans. Theodore Andersson and Kari Ellen Gade, Ithaca–London: Cornell University Press, 2000.

Both sagas refer to Harald as a *pálmara*, the Norse word for pilgrim, but the motives presented for the journey are conflicting in the two sagas.⁴⁶

The saga authors clearly had limited knowledge about the reasons for Harald's expedition.⁴⁷ Sigfus Blöndal argues that Harald was most likely sent to Jerusalem as escort for a group of high-ranking Byzantine pilgrims.⁴⁸ This seems plausible. The literary rendering of Harald's armed pilgrimage may testify to an influence from French and German historians, who in the course of the twelfth century, had transformed Charlemagne into the archetype crusader.⁴⁹ The description of King Harald's "proto-crusade" seems cast in the same mould.⁵⁰ The depiction of Harald as a liberator of the Holy Land and the defender of pilgrims seems heavily influenced by contemporary crusade ideology and crusade institutions like the Knights Templars.⁵¹ This memory construct served different purposes. Not only did it place Norse crusading on par with the continental tradition, it also – more importantly – made Norwegian kings look better than their Danish rivals.⁵²

While some modern historians reject the idea that there even existed something like a crusade movement in the twelfth century,⁵³ something definitely developed that could be called a Norse crusade tradition, or at least pattern, centred on the participation in the crusades to Jerusalem. This participation, which also included other crusade venues such as Iberia, was concurrently transforming warfare at home. In the 1120s, elements of crusading ideology seem to have influenced King Sigurd's punitive expedition against apostates in Kalmar (Scania); while later, in

⁴⁶ *Morkinskinna* claims Harald went to Jerusalem to atone for some sin, *Morkinskinna*, ch. 13. The *Heimskringla* referred to the skaldic tradition, which claimed Harald was sent there by the Emperor, Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*: vol. 3, *Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar*, ch. 12.

⁴⁷ For the sagas, see Claus Krag, "Harald Hardrådes ungdomsår og kongesagaene: Forholdet mellom sagaprosa, skaldekvad og muntlig tradisjon," *Collegium Medievale. Interdisciplinary Journal of Medieval Research* 11 (1998): 9–31.

⁴⁸ Blöndal, *The Varangians of Byzantium*, 57–8.

⁴⁹ Matthew Gabriele, *An Empire of Memory: The Legend of Charlemagne, the Franks, and Jerusalem before the First Crusade* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 128. See also Chapter 5 (Bjørn Bandlien), 73–77 on the reception of the figure of Charlemagne.

⁵⁰ This might have been influenced by the place crusading had achieved in royal ideology by the thirteenth century. Many of the King's sagas were written in the 1220s and 1230s, which coincide with the attempts of King Haakon Haakonsson (r. 1217–1263) to get a papal coronation. Consequently, he made several vows to go on a crusade. The crusades played an important part in Haakon's diplomatic relations with the papacy, but also other foreign leaders, see: Svenungsen, "Norge og korstogene," 151–77.

⁵¹ The sagas's depictions of Harald might have been influenced by the situation after the Muslim conquest of Jerusalem in 1187, see Svenungsen, "Norge og korstogene," 44–8.

⁵² King Erik of Denmark had been the first Scandinavian monarch to set sail towards Jerusalem in the aftermath of the First Crusade and a recurrent topos in several Norse King's sagas is to contrast his journey with the later crusade of King Sigurd. This is especially evident in connection with the stay in Constantinople. Both kings were given a choice of gift by the Byzantine Emperor, between tubes of gold and games held in their honour at the Hippodrome. While the Danish king chose the gold, King Sigurd instead chose the games, which presented him as the more honourable, see *Morkinskinna*, ch. 62.

⁵³ Tyerman, *The Invention of the Crusades*.

the 1160s, elements of crusading ideology were incorporated in the defence of King Magnus Erlingsson's reign.⁵⁴ The beginning of Norse participation in the crusades dates back to the time of the First Crusade. King Sigurd *jórsalafari*'s crusade in 1108 was perhaps a late wave of the First Crusade, but he also became the first European monarch to visit Jerusalem after the conquest and the establishment of a Latin kingdom.⁵⁵ The crusade might have been the result of the extensive contact with the British Isles, where the First crusade was widely known.⁵⁶ The crusade could also have been a response to the earlier pilgrimage or crusade of the Danish King, Erik the Good, who was the first monarch to set out towards Jerusalem, but died *en route* at Cyprus in 1103.⁵⁷

King Sigurd, however, might not have been the first Norse crusader. Already in 1103, a group of Norsemen who had participated in a voyage to the Holy Land and Constantinople had returned to Norway. Two years earlier, Skopti Qgmundarson, a magnate in Western Norway from the powerful Arnunge family, set out for Jerusalem accompanied by three of his four sons and a well-equipped fleet of five ships and many men. Neither Skopti nor any of his three sons, however, made it to Jerusalem, as they all died on the way.⁵⁸ According to Snorri Sturluson (d. 1241), who is the only source to Skopti's expedition, the journey was the result of a conflict between Skopti and the Norwegian King Magnus Barefoot (r. 1093–1103). Snorri's account of the conflict is not very convincing.⁵⁹ If the saga's reference to

54 The so-called "Kalmar-leidang" of 1123/24, a joint military expedition by King Sigurd and his Danish counterpart, King Niels, against apostate Christians in Småland. Whether the expedition was a crusade is difficult to determine from the few sources, but the later saga authors were at least influenced by contemporary crusading themes. However, one indication that at least some contemporaries saw it as a crusade is an undated letter from Peter the Venerable, the abbot of Cluny, to King Sigurd. In his letter, the abbot praise the king for his efforts to fight "the enemies of Cross of Christ" [*inimicos crucis Christi*] at home and in the East and South, see *Latinske dokument til norsk middelalder fram til 1204*, ed. E. Vandvik, Oslo: Samlaget, 1959, No. 4. See also Kurt Villads Jensen, *Crusading at the Edges of Europe: Denmark and Portugal c.1000–c.1250* (London: Routledge, 2016), 170–3.

55 For an overview of King Sigurd's crusade, see Svenungsen, "Norge og korstogene," 65–8.

56 Christopher Tyerman, *England and the Crusades, 1095–1588* (Chicago – London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 24–32.

57 King Erik's journey is mentioned in the Norse King's saga *Knytlinga Saga: The History of the Kings of Denmark*, trans. Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards, Odense: Odense University Press, 1986, and the Latin chronicle of Saxo Grammaticus, *Saxo Danmarks Historie*, 2 vols, trans. Peter Zeeberg, Copenhagen: Gads Forlag, 2000. See also Chapter 8 (Lukas Raupp), 147–64 and Chapter 11 (Pringle), 199–204.

58 Skopti himself died in Rome while his last remaining son, Thord, died in Sicily, see Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*: vol. 3, *Magnuss saga Berfoetts*, ch. 17–20. See also Svenungsen, "Norge og korstogene," 60.

59 In Snorri's account, the reason for the conflict between Skopti and King Magnus is a quarrel over *dánarauf*, which was either an inheritance a buried treasure. When the conflict escalated, each of Skopti's sons visit the king three times. Since the number three is a magic number in Scandinavian

“well-equipped” [*vel búin*] is understood in military terms, this might indicate that they represented the first wave of Norse crusaders.⁶⁰

In April 1147, Pope Eugenius III (r. 1145–1153) published his bull *Divina dispensatione* (II). This gave crusaders going to Iberia and the Baltic the same privileges as participants in the Jerusalem crusade.⁶¹ For centuries onwards, different Danish, Swedish, German and Polish agents rivalled for hegemony in the Baltic region.⁶² There is, however, little evidence that Norwegians were involved in the Baltic crusade and mission in the twelfth century.⁶³ There might be several reasons for this, but one crucial factor might be that a Norse crusade tradition focusing on Jerusalem had already developed.⁶⁴ This, however, does not mean that Norse crusading fits with the understanding of the so-called “traditionalists,” who views only campaigns fought to liberate or defend Jerusalem as real crusades.⁶⁵ That being said, Norse crusaders seem to have had a more pragmatic attitude, where they regularly participated in crusading activities in Iberia underway to Jerusalem.⁶⁶

folktales, it was perhaps introduced by Snorri in an effort to create a coherent story from fragmented sources.

60 Another contemporary voyage to Jerusalem, was the pilgrimage (or crusade?) of Lagman, the ruler of Man which is mentioned in the *Chronicle of the Kings of Man*. According to the chronicle, Lagman went to Jerusalem in the 1090s or early 1100s (the chronology of the chronicle is very uncertain), perhaps as penance for the mutilation of a younger brother, see Svenungsen, “Norge og korstogene,” 56–7.

61 For a general overview of the Second Crusade, see Jonathan Phillips, *The Second Crusade: Extending the frontiers of Christendom* (New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 2007). For the sources to the crusade, see Giles Constable, “The Second Crusade as seen by Contemporaries,” *Traditio* 9 (1952): 213–79.

62 For an overview of the Baltic Crusades, see Eric Christiansen, *The Northern Crusades* (London: Penguin Books, 1997). See also Iben Fonnesberg-Schmidt, *The Popes and the Baltic Crusades 1147–1254* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

63 The Papacy clearly sought Norwegian involvement in the Baltic crusades, perhaps to balance German or Danish dominance, but a papal letter, dating from 1171–1172, urging Norwegian participants to partake in a crusade against the pagan Estonians, does not seem to have resulted in any Norwegian response, see DN vol. 17, 854.

64 An obvious reason is the political turmoil in Norway during the majority of the twelfth century, but it might also be the result of lack of surviving sources.

65 Housley, *Contesting the Crusades*.

66 In fact, according to the narrative sources the actual fighting, the “crusading bit” of these expeditions, were done in or near Iberia, see Svenungsen, “Norge og korstogene,” 64–149. For the raids on the Balearic Islands, see Gary B. Doxey, “Norwegian Crusaders and the Balearic Islands,” *Scandinavian Studies* 68 (1996): 139–60.

The Source Material

There is a pronounced difference in the source material relating to the earlier crusade of King Sigurd compared to that of Earl Rognvald and Erling Ormsson, as the former crusade is recorded in a wide range of Scandinavian and non-Scandinavian sources, including eyewitness accounts.⁶⁷ In contrast, the latter is only recorded in a handful of Scandinavian sources, including several shorter summaries in the Norse King's sagas and Icelandic annals.⁶⁸ The main narrative source for Rognvald and Erling's expedition is the *Orkneyinga saga*, written by an unknown Icelander around 1200.⁶⁹ None of these sources are contemporary, some are written even centuries later. The *Orkneyinga saga*, however, contains several skaldic poems attributed to named participants, including Earl Rognvald. These poems are usually regarded as eyewitness accounts.⁷⁰ A more problematic issue related to the surviving sources, is whether there is any evidence for contact between Norway and the papacy in connection with the crusade in 1152.

The crusade bulls of Eugenius III circulated widely in Europe,⁷¹ but there is no record of any papal bulls or crusade preaching in the Norwegian domains.⁷² This does not mean that the crusade was not known here, as it was definitely known in neighbouring Denmark.⁷³ There are some references to the crusade bulls of Eugenius

67 The eyewitness account was that of Fulcher of Chartres, who had participated in the First Crusade and later settled in the Latin kingdom, where he between 1101 and c.1128 wrote a chronicle about the First Crusade. For references to Fulcher and an overview of the sources to King Sigurd's crusade, see Halvdan Koht, "Kong Sigurd på Jorsal-ferd," *Historisk Tidsskrift* 5 (1924): 153–68, with a few more references in Svenungsen, "Norge og korstogene," 58–60, 65–8.

68 *Morkinskinna* ch. 95; Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*: vol. 3, *Haraldsson saga* ch. 17; *Islandske Annaler indtil 1578*, ed. Gustav Storm, Christiania: Grøndahl & Søns Bogtrykkeri, 1888.

69 Regarding the ideology of the *Orkneyinga saga*, see Peter Foote, "Observations on Orkneyinga Saga," in *St. Magnus Cathedral and Orkney's Twelfth Century Renaissance*, ed. B.E. Crawford (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988), 192–207.

70 Generally, scholars agree that skaldic poems did not change considerably from time of composition to when they were written down, sometimes centuries later. The reason for this, is the strict metric rules of Norse poetry. Too many changes would ultimately lead to a collapse of meaning, see Bergsveinn Birgisson, "Inn i skaldens sinn. Kognitive, estetiske og historiske skatter i den norrøne skaldediktingen" (PhD thesis, University of Bergen, 2008). See also Chapter 4 (Bjørn Bandlien), 61–3.

71 Phillips, *The Second Crusade*, 37–79.

72 This is one of very few known letters from Eugenius III to Norwegian recipients, is his letter of confirmation to Munkeliv monastery in Bergen dated 7 January 1146, see DN vol. 12, 1. Very few papal letters or bulls sent to Norway during the Middle Ages are preserved, see Ludvik Holm-Olsen, *Med fjærpenn og pergament. Vår skriftkultur i middelalderen* (Oslo: Cappelen, 1990).

73 In 1146 a papal legate by the name of Hubaldus was in Denmark in connection with the Wendish crusade, while both *Divina dispensatione* (II) and the accompanying preaching letter of Bernard of Clairvaux were known. According to Janus Møller Jensen, Saxo's chronicle clearly echoes these two sources, Jensen, "Denmark and the Holy War," 224; Jensen, "The Second Crusade and the Significance of Crusading," 177.

III in Denmark, where the *Knytlinga saga* mentions that “[a]bout this time Jerusalem was captured by the infidel and messages came from Pope Eugenius that men should take up the cross for a journey to Jerusalem to battle against the infidel.”⁷⁴ Even if the saga author mistook Edessa for Jerusalem, the reference is not without merit. According to Janus Møller Jensen, the saga implies “that the crusade to Outremer was preached in Denmark before the crusade was turned against the Wends.”⁷⁵ Considering the strong political and cultural contact between Norway and Denmark, it is hard to believe that news of the crusade did not cross over the sea and reach the Norwegians.⁷⁶

The closest we get to at least a faint hint of ecclesiastical authority, is the presence and participation in the crusade of the bishop of Orkney. Bishop William, known as “the old” (Old Norse *hinn gamli*, Latin *senex*), was, according to the *Orkneyinga saga*, bishop of Orkney for more than 66 years. He was an educated man who had studied in Paris, and he had been instrumental in the canonization of St Magnus of Orkney in 1136.⁷⁷ He was one of the senior figures of the crusade, even commanding one of the ships in the fleet.⁷⁸ However, the bishop acted only as an interpreter and did not instigate the expedition as far as the sources are concerned.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, to conclude *ex silentio* that the lack of surviving records for any papal bull proves the crusade was not preached in Norway, is to overlook important contacts between Norway and leading ecclesiastical institutions on the continent.

In the twelfth century there was extensive contact between Norway and the continent. Norwegian students travelled abroad to the emerging universities in France and England, later to Italy and Northern Germany. But the contact also included the houses of the new monastic orders, such as the Cistercians and Premonstratensians, which were international hubs for the spread of new ideas and reform. The importance of this stronger contact with the European continent is evident by the fact that all three successive archbishops of Nidaros in the second half of twelfth century,

⁷⁴ *Knytlinga Saga*, 147.

⁷⁵ Jensen, *Crusading at the Edges of Europe*, 178.

⁷⁶ In the saga there is a reference to King Inge just prior to coming of the papal letter, see *Knytlinga Saga*, 142–3.

⁷⁷ The saga refers to William as *Parisklerkr* (“clerk of Paris”), *Orkneyinga Saga*, ch. 85. For Nordic students abroad in the twelfth century, see Sverre Bagge, “Nordic Students at Foreign Universities,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 9 (1984): 1–29.

⁷⁸ In the saga, there are at least three examples of his high status (besides his rank as a bishop). Firstly, he is mentioned right after Earl Rognvald in rank among those who commanded ships in the fleet. Secondly, the other leaders turn to him and ask for advice before the engagement with the Muslim ship. Thirdly, he is again mentioned second only to the earl at the arrival in Apulia on the return journey, see *Orkneyinga Saga*, chs 86, 87, 89.

⁷⁹ The bishop’s role might have been downplayed by the later saga author considering the saga’s main perspective is that of the Earls of Orkney, not the church.

Eystein (r. 1161–1188), Eirik (r. 1189–1205) and Thore (r. 1206–1214), had a connection to the learning centre St Victor in Paris.⁸⁰ An intellectual culture emerged in Norway in the same period, where scholars like Theodoricus Monachus tried to link the history of Norway to the history of salvation – a history centred on Jerusalem.⁸¹

The stronger contact with the continent was not only marked by people travelling out of Norway, but also by people travelling into the country. New monastic orders established themselves in Norway during the twelfth century, such as the Cistercians and Premonstratensians, and around 1200, even one of the military orders, the Hospitallers (after the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem), established a house in the eastern parts of the country.⁸² The Cistercians were first. In 1145, Bishop Sigurd of Bergen (r. 1139–1159) visited Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire and afterwards invited the order to his diocese, resulting in the first Cistercian monastic foundation in Norway the following year at Lyse, near Bergen.⁸³ A second monastery followed in 1147, this time at the isle Hovedøya in the Oslo fjord. Again, the founding was the result of a Norwegian initiative, and the monastery was filled with English monks.⁸⁴ This time there was a royal connection also: the donation of Hovedøya to the Cistercians was confirmed in a letter by King Inge *kryppill* (Hunchback, r. 1136–1161).⁸⁵ I will return later to this issue of royal connections with the crusade.

The coming of the Cistercians to Norway coincided with the preaching of the Second Crusade by the order's famous abbot, St Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153).⁸⁶ Bernard was a keen promoter of the crusade, and his support was crucial for the expansion of the crusade into the Baltic region. Moreover, he had strong ties to important crusade institutions in Jerusalem, like the Templars.⁸⁷

80 Bagge, "Nordic Students at Foreign Universities," 3–5.

81 Sverre Bagge, "Theodoricus Monachus: Clerical Historiography in Twelfth Century Norway," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 14 (1989): 117–123. For historiography and salvation history, see also the introduction to this volume, Chapter 1 (Kristin B. Aavitsland), 23.

82 For the Hospitallers at Varna (Værne), see Trond Svandal, *Johannitterordenen: en ridderorden i det norske middelaldersamfunnet* (Oslo: Middelalderforum, 2006).

83 For the Cistercians in Norway, see Arne Odd Johnsen, *De norske cistercienserklostre 1146–1264: Sett i europeisk sammenheng* (Oslo – Bergen – Tromsø: Universitetsforlaget, 1977).

84 The monks came from the Cistercian abbey at Kirkstead, in Lincolnshire, see DN, vol. 17 B (tillæg), 241.

85 The letter itself is lost, but the *Akershusregister* of 1622 attests the existence of the letter ("Kong Inga hans breff om hegnadt paa stadenom, giffuet thill Huodøe closter . . ."), *Akershusregisteret af 1622*, ed. G. Tank, Den norske historiske Kildeskriftkommission, Kristiania: Grøndahl & Søns boktryggeri, 1916.

86 For Bernard's preaching tour, see Phillips, *The Second Crusade*, 80–98.

87 Bernard had written a general rule for the Templars and praised them in his *De laude novae militiae* (c.1130), see Philips 2007, *The Second Crusade*: 57, 73.

During his preaching tour on the continent, Bernard wrote a letter to the English, which served as a blueprint for the preaching of the cross by the clergy.⁸⁸ Christopher Tyerman argues that the Cistercians played a prominent role in the preaching and organising of the crusade in England.⁸⁹ Considering that the first Cistercians in Norway were English monks, it is likely that they were well informed about the planned crusade.

A Journey to Jerusalem

In the *Orkneyinga saga*, the origin of Rongvald and Erling's expedition can be traced back to events at the royal court. In 1149, Earl Rognvald was invited by King Inge to his court in Bergen. This was an attempt by the king's advisors to bring the earl closer to Inge's faction during the increased tensions between the three brothers and co-rulers, Inge, Sigurd (r.1136–1155), and Eystein (r.1142–1157).⁹⁰ At the same time, a man named Eindridi *ungi* (the Young) came to Bergen. He returned to Norway after many years of mercenary service in Constantinople.⁹¹ The saga mentions that Eindridi brought "much news" [*morg tidendi*] from the East, without specifying the content of that news any further.

We can only speculate what Eindridi actually told his listeners. It might have been news related to the failed crusade of the two kings Conrad III of Germany (r.1138–1152), and Louis VII of France (r.1137–1180).⁹² If he did not mention this defeat (which would seem unstrategic for recruitment), he might have told about the successful capture of Lisbon by crusaders from England and the Low Countries in 1147.⁹³ Considering later events, it seems highly possible that Eindridi had ulterior motives for coming back home; but for whatever reason, the tantalizing and

88 Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, 154–55.

89 However, as Tyerman points out, the political turmoil in England in the 1140s, were "hardly conducive to unequivocal royal or baronial support" for any crusade in the period, see Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, 155.

90 *Orkneyinga Saga*, ch. 85.

91 For Eindridi's career in the Varangian Guard, see Blöndal, *The Varangians of Byzantium*, 50, 52–53, 55–57, 61, 86, 217.

92 Eindridi might have seen Conrad and Louis, who travelled by way of Constantinople, see Phillips, *The Second Crusade*, 185–206.

93 The story of the siege was later written by one of the participants, a man named Raol, see *De expugnatione Lyxobonensi: The Conquest of Lisbon*, ed. and trans. C.W. David, New York: Columbia University Press, 2001. Eindridi might have heard about the siege from English Varangians. After the Norman conquest of 1066, many Anglo-Saxons travelled to Constantinople and by the later stages of the company's existence, it was dominated primarily by English and Slavic mercenaries, see Blöndal, *The Varangians of Byzantium*.

powerful name of Jerusalem had been spoken.⁹⁴ The result of Eindridi's speech was that several of the leading men in the king's circle agreed upon a journey to Jerusalem. This, however, was not the first connection between the earls of Orkney and Jerusalem. In the 1120s, Earl Hákon Pálsson (r.1105–1123) had undertaken a pilgrimage to both Rome and Jerusalem, possibly as penance for the killing of his fellow earl and co-ruler, St Magnus.⁹⁵ Earl Rognvald, who was a nephew of St Magnus, was himself perhaps not all that unfamiliar with the idea of a crusade. As a young man, Rognvald had met another famous Norse crusader, namely King Sigurd *jórsalafari*, and it was also the latter who had made him earl and invested him with half of Orkney in 1129.⁹⁶

In contrast to the earlier crusade of King Sigurd, the sources mention the names of several of those who participated in Earl Rognvald's crusade.⁹⁷ This information gives us a better understanding of the social structures involved, which suggests that Norse crusades had perhaps more in common with their European counterparts than what earlier historians have espoused. Family and kinship played an important part in the organisation and financing of crusade expeditions, and some families were more inclined, at least in the early history of the crusades, to participate.⁹⁸ John France underlines the importance of social bonds, which he labels as "patronage," meaning that if a lord took the cross, members of his household were probably obliged to participate as well.⁹⁹ This was especially the case when the crusade had a royal initiative.¹⁰⁰ The superiors could, however, also experience social pressure. During their conversation, Eindridi said to Earl Rognvald: "It seems very odd to me, Earl [. . .], that you don't

94 He might have been sent by the Byzantine Emperor to recruit Norse mercenaries, like Reidar *sendimadr* (Messenger) was later in the 1190s, see *Sverris saga etter Cod. Am 327 4°*, ed. Gustav Indrebø, Kristiania: Den Norske historiske kildeskriftkommission, 1920; Blöndal, *The Varangians of Byzantium*, 155, claims the saga "hints fairly strongly" at this. For the career of Reidar *sendimadr*, see Pål B. Svenungsen, "Væring, bagler og pilegrim – Reidar Sendemanns liv og virke," *Historie 3* (2010): 22–30.

95 *Orkneyinga Saga* 1978, ch. 52.

96 Cf. *Orkneyinga Saga*, chs 61–2.

97 Most likely, several magnates participated in King Sigurd's crusade, but, except for the king, the only named participants are some of the Icelandic skalds in the king's retinue, even if not all of them had participated in person, and some based their accounts of the crusade on second-hand information. One of few known participants, was the Icelandic skald Aslak Hani (the Rooster), who during a later quarrel with King Sigurd, referred to the crusade, see *Morkinskinna*, ch. 77.

98 Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The First Crusades, 1095–1131* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 99, et passim.

99 John France, "Patronage and the Appeal of the First Crusade," in *The First Crusade: Origins and Impact*, ed. Jonathan Phillips (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 5–20.

100 The effect of royal patronage was evident at King Louis VII's elaborate cross-taking ceremony at Vézelay, which led many to follow his example, see Phillips, *The Second Crusade*, 103. As Tyerman argues, when the central objective of royal government was a crusade it "attracted large numbers from the political elite," see Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, 67.

want to go to the Holy Land yourself, but are content to listen to people's reports about it." He then continued to argue how expeditions to Jerusalem was associated with men of ability, such as the earl, and underlined that "it would bring you great respect if you were to mix with people from the noblest families." In the *Orkneyinga saga*, it is further mentioned that "many of the most respected men" expected Earl Rognvald to lead the crusade.¹⁰¹ A similar example of a group expecting their social superiors to lead a crusade is found in one of the accounts of King Sigurd's crusade.¹⁰²

Both bonds of kinship and patronage played an important part in connection with the crusade of 1152. Several of the leading participants were related through kinship; according to the *Orkneyinga saga*, Earl Rognvald and Erling Ormsson were kinsmen.¹⁰³ Similarly, another important landed man, Jon Peterson *fotr* (Foot), was Rognvald's brother-in-law.¹⁰⁴ Besides kinship, other forms of social bonds, reflected in the hierarchical nature of medieval Norse society, were important in the organisation of the crusade. In the sources, two distinct networks appear on different levels. First, on a national level, there is an outline of a royal network centred around the court of King Inge, consisting mostly of magnates from Western Norway.¹⁰⁵ Besides the earl, this included the already mentioned Erling Ormsson, who was from Etne in Hordaland, as well as Jon Petersson, who was from Sogn. Other important men were Aslak Erlendsson, from Hernar northwest of Bergen,¹⁰⁶ and Guttorm Mjølukoll, from Hålogaland in the northern part of Norway.¹⁰⁷

Second, at a regional level a local Orcadian network appears, centring on the earl's household and followers. In theory, crusading was a voluntary and devotional act, but people could be driven into taking the cross.¹⁰⁸ Fear of one's lord combined with the hope of salvation made crusading so attractive to a fair cross-section of medieval society. The foremost member of the Orcadian network was the already mentioned bishop of Orkney, William, while some of the other named

101 "margir gaufgir men", *Orkneyinga Saga* 1978, ch. 85.

102 According to Snorri, returning crusaders, who had participated in Skopti Gomundsson's expedition, urged that one of the three brothers and co-rulers, Sigurd, Eystein and Olav, should lead an expedition eastwards. Snorri, however, is the only source to refer to this and in other sagas presents it as a royal initiative rooted in the personal motives and piety of King Sigurd, see *Morkinskinna*, ch. 60; *Ågrip or Noregs kongesoger*, trans. Gustav Indrebø, Oslo: Det norske samlaget, 1973; *Fagrskinna: En norsk kongesaga*, trans. J. Schreiner, Oslo: Fabritius, 1926.

103 *Orkneyinga Saga*, ch. 61.

104 Jon and Rognvald had previously been in conflict, and as part of a peace agreement, Jon had married Rognvald's sister, see *Orkneyinga Saga*, ch. 61.

105 On the social background of the magnates, see Gustav Storm, "Om lendermandsklassens talrighed i det 12- og 13. Arhundrede," *Historisk Tidsskrift* 2, no. 4 (1884): 129–88.

106 Aslak is later mentioned as one of the men who participated in the killing of King Inge's brother and rival, King Sigurd *munnr* (Mouth).

107 Svenungsen, "Norge og korstogene," 93–4.

108 Riley-Smith, *The First Crusades*, 90.

members were Magnus Havarðsson, a member of one of the leading families in Orkney, and Svein Roaldsson, who was the Earl's cupbearer [*skutelsvein*].¹⁰⁹ The Orcadian network also consisted of the earl's skalds and other minor members of his household.¹¹⁰ This latter group might even have included some women in the earl's service.¹¹¹

Royal connections are not surprising to find, especially considering how dependent the early Norse crusade participation had hinged on royal support and participation. King Inge, who was described as a pious man and who was on good terms with the church,¹¹² might have compensated financially for being physical unfit to take part in the expedition, hoping to receive some kind of spiritual reward in return.¹¹³ Despite the saga's silence regarding the extent of the king's involvement, King Inge did at least support the earl's expedition with a pair of longships.¹¹⁴ This was most certainly a welcome gift, as the cost of crusading was huge – it is estimated that participation required four times a knight's annual income¹¹⁵ – and the participants had themselves agreed upon a two-year preparation period to build ships.¹¹⁶ Nothing is mentioned in the sources about the Norwegian clergy's involvement in the crusade, but leading ecclesiastics may very well have supported it. One

109 On his mother's side, Håvard descendent from Earl Paul Thorfinsson (d.1099), who was earl of Orkney until King Magnus Barefoot invaded the islands in 1098 and installed his son, Sigurd, as earl.

110 The four skalds in the earl's retinue was the Icelanders Torgeir Savakoll, Odde *inn litli* (Tiny), Torbjørn *svarti* (the Black), and Årmod. The saga also mentions several other important men from Orkney, among them Torkjell *krókauga* (the Crooked eyed), Grimkjell of Glettunes (Glaitness), Blán Torsteinnsson, and Sigmund Ongul, a skald and relative of the powerful Orkney chieftain, Svein Åsleivsson. The saga also mentions a man called Audun *rauði* (the Red), a warrior who might have been in the service of Erling.

111 One of the rune carvings at Maeshowe, has been interpreted as referring to the woman's name *Hlif*, who further was the "the earl's cook" or "housekeeper" [*matsetja jarls*], see Michael P. Barnes, ed. *The Runic Inscriptions of Maeshowe, Orkney*, Runrön (Uppsala: Institutionen för nordiska språk, Uppsala Universitet, 1994), 189 and Chapter 21 (Mikael Males), 456 and Fig. 21.1.

112 Although crippled after an incident in his early childhood, Inge was born in wedlock and the reformers increasing demand that kings should be of legitimate birth gave Inge an advantage over his brothers, see Knut Helle, *Norge blir en stat 1130–1319*, second ed. (Oslo: Fagbokforlaget, 1974), 47. The papal legate to Norway in 1152/1153, Cardinal Nicholas Breakspear (the later Pope Hadrian IV), clearly expressed his favour of Inge, referring him as "his son," see Johnsen 1945, *Studier vedrørende kardinal Nicolaus Brekespears legasjon til Norden*: 30–1.

113 In the early parts of the thirteenth century, new economic innovations introduced by Innocent III, meant that people who either sponsored someone to travel on a crusade in their place or supported the crusade economically, would be given parts or a full grant of the lucrative crusader indulgence.

114 Unfortunately, though, the gift would not benefit the crusade: While Earl Rognvald gave one ship to his kinsman and co-earl, Harald Maddasson, the other ship was shipwrecked on the return to Orkney, *Orkneyinga Saga*, ch. 85.

115 Riley-Smith, *The First Crusades*, 112.

116 *Orkneyinga Saga*, ch. 85.

possible candidate in this regard is Eystein Erlendsson (d. 1188), who was King Inge's court chaplain and later became the second Archbishop of Nidaros. As already mentioned, he was educated in Paris and had strong ties to the reform movement and leading ecclesiastical institutions on the continent. Later he was to be instrumental in the incorporation of elements of crusading ideology in canon and secular law, enacted in defence of the reign of Erling *skakki*'s son, King Magnus Erlingsson.¹¹⁷

An Outline of Events

Scandinavian pilgrims and crusaders travelling to Jerusalem could choose between several different routes. A popular route was the so-called *Rómavegr* (Roman way) which went by land through Germany, across the Alps, and into Italy. From Rome, pilgrims could then travel south to Bari where they could board a ship to the Holy Land. Another route was the *Austrvegr* (East way) which went eastwards by way of the many Russian rivers down to Constantinople.¹¹⁸ This route had been popular since the ninth and tenth century among Scandinavians seeking mercenary service in the Varangian Guard in Constantinople.¹¹⁹ Earl Rognvald chose a third route and followed in the footsteps of earlier Norse crusaders and took the southern route, the so-called *Sudrvegr* (South way). This was geographically the longest route and meant travelling around the Iberian Peninsula and into the Mediterranean, but it was the more efficient as it went by the sea.

The *Orkneyinga saga* mentions that the fleet first sailed south from Orkney to Scotland, then down the coast of Northumbria, before crossing over to France. According to the saga, the fleet then made its first stop at Narbonne [*Narbón*].¹²⁰ For obvious geographical reasons, the chronology of the saga must be wrong. Instead, the first stop was most likely in Galicia.¹²¹ The saga's description of the stay in Spain draws on parallels to the earlier crusade of King Sigurd, especially the

117 Archbishop Eystein was most likely the architect behind King Magnus's coronation oath and letter of privileges to the Norwegian Church, as well as the *Caonenes nidrosiensis*, see *Norske middelalderdokumenter*, ed. and trans. Sverre Bagge, *et al.*, Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1973. For a modern biography of Eystein, see Erik Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein – Statsmann og kirkebygger* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1996).

118 Cf. Krijna N. Ciggaar, *Western Travellers to Constantinople: The West and Byzantium, 962–1204*, The Medieval Mediterranean (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

119 Blöndal, *The Varangians of Byzantium*, 1–14.

120 *Orkneyinga Saga*, ch. 86.

121 *Orkneyinga Saga*, ch. 86.

Norse crusaders' conflict with local Christians.¹²² After this, the fleet sailed down along the coast of Spain while looting in al-Andalus, which was known as “pagan Spain,” and is a theme I will return to. After the fleet passed the Strait of Gibraltar [*Niorfasund*], Eindridi, along with six ships, parted company with the main fleet and sailed for Marseilles [*Marseilar*], from whence he travelled straight to Constantinople.¹²³ It was probably right before or after Eindridi's departure, that the fleet made the aforementioned stop at Narbonne. Here they were welcomed by Viscountess Ermengarde [*Ermingerþr*] (r. 1134–1192), and stayed as guests at her court.¹²⁴ Narbonne was a centre for the emerging courtly culture in Southern France and famous for its patronage of troubadours.¹²⁵ Ermengarde's family had strong ties to the crusade movement: her ancestors had participated in the crusades to both Jerusalem and Iberia, and Ermengarde herself had been present at the siege of Almeria in 1148.¹²⁶

The visit to Narbonne proved instrumental in the transmission of new cultural impulses from the Continent to the northern periphery of the Latin West. The influence is evident in several poems composed by both the earl and several of his named skalds written directly after their stay at the court of Ermengarde. In fact, the viscountess is the centre of attention in several of these poems, praised for her beauty and grace, as “[my] clever sweetheart,” “my golden-locked girl,” or “the elegant Ermingerd.”¹²⁷ This should not be understood merely as the poetic expressions of lovesick Norse crusaders (despite the arduous sea voyage), but rather as an attempt to demonstrate their mastery of this new, courtly fashion to an audience back home.¹²⁸

After the stay in Narbonne, the fleet sailed along the coast of North Africa [*Serkland*], before they made another stop near Sardinia [*Sardinarey*]. Not long after

122 In both accounts the contact between the Norse crusaders and the locals were initially peaceful, but when the Norsemen were denied access to local markets the conflict quickly escalated. Regarding King Sigurd, see *Morkinskinna*, ch. 61, while for Rognvald, see *Orkneyinga Saga*, ch. 86–7. A difference between the two stories, however, is that Rognvald was offered access to markets by the locals in exchange for driving off a group of castle-dwellers that had oppressed the countryside. Nevertheless, in both cases the saga authors seem uncomfortable with the fact that the crusaders attacked fellow Christians and hence use much space to justify the attacks.

123 *Orkneyinga Saga*, ch. 87.

124 Regarding Ermengarde's family and background, see Fredrick L. Cheyette, *Ermengarde of Narbonne and the World of the Troubadours* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

125 Cf. Jacqueline Callie, *Medieval Narbonne: A City at the Heart of the Troubadour World* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

126 One of her ancestors, Count Aimery I, had participated in the First Crusade, while her father, Count Aimery II, died while participating in the *Reconquista* in Iberia, see Cheyette, *Ermengarde of Narbonne*; Constable, “The Second Crusade,” 243.

127 *Orkneyinga Saga*, ch. 86.

128 Interestingly enough, later Norse translations of French romances in the thirteenth century are marked by a tendency that the translator (often a cleric), left out the more erotic elements in the original version.

this, the crusaders spotted and fought against a foreign ship, a so-called *dromund*.¹²⁹ The ensuing battle is the climax in the saga's narrative. It was a fierce battle, but eventually the Norse crusaders were victorious, killing everyone on-board, except one man: the captain, whom they held for ransom. After this climax, the saga's narrative drops off. The accounts of both the stay in the Holy Land and in Constantinople are very brief compared with the earlier parts of the journey.¹³⁰ This was perhaps related to the fact that when the Norse crusaders arrived in the Holy Land, the general crusade was long over. After visiting the holy sites, including bathing in the holy river of Jordan, the Norse crusaders started the journey back home. Their first stop homeward was a place called *Imbolum*,¹³¹ of which the saga relates about an episode of drunkenness that ended in tragedy.¹³² The fleet next reached Constantinople. Here they were reunited with their former co-crusader, Eindridi, but this relationship was rather strained.

Here, the saga author applies a common *topos* in the Norse literature, namely the motive of the good reception of the Northerners. Upon arrival, Earl Rognvald was greeted in person by "the chair-king", i.e. the Emperor Manuel Komnenos (r.1143–1180). The Emperor then presented Earl Rognvald with rich gifts, and tried to persuade him and the other Norsemen to stay and take service in the Byzantine army.¹³³ His tactics, however, did not work and after staying the winter, the Norse crusaders travelled onward from Constantinople to Durazzo, where they crossed over to Apulia, and abandoned the ships for horses.¹³⁴ After a brief visit to Rome, the crusaders followed the *Rómavegr* by land to Denmark and then continued on to Norway. According to the saga, the journey had taken three years.

129 *Orkneyinga Saga*, ch. 87–8. Regarding the dromund ship style, see John H. Pryor and Elisabeth M. Jeffreys, *The Age of the ΔΡΟΜΩΝ: The Byzantine Navy, ca 500–1204* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

130 *Orkneyinga Saga*, ch. 87–8.

131 This might be a Norse misunderstanding of the Greek word *embolon*, meaning "market".

132 Jon Petersson *fotr* disappeared and was later found murdered by the city wall, see *Orkneyinga Saga*, ch. 88.

133 *Orkneyinga Saga*, ch. 89.

134 Richard Unger argues that there are two reasons to why the Norse crusaders did not travel back home by sea. First, because ship worms [*teredo navalis*], found in the warm water of the Mediterranean, damaged the northern ships so they became useless. Other northern crusaders, like King Richard I, experienced the same. Second, Unger argues that the Norse long ship lacked the technological advance to cross the strong currents of the Mediterranean and sail westwards back through Gibraltar, see Richard W. Unger, "The Northern Crusaders: The Logistics of English and Other Northern Crusader Fleets," in *Logistics of Warfare in the Age of the Crusades. Proceedings of a Workshop held at the Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Sydney, 30 September to 4 October 2002*, ed. John H. Pryor (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 251–73.

An Economic Endeavour?

The saga's brief account of the stay in the Holy Land compared to other parts of the journey, combined with references to the taking of "booty" and "plunder," and the fact that Norse crusaders usually stopped in Constantinople on their journeys, has led many historians to reject the idea that the expedition was a crusade. Instead, some have gone as far as calling it "a carefree Viking jaunt."¹³⁵ This assumption, however, rests on thin evidence. The belief that material and spiritual motives are mutually exclusive is a modern distinction which does not necessarily apply to medieval culture.¹³⁶ Constantinople was attractive not only for its material wealth, but also for its spiritual authority. An often-neglected aspect is that before the sacking of 1204, Constantinople held one of the largest collections of relics and churches in all of Christendom. This included both relics and churches dedicated to St Olav, the patron saint of Norway.¹³⁷

Still, the argument that material motives played an important role is difficult to completely reject. Indeed, for some participants, like Eindridi *ungi*, it seems to have been a leading factor for their participation in the crusade.¹³⁸ Despite the church's desire to control the crusades from the start, the papacy could not prevent participants from adding their own motives and aspirations into the enterprise they were partaking in.¹³⁹ The Clermont decree emphasized the desired state of mind of the crusader: participation should only be undertaken "for devotion alone, not to obtain honour or money."¹⁴⁰ Despite the church's efforts, it was unavoidable that the crusades became associated with certain secular ideals. Like all theatres of war, it became an arena for warriors (even the very pious among them) to demonstrate their courage and prowess.¹⁴¹

135 F.T. Wainwright, "The Golden Age and After," in *The Northern Isles*, ed. F.T. Wainwright (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1962), 192, quoted here after Jensen, "The Second Crusade and the Significance of Crusading," 156, n. 4. See also Finnur Jónsson, "Røgnvald Jarls Jorsalfærd," *Historisk Tidsskrift* 8, no. 4 (1912–1913): 151–65.

136 For the many conflicting ideas in connection with the First Crusade, see Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*.

137 From the early twelfth century, the Varangians in Constantinople had their own church, dedicated to the Virgin Mary and St Olav. The city also housed relics from St Olav, for instance his sword, which was kept in the Varangian church – while his helmet was in Antioch and his chain mail in Jerusalem. See Chapter 14 (Øystein Ekroll), 281.

138 A comparison with the First Crusade is the somewhat questionable motives of Bohemond of Taranto, see Riley-Smith, *The First Crusades*, 17–18.

139 It took almost a century before the concepts of the crusades were fully developed, see Tyerman, *The Invention of the Crusades*.

140 Urban II, *The Councils of Urban II: Volume 1: Decreta Claromontensia*, In *Supplementum*, ed. R. Sommerville, *Annuaire Historiae Conciliorum*, Internationale Zeitschrift für Konziliengeschichtsforschung, Adolf M. Hakkert: Amsterdam, 1972.

141 Richard W. Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors: The Religious Ideology of Chivalry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); Cheyette, *Ermengarde of Narbonne*. During the twelfth and thirteenth

One of the main reasons why the crusades became such an instant success across Europe was that it struck a chord within the warrior aristocracy.¹⁴² The idea of the crusades was not only an innovative concept within the theology of the church, but it also fulfilled a spiritual need within lay circles. Historians like Jonathan Riley-Smith and Marcus Bull have emphasised the centrality of Jerusalem in the religious consciousness of the Latin West, especially within lay circles, regarding the origin of the First Crusade.¹⁴³ In a much quoted passage, the aforementioned Guibert of Nogent praised how, “God has established holy wars in our day, so that the order of knights and their followers [. . .] can find a new way of attaining salvation.”¹⁴⁴ The crusades represented a new alternative for pious laymen, whereby they could obtain salvation without entering a monastery or laying down the sword.¹⁴⁵ As one historian described the First Crusade, it was “a military monastery on the move.”¹⁴⁶

This, however, brings us to the issue of plunder. Plunder is mentioned several times in connection with both King Sigurd’s crusade and the later crusade of Earl Rognvald.¹⁴⁷ For example, the saga mentions for Earl Rognvald’s crusade that the Norse crusaders gained plenty of plunder after the battle with the *dromund*. This reference would immediately seem like a violation of the Clermont decree’s emphasis on “devotion alone,” however these riches were not brought back to Scandinavia. According to the saga, after the battle, the Norse crusaders sailed south, “to the land of the Saracens” [*Serklandi*],¹⁴⁸ where they made a truce with the townspeople and traded with them, “selling them silver and other valuables.”¹⁴⁹ The silver and valuables gained as booty would, as the saga suggests, be used to buy necessary supplies in order to sustain the fleet.

century it also became incorporated into ideals of kingship, see M. Cecilia Gaposchkin, *The Making of Saint Louis. Kingship, Sanctity, and Crusade in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca – London: Cornell University Press, 2008).

142 Bull, *Knightly Piety and the Lay Response*.

143 Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*; H.E.J. Cowdrey, “Pope Urban II and the Idea of Crusade,” *Studi medievali 3rd Ser.* 36 (1995); Bull, *Knightly Piety and the Lay Response*.

144 Nogent, *The Deeds of the Franks Franks*, 28.

145 Such a view is present in Ralph of Caen’s *Gesta Tancredi* (c.1112–1130), a biography of Tancred, who was one of the leaders of the First Crusade and later became prince of Galilee, and regent of Antioch. According to Ralph, Tancred had, prior to joining the crusade, thought about entering a monastery, but then saw the crusades as a suitable alternative, see Ralph of Caen, *Gesta Tancredi of Ralph of Caen: A History of the Normans on the First Crusade*, ed. and trans. B.S. Bachrach and D.S. Bachrach, Farnham: Ashgate, 2010.

146 Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, 84.

147 For a more detailed discussion, see Svenungsen, “Norge og korstogene,” 86–8.

148 The reference to *Serklandi* would indicate that that this place perhaps was a port in Northern Africa.

149 “. . . ok ættu vid þa kaup ok selldu þeim [siilfr ok annat fee],” *Orkneyinga Saga*, ch. 88.

Similar references to plunder and booty in connection with crusades are found in both Norse and Latin narratives, all the way back to the First Crusade.¹⁵⁰ This might seem like a contradiction, but it should be remembered that any attempt to make a clear distinction between material and spiritual motives regarding medieval people, especially crusaders, easily becomes an anachronistic exercise. The dichotomy between material and spiritual is a modern construct; God could grant crusaders victory in battle as a sign of their right intention and state of mind, as well as reward them with the material spoils of war.¹⁵¹ In fact, at times even leading ecclesiastics used this profit motive to promote crusades in different parts of Europe.¹⁵²

The many references to material gain have been used by some as an argument to denounce the crusades as mere profit-motivated enterprises, where religion acted as only a smoke screen for the greed and territorial ambitions of the western knights, especially the younger sons of the aristocracy left landless by the laws of *primogenitur* in Europe.¹⁵³ This profit myth, according to Jonathan Riley-Smith, always rested on insufficient evidence¹⁵⁴ and is rejected in most modern studies.¹⁵⁵ Instead, consensus has shifted to an understanding that the cost of crusading far exceeded the profits ever gained.¹⁵⁶ An issue often neglected in connection with references to plunder and booty during crusades is the challenges concerning provision. Few, if any, medieval armies were able to forage in advance. This made provision especially difficult when traveling through hostile territories. Plunder was at times the only way to sustain an army. This problematic issue, however, could at times lead crusaders into conflict with other Christians, as King Sigurd experienced with local Christians in Spain.¹⁵⁷ Returning to the example above, the saga mentions how Earl Rognvald and the Norse crusaders traded “silver and other valuables,” but it does not mention what they got in return – probably food and provisions.

150 Albert of Aachen referer to crusaders taking booty and plunder, even before they reached Constantinople, see Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, 18–19, 24–25, 32–33, 52–53, 64–65, 74–75, 76–77, 82–83, et passim.

151 This was a view shared by several chroniclers after the crusaders victory over the Egyptian counter-invasion force a month after the capture of Jerusalem, see Riley-Smith, *The First Crusades*, 20.

152 In 1148, the bishops of Toldeo and Leon not only offered the crusaders spiritual blessings, but also the prospect of Moorish gold if the former proved insufficient, see Constable, “The Second Crusade as seen by Contemporaries,” 231.

153 For such historiographical interpretations, see references in Housley, *Contesting the Crusades*.

154 Riley-Smith, *The First Crusades*, 19–22.

155 For myths connected to the crusades, see Alfred J. Andrea and Andrew Holt, eds., *Seven Myths of the Crusades* (Cambridge: Hackett Pub Co., 2015).

156 According to historian Peter Spufford, the crusades drained Europe of silver, see Peter Spufford, *Money and its Use in Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 74–106.

157 *Morkinskinna*, ch. 61.

Crusade or Pilgrimage?

So far, I have tried to nuance the materialistic interpretation of the motives behind Earl Rognvald and Erling's expedition, but what about the presence of religious and ideological motives? One of the strongest, yet surprisingly often overlooked indications of the expedition's inherent religious character, is its destination. With the exception of Eindridi and his companions,¹⁵⁸ the desired destination for the majority of the participants was Jerusalem, the pilgrim and crusade destination *par excellence* throughout the Middle Ages.¹⁵⁹ A direct reference to a specific holy site is found in one of the earl's stanzas. In the poem, Rognvald tells how the sweet words of Ermingarde would echo in his ears, "enjoining us to journey by water to Jordan."¹⁶⁰ The river Jordan, where Christ had been baptized, was one of the most popular sites to visit by Norse pilgrims and crusaders while in the Holy Land.¹⁶¹ If we accept the underlying religious motives, as expressed by the desired destination, this leads to further questions of the expedition's religious character. Is it possible to differentiate between the two most popular forms of devotional journeys to Jerusalem in the twelfth century, namely whether the expedition was a pilgrimage or a crusade?

In the *Orkneyinga saga*, there are several examples of what, in accordance with Purkis' distinction, can be labelled as an active military role, while the saga narrative also places the fighting within a clear religious context. Many of the participants aboard the Norse fleet were obviously heavily armed, as is clear from the military engagements, yet all of the saga accounts further define the enemies encountered according to their religious affiliation.¹⁶² In the *Orkneyinga saga's* narrative of the engagement with the big "Saracen ship" [*dromundinum voru Saraceni*], the so-called *dromund*, the enemy is first referred to as "Mohammed's heretics" [*Maumets villumenn*], and the saga author further remarks that "there were many *blámenn* and they offered the hardest resistance."¹⁶³ In one stanza, Earl Rognvald

158 Still, even Eindridi only referred to Jerusalem [*Iorsalaheim*] in the saga's account, see *Orkneyinga Saga*, ch. 85.

159 For the centrality of the Holy Sepulchre and Jerusalem in medieval Christianity, see Morris, *The Sepulchre of Christ*.

160 "Orþ skal Ermingarþar itr drengr muna lengi; bruþr vill rauck, at riþim ranheim til Iordanar", *Orkneyinga Saga*, ch. 86.

161 The saga narratives of the pilgrimage and crusade of Harald *harðráða* and Sigurd *jórsalafari* mentions visits to and baths in the Jordan. It is also included in abbot Nikulás' travel guide, see Wilkinson, Hill, and Ryan, *Jerusalem Pilgrimage*, 215–19. See also Chapter 11 (Denys Pringle), 208 and Chapter 12 (Mikael Males), 460.

162 All the sagas accounts underline how the fighting was done against "heathens," i.e. Muslims, see *Orkneyinga Saga*, ch. 86–8; *Morkinskinna*, ch. 95; Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, vol. 3, *Haraldssona saga* ch. 17.

163 "Þar var mart blámana, ok veittu þeir ina hørðustu móttöku," *Orkneyinga Saga*, ch. 88.

also refers to the enemy as *blamanna*.¹⁶⁴ The Norse term *blámaðr*, which directly translates as “blue man,” is a somewhat ambivalent term with shifting meaning according to context; it could refer to different kinds of people Scandinavians encountered beyond the Mediterranean, more specifically to Ethiopians, Moors, and other foreign peoples (ethnic), but it also refers generally to Muslims (religious).¹⁶⁵

There are no references to attempts at forced conversion of Muslim captives in the *Orkneyinga saga*. Instead, all enemies are killed without mercy with the exception of the ship’s captain, who is captured alive. He is no *blámaðr*, but described as a “nobleman from Serkland.”¹⁶⁶ Even though the crusaders fail to get a ransom for the man, he is not killed. In a scene which Robert Cole describes as “reminiscent of the chivalrous relationship of Saladin and Richard the Lionheart,” he is let free and expresses his gratitude to the crusaders.¹⁶⁷ Here the chivalrous elements are more evident than the religious ones. In contrast, the *Morkinskinna* mentions several incidents during the earlier crusade of King Sigurd, in which captive Muslims were given the choice between conversion and death. This happened, for example, after the Norse crusaders had taken a castle near the modern Portuguese town of Sintra [*Sintré*]. According to *Morkinskinna*, King Sigurd gave a speech resonating with Bernard of Clairvaux’s rhetoric regarding the Wendish crusade, in which fighting the heathens was encouraged until “they shall be either converted or deleted.”¹⁶⁸ In his address to captured Muslims, King Sigurd told captured Muslims “if you will accept the faith, I will spare your lives, although you deserve to die.”¹⁶⁹ They all refused to convert and hence were killed. In both these cases, the Norse travellers did not take a passive role, but actively engaged the “enemies of Christ” in warfare. If the expedition was seen as a pilgrimage by either the participants or other contemporaries, it was definitely an armed one.

Despite the religious nature of the fighting, the later saga authors had a problem. By the time the Norse crusaders arrived in the Holy Land, the general crusade was long since over. Internal tension in the Latin kingdom in the early 1150s halted any crusading activity towards external enemies.¹⁷⁰ This lack of a general crusade to participate in perhaps explains the strong emphasis in the sagas on the battles

164 *Orkneyinga Saga*, ch. 88.

165 Richard Cole, “Racial Thinking in Old Norse Literature: The Case of the *Blámaðr*,” *Saga-Book* 39 (2015): 21–40; John Lindow, “Supernatural Others and Ethnic Others: A Millenium of World View,” *Scandinavian Studies* 67, no. 1 (1995): 8–31.

166 “Qðlingr af Serklandi,” *Orkneyinga Saga* 1978: ch. 88.

167 Cole 2015, “Racial Thinking,” 27.

168 Here quoted after, Christiansen, *The Northern Crusades*, 53.

169 “. . . ef þer vilit við trv taca. þa mon ec gefa yðr lif. þott þat veri macligra at þer verit drepnir,” *Morkinskinna*, ch. 61.

170 A brief civil war was fought between mother and son, Queen Melisende and King Baldwin III, in 1152, as the latter wanted to be the sole ruler of the Latin kingdom, see Hans Eberhard Mayer, “Studies in the History of Queen Melisende of Jerusalem,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 26 (1972): 95–182.

fought against Muslims in or near Spain, which parallels the earlier crusade of King Sigurd.¹⁷¹ But fighting Muslims in Iberia was not just a “second best” option, in fact, by the mid-1100s it was merely crusading in another arena. As mentioned above, in the 1140s Pope Eugenius III officially raised the status of the military campaigns in Iberia and the Baltic to the same level as the crusades towards the Holy Land.¹⁷² At least some contemporaries, like the German chronicler Helmold of Bosau (d. c.1177), saw these three campaign destinations as forming part of a universal enterprise.¹⁷³ Indeed, a more coherent crusade movement was beginning to take shape. The Iberian crusades seem to have attracted many Northern European crusaders. In 1147, crusaders from England, the Rhineland, and the Low Countries had participated in the siege and conquest of Lisbon.¹⁷⁴ The contact between Iberia and Scandinavia was also getting stronger, ultimately culminating in several marriage alliances in the course of the thirteenth century.¹⁷⁵ In fact, by the mid-twelfth century, it had become almost a common feature for Northern European crusaders travelling to Jerusalem to participate in crusading-related activities in Iberia, which represented minor engagements in the larger process of the *Reconquista*.¹⁷⁶ Besides these military elements, there are other more identifiable signs that indicate how contemporaries, including the participants themselves, saw and understood these expeditions as crusades.

171 For King Sigurd’s raid on the Balearic Islands during his crusade, see Doxey 1996, “Norwegian Crusaders and the Balearic Islands:” 139–60.

172 Jonathan Phillips, “Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, the Low Countries and the Lisbon Letter of the Second Crusade,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 48 (1997): 485–497.

173 Helmold of Bosau, *Chronica Sclavorum*, ed. Johann Martin Lappenberg and G.H. Pertz, Hannover: Impensis bibliopolii Hahniani, 1868. See also Constable, “The Second Crusade as seen by Contemporaries,” 223.

174 English crusaders had previously participated in a failed siege of Lisbon in 1140, see *De expugnatione Lyxobonensi*.

175 This contact led to several interesting marriage arrangements between Iberian and Scandinavian royal houses, such as the marriage between King Valdemar Valdemar II and Berengaria of Portugal (1214) and Kristin, the daughter of the Norwegian King Haakon Haakonsson, and a brother of Alfonso X of Castile in 1258. For the connections between Denmark and Iberia, see Jensen, *Crusading at the Edges of Europe*. For Norway, see Svenungsen, “Norge og korstogene,” 79–80, 195–202 and Chapter 23 (Jørn Øyrehagen Sunde), 516.

176 Joseph F. O’Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 31–2, who distinguishes between the *Reconquista*, which was a continual process that despite shorter or longer periods of truces and armistices had an overriding goal of Christian re-conquest, and crusades, which refers to an event or a specific campaign resulting from a proclamation by the pope, a council, a legate or a bishop who granted remission of sins to the participants.

Crusader and Pilgrim Insignias

There are indications in the sources that Earl Rognvald had indeed taken the cross. According to the *Orkneyinga saga*, the earl announced his intentions to go on a crusade to his followers and to Bishop William during the Christmas celebrations.¹⁷⁷ Feasts like Christmas and Easter, and also the two feast days for the Invention of the Cross (3 May), and the Exaltation of the Cross (September 14), were very often associated with cross taking ceremonies, because these feasts were so closely associated with Jerusalem and the Holy Cross.¹⁷⁸ In France, King Louis VII had first announced his intentions to go on a crusade to his Christmas court at Bourges in 1145.¹⁷⁹ Likewise, in connection with the later Third Crusade, the news of the fall of Jerusalem reached the Christmas court of the Danish king Knud VI (r.1182–1202), and the tidings led several important Danish magnates to spontaneously take the cross.¹⁸⁰ But there are also references in *Orkneyinga saga* to crusader insignias. During the stay in the Holy Land, the Norse crusaders visited the holy places and, like other Scandinavian crusaders and pilgrims, this included a bath in the holy river of Jordan. After he rose from the water, the earl composed a poem. Here he mentioned “[a] cross on this bard’s breast, on his back a palm branch.”¹⁸¹ Both the cross and the palm were well-known pilgrim and crusader insignias, but the symbol of the cross, as by the second half of the twelfth century, was beginning to be more closely associated with crusaders, who were known as a *crucesignati* (cross bearers).¹⁸² Cross insignias are also found in Orcadian context outside the saga narrative.

At some time during the Middle Ages the Neolithic tomb of Maeshowe on the mainland in Orkney was broken into.¹⁸³ The intruders left their mark in the form of graffiti, including runic inscription and several crosses.¹⁸⁴ Michael Barnes dates the

177 *Orkneyinga Saga*, ch. 85.

178 Beverly M. Kenzle, “Preaching the Cross: Liturgy and Crusade Propaganda,” *Medieval Sermon Studies* 53 (2009): 11–32.

179 Phillips, *The Second Crusade*, 62–6.

180 *Historia de profectione Danorum in Hierosolymam*, ed. 2007 M.C. Geertz, *Scriptores minores historiae Danicae medii aevi*, II, Copenhagen: Selskabet for udgivelse af kilder til dansk historie, 1922, 457–92. This Danish crusade is the topic of the subsequent Chapter 7 (Ane L. Bysted), 132–9.

181 *Orkneyinga Saga*, ch. 87.

182 Michael Markowski, “Crucesignatus: Its Origin and Early Usage,” *Journal of Medieval History* 30, no. 1 (1984): 61–82; Giles Constable, “Jerusalem and the Sign of the Cross (with particular references to the cross of pilgrimage and crusading in the twelfth century),” in *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. R.I. Levine (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1999), 371–81.

183 Cf. Chapter 21 (Mikael Males), 456–61.

184 One of those who carved a cross identified himself, “Benedikt gerði kross Þenna” (despite that there is no cross directly near the inscription), see Barnes, *The Runic Inscriptions of Maeshowe*, 170.

inscriptions to between 1125 and 1175.¹⁸⁵ This means the runes are possibly connected to events recorded in the *Orkneyinga saga*, where it is stated that the crusaders spent the first winter in Orkney.¹⁸⁶ The geographical connection to Jerusalem is not only evident in the carvings of crosses, but also in several references in the inscriptions to “Jerusalem travellers” or “Jerusalem men.”¹⁸⁷ The carvings refer to named individuals, some of which may be leading participants in the crusade, but no certain identification is possible.¹⁸⁸ The carvings, if made by the crusaders, are the closest we get to a glimpse into the mind-set of the participants. Furthermore, we find a clear religious understanding of the journey in some of the skaldic poetry associated with the participants, and in one stanza, Earl Rognvald sets forth the idea of the journey as a divine trial and the outcome of the battle against the Muslim *dromund* is an expression of “the will of God.”¹⁸⁹ His choice of wording may echo the First Crusaders battle cry *Deus vult*, “God wills it!”¹⁹⁰

Bringing Jerusalem Back Home

The continued involvement in the crusades to Jerusalem in the twelfth century affected the conception of the city in both Europe and Scandinavia. During the eleventh century, the three symbols of the cross, Christ, and Jerusalem became closely associated with each other in a way Giles Constable argues brought “together the earthly and heavenly Jerusalems.”¹⁹¹ The crusader spirituality of the twelfth century did, in many ways, represent a further extension of this idea: the crusader was not only a “soldier of Christ” [*miles Christi*], he (or she) was also “signed with the cross” [*crucesignatus*], and desired to go to the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem to venerate. Many kinds of religious and cultural impulses were transmitted through participation in the crusades. As the visit to Narbonne demonstrated, direct contact with cultural centres on the continent led to the transmission of new impulses, such as the

185 Barnes, *The Runic Inscriptions of Maeshowe, Orkney*. See also *Runes: A Handbook* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2012).

186 *Orkneyinga Saga*, chs 85–6.

187 “Jorsalamenn brutu haug Penn,” Barnes 1994, *The Runic Inscriptions of Maeshowe*, 40.

188 Some scholars suggest that the names *Erlingr* and *Einðriðr* are mentioned in some of the inscriptions. If so, the association to Erling *skakki* and Eindridi *ungi* is close at hand. However, these interpretations are debated among scholars, see Barnes, *The Runic Inscriptions of Maeshowe*, 189.

189 “þvi hefir alldar gud valldit”, *Orkneyinga Saga*, ch. 88.

190 Bernard Hamilton, “‘God Wills It’: Signs of Divine Approval in the Crusade Movement,” in *Signs, Wonders, Miracles: Representations of Divine Power in the Life of the Church*, ed. K. Cooper and J. Gregory (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005), 88–98.

191 Constable, “Jerusalem and the Sign of the Cross,” 381.

emerging courtly culture, that was absorbed and given a Norse expression.¹⁹² This indicates a wish within the Norse elite to prove they shared the same taste and norms as their European counterparts, and the same was also apparent in their ideas of Jerusalem. While the holiness and centrality of Jerusalem attracted Norse pilgrims and other far-travellers for centuries, the participation in the crusades in the twelfth century resulted in – or coincided with – an emerging desire to bring back a piece of the city’s holiness.

The idea of a translation (*translatio*) of Jerusalem was common in medieval Europe.¹⁹³ Translations could take on different forms and occur by either importing relics associated with Jerusalem, especially material substances connected to the life and passion of Christ, or by imitating architectural structures found in the Holy Land, especially the Holy Sepulchre.¹⁹⁴ The translation of Jerusalem in Scandinavia was associated with both of these types. The transfer of relics is found in connection with the crusade of King Sigurd, who brought a relic of the Holy Cross to Norway, where it was later joined by another Jerusalem relic, the *fingrgullit*: a gold ring containing drops of the Holy Blood of Christ.¹⁹⁵

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, many round churches were built across Europe. Several of these were associated with returning crusaders or crusade institutions, like the Hospitallers and the Templars.¹⁹⁶ In this, as in most things, crusaders further developed previously established traditions, as returning pilgrims had already established similar round churches in the eleventh century.¹⁹⁷ This phenomenon also occurred in Eastern Scandinavia, where several round churches were built, for instance at Bornholm and around the Baltic Sea.¹⁹⁸ The Norse community was no different. In the twelfth century, at least three round churches were

192 Such as the introduction and appropriation of the new idea of *hoeverska* (courtly manners) into Norse elite culture, first encountered by Norse crusader during the visit to the court of Ermengarde in the southern parts of France.

193 Morris, *The Sepulchre of Christ*, 219–53; and Chapter 3 (Eivor Andersen Oftestad), 49–55.

194 Cf. Chapter 8 (Lukas Raupp), 140–65 Chapter 9 (Lena Liepe), 166–87, and Chapter 14 (Ekroll), 270–98. See also Kristin B. Aavitsland, “Defending Jerusalem: Visualizations of a Christian Identity in Medieval Scandinavia,” in *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem*, ed. Bianca Kühnel, et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 125–28.

195 For the year 1165, Icelandic annals mention that “Blód várs herra Jesv Christi kom til Nidarós”, *Íslandskæ Annaler*: 1888, 117. For the relic of the Holy Cross, see Chapter 8 (Lukas Raupp), 140–66.

196 Morris, *The Sepulchre of Christ*, 230–45. See also Øystein Ekroll, “The Octagonal Shrine Chapel of St Olav at Nidaros Cathedral: An Investigation of its Fabric, Architecture and International Context” (PhD Thesis, NTNU, 2015), 319–329.

197 Housley, *Fighting for the Cross*, 280.

198 These churches did most likely serve several different functions, see Jes Wienberg, “Fæstninger, magasiner og symboler – Østersøens flertydige kirker,” *META – Medeltidsarkäologisk tidskrift* 4 (2000): 26–58. See Chapter 16 (Kersti Markus), 324–39 for round churches in Vestgötaland, Sweden.



Fig. 6.1: Orkney, Orphir. Ruined round church, early twelfth century, probably commemorating Earl Hákon Pálsson's expedition to Jerusalem in the 1120s.

built in different parts of the Norwegian realm, such as Orkney (Fig. 6.2), Tønsberg and Nidaros, linked to either pilgrims, crusaders, or crusade institutions.¹⁹⁹

The largest circular church in the whole of Scandinavia was the Premonstratensian church of St Olav in Tønsberg, in south-eastern Norway.²⁰⁰ It was most likely built in the second half of the twelfth century (before 1207), but its commissioner is not known.²⁰¹ Several candidates, both Norwegian and Danish, have been suggested, including Erling *skakki* and his son King Magnus, who both had strong ties to Tønsberg.²⁰² Perhaps the building of this church was part of legitimization strategy for the new royal lineage, referring to Erling's crusade participation.

The Aftermath

Generally, crusades had a very high mortality rate, and Norse crusades were no exception. It seems that a substantial part of Norse crusade armies perished due to the many hardships underway, like battles, diseases, or the more infamous Norse crusader-death of “alcohol-related incidents.”²⁰³ Some of the participants might have chosen to stay behind in Constantinople, like Eindridi *ungi*, to enlist as mercenaries in the famous Varangian Guard. For those who survived the crusade, this was potentially a career-changing experience – for better or worse. The First Crusade was a success, and the returning crusaders became celebrities all over Europe. Later generations of crusaders, however, often received a lukewarm welcome at home. The failure of the Second Crusade resulted in the criticism of

199 The round church at Orphir is often associated with Earl Hákon Pálsson, who probably built it as a commemoration of his pilgrimage to Rome and Jerusalem in the 1120s, as penance for his involvement in the murder of St Magnus, see Aavitsland, “Defending Jerusalem,” 126.

200 The church is today preserved only as a ruin, see Øyvind Lunde, “Premonstratensernes kloster i Tønsberg – kirken og klosteranlegget,” in *Seminaret “kloster og by” 11.-13.november 1992. Omkring Olavsklosteret, premonstratensiserordenen og klostervesenet i middelalderen*, ed. J.E.G. Eriksson and K. Schei (Tønsberg: Tønsberg bibliotek og Riksantikvaren, Utgravningskontoret for Tønsberg, 1993), 23–37. See also fig. 7.1, 132.

201 The *ante* date of the church is 1207, since the Croizer-King, Erling *steinveggr* (Stone wall), was buried in the wall of the church at this date.

202 Erling and Magnus stayed in Tønsberg for longer periods during the 1160s and 1170s. For other possible candidates, see Lunde, “Premonstratensernes kloster i Tønsberg,” 23–37; Arne Odd Johnsen, *Tønsberg gjennom tidene* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1971), 60–1.

203 In connection with Rongvald's crusade, we find examples of crusades dying of diseases, as Torbjørn *svarti* at Acre, or more violently, as Jon *fotr* at *Imbolum*. The latter, however, is not the only alcohol-related death involving Norse crusaders. According to William of Malmesbury, many of King Sigurd's men died suddenly during the stay in Constantinople. William then goes on to tell a fantastic tale, of how the king, by dissecting a dead man and conduction an experiment with a pig's liver, concluded that the deaths were caused by the drinking of undiluted wine, see William of Malmesbury, *The History of the English Kings: II:V*, ch. 410.

everyone involved. The crusaders were blamed the most, as their sins were seen as the main cause for the campaign's failure, but not even Bernard of Clairvaux could escape criticism.²⁰⁴ In the aftermath of the Second Crusade, enthusiasm for crusading dropped to a new low and did not recover until the loss of Jerusalem in 1187.²⁰⁵

In contrast, Earl Rognvald and his men received a hero's welcome upon their return to Norway. One generation earlier, King Sigurd had been honoured with the epithet *jórsalafari*, the Norse equivalent of the Latin *jerosolimitani*, an honorary title bestowed upon the first generation of crusaders.²⁰⁶ This welcome, however, does not seem to have been the case for later Norse crusaders; nevertheless, according to the *Orkeneyinga saga*, the journey still became "famous" and "everyone who made it was considered all the greater."²⁰⁷ The *Orkeneyinga saga* only mentions a collective honour being bestowed upon the crusaders, but Snorri explicitly singles out Erling, who was "considered a much greater man" after the crusade.²⁰⁸ During the battle against the Muslim *dromund*, Erling received the blow to his neck that earned him the nickname of *skakki* ("Wry-neck").

At an actor level, the aftermath of the crusade in the mid-1150s proved very different for the two main leaders, respectively "the Saint" and "the Wry-neck." Upon his return to Orkney, Earl Rognvald found his domains in a state of political turmoil. For the remainder of his life he struggled to regain power over the earldom, before he was killed in a minor skirmish three years later.²⁰⁹ According to the *Orkeneyinga saga* miracles were soon reported at his grave in the yet unfinished St Magnus Cathedral at Kirkwall (Fig. 6.1), which Rognvald had started building in 1137.²¹⁰ According to Icelandic sources, Bishop Bjarni Kolbeinsson Skald (1188–1223), had Earl Rognvald canonized in 1192.²¹¹ Allegedly, the canonization was done with permission from Pope Celestine III (r.1191–1198), but no existing records can confirm this. Even if he did not live to benefit politically from his crusader status, it is more than likely that Rognvald's participation in the crusade, along with his kinship with St Magnus, the patron of Orkney,²¹² proved instrumental for his later canonization.²¹³

204 Phillips, *The Second Crusade*, 269–79.

205 Philips, *The Second Crusade*, 269–79.

206 Housley, *Fighting for the Cross*, 270–2.

207 "Ok varþ þessi ferþ in fregsta; ok þottu þeir allir myklu meira hattar men siþann", *Orkeneyinga Saga*, ch. 89.

208 "Þótti Erlingr nú miklu meiri maðr," Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*: vol. 3, *Haraldssona saga* ch. 17.

209 *Orkeneyinga Saga*, chs 103–4.

210 *Orkeneyinga Saga*, ch. 104.

211 *Orkeneyinga Saga*, ch. 104; *Islandske Annaler* 1888: 120, 80, 324.

212 The former earl, St Magnus Erlendsson (d. 1115), was Rognvald's maternal uncle.

213 As was the case with another former crusader, King Louis IX of France, see Gaposchkin, *The Making of Saint Louis*.



Fig. 6.2: Orkney, Kirkwall. St Magnus Cathedral, initiated 1137 by St Rognvald Kali Kolsson, earl of Orkney.

For other participants, the crusade had a more secular outcome, and no one benefitted more in this regard than Erling *skakki*. Not only did the crusader status prove vital in launching Erling's own political career,²¹⁴ but it also laid the foundation for his son Magnus's later kingship.²¹⁵ This was made possible by Erling's political manoeuvring, especially through the alliance with the Church. By granting the Church a wide range of privileges, the new dynasty got legitimacy in return. Because of this, King Magnus, Erling's son, received unction and coronation, the first such ceremony to be held in Norway. The ritual may very well have included some references to the crusades of his father Erling and maternal grandfather King Sigurd *jórsalafari*.²¹⁶ The Church also gave the dynasty

²¹⁴ Erling's rise to power was also connected to the death of his half-brother, Ogmund *dengje*, while he was on crusade. After his return, Erling became one of the leading figures around King Inge, see *Orkneyinga Saga*, ch. 89.

²¹⁵ The traditional practice in the period was that sons of a former king would claim the right to the throne. Magnus's claim, however, was through his mother Kristin, daughter of King Sigurd.

²¹⁶ According to a later source, *Bergen Rimkrønike* (ca.1560), Magnus' coronation date was the feast day of St Lawrence [*Lavranz messo*], August 10, see *Bergens Rimkrønike: Utg. efter håndskriftene: Med en undersøkelse av krønikens tilblivelse og kilder av Geirmund Vislie*, ed. Geirmund Vislie, Småskrifter fra det litteraturhistoriske Seminar, Oslo: Mallingske, 1925. This is the same day

ideological support, including crusading ideology in its defence against “rebels and criminals.”²¹⁷

On a more structural level, one aspect of the Norse campaign in the 1150s was that it established, or rather confirmed, the development of a Norse crusade tradition. Within the wider context of the crusades, the expedition of Earl Rognvald might, as mentioned, have been a late response to Pope Eugenius III’s call for a general crusade. However, in a narrower, regional context, the expedition did in many ways represent both a continuation of an established crusade practice, as well as a shift within that same tradition. On the one hand, the expedition confirmed the centrality of Jerusalem, while not excluding other crusade venues. On the other hand, the expedition marked a shift towards stronger aristocratic involvement in Norse crusade expeditions. The crusades would still enjoy strong royal support following centuries, but participation was now to be predominately an aristocratic undertaking.²¹⁸ Nevertheless, royal patronage played an important role in the recruitment and organisation of Norse crusade expeditions, with elements of crusading ideology incorporated into secular and canon law in the 1160s.

Another structural tendency was the intensified process of translation – through relics and architecture – which made Nidaros more closely associated with Jerusalem. The translation was not only carried out by stones and bones, it could also be expressed as a in a more “Norse kind of way.” In connection with the elevation of Nidaros to archiepiscopal see in 1152/53 – coincidentally during the pontificate of the instigator of the Second Crusade, Eugenius III – an assembly was held in Nidaros cathedral.²¹⁹ Present at the occasion, perhaps as part of the first *Olsok* (“Olaf’s Wake”) celebration there, were the three kings, Eystein, Sigurd and Inge, as well as the first archbishop of Nidaros, Jón Birgisson (d. 1157). It was also on this occasion that the Icelandic priest and skald, Einarr Skúlason, first performed his famous poem, *Geisli* [Ray of light], a celebratory poem of the Norwegian martyr-king St Olav (d. 1030).²²⁰ Einarr, who in other poems had praised King Sigurd *jórsalafari*’s crusade exploits, now presented a motive that was to become very common, the comparison between Christ and St Olav. The association between Olav and Christ was

mentioned in connection with Earl Rognvald and Erling’s visit to, and bath, in Jordan, *Orkneyinga Saga* 1978: ch. 88, where King Sigurd also had been.

217 Sverre Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom. State Formation in Norway, c. 900–1350* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2010), 59–61.

218 This was the case for the Danish-Norwegian crusade in the early 1190s and for the many smaller contingents that set sail from Norway in 1216 to join the crusade proclaimed at the Fourth Lateran Council, see Svenungsen, “Norge og korstogene,” 34–149.

219 Johnsen, *Studier vedrørende kardinal Nicolaus Brekespears legasjon*, 40–64.

220 Cf. Chapter 14 (Øystein Ekroll), 281. For the poem, see *Einarr Skúlason’s Geisli: A Critical Edition*, ed. M. Chase, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005.

further underlined by the very building in which the performance took place, along with the presence of the Cross relic.²²¹ Simultaneously as these events took place in Nidaros, Norse crusaders were on their way to Jerusalem. This all formed part of a process of translation, to create a Jerusalem in the North.

²²¹ The church in Nidaros was built during the reign (1066–1093) of King Olav III *kyrri* (the peaceful), and dedicated to the Holy Trinity (Christchurch). See Chapter 14 (Øystein Ekroll), 270–98.



Fig. 7.1: The ruin of St Olav's Church of the Premonstratensian monastery in Tønsberg, twelfth century.

Ane L. Bysted

Chapter 7

Historia de Profectione Danorum in Hierosolymam: A Journey to the Lost Jerusalem

The *Historia de profectione Danorum in Hierosolymam* is the tale of a group of Danes and Norwegians who travelled to the Holy Land in order to join the Third Crusade, but arrived too late to take part in the battles.¹ At a first glance, it thus tells the story of a failed crusade and a journey that had been in vain. This was not the message that the anonymous author tried to convey, however. As demonstrated by Karen Skovgaard-Petersen, he presented the journey as a crusade and the travellers as crusaders and martyrs by employing the literary tradition that had established itself since the chronicles of the First Crusade, and Skovgaard-Petersen has found many parallels in twelfth century crusading literature.² In this short chapter, I will point out that the *Profectio* also bears particular witness to the sentiments in Western Europe after Jerusalem had been lost to Saladin in October 1187, and to a changed attitude towards the holy city in crusader sources in the final decades of the twelfth century, expressing lament and sorrow over the lost city.

The Author and the Work

The identity of the author is not known. He calls himself *frater X canonicus*, which possibly means “canon, brother in Christ,” and he reveals that he has lived in Tønsberg, South-Eastern Norway, for some time.³ He shows a good knowledge of affairs in both Norway and Denmark, but renders place-names in Norwegian, and this makes it likely that he was a canon at the Premonstratensian monastery in Tønsberg

¹ *Historia de profectione Danorum in Hierosolymam*, ed. M.C. Geertz, *Scriptores minores historiae Danicæ medii ævi*, II, Copenhagen: Selskabet for udgivelse af kilder til dansk historie, 1922, 457–92. I regret that I have not been able to make use of a forthcoming new critical edition by Karen Skovgaard-Petersen.

² Karen Skovgaard-Petersen, *A Journey to the Promised Land: Crusading theology in the Historia de profectione Danorum in Hierosolymam (c.1200)* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2001).

³ *Historia de profectione*, 457, 473.

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and had a connection also to the mother house of this monastery in Børglum in Northern Jutland (Fig. 7.1).⁴

The work was probably written in the late 1190s,⁵ approximately a decade after the Christians' loss of Jerusalem in 1187. It is divided into 27 short chapters, headed by a dedicatory letter and a prologue. About two thirds of it deal with preparations and detours at the beginning of the journey, and only two chapters (24–25) with the time in the Holy Land. However, the prelude and preparations in the beginning are highly interesting because they tell us of how ideas about Jerusalem were disseminated through papal letters and preaching. Chapters 1 and 2 present the theological and historical background for the Third Crusade: because of the general sinfulness of the world, Jerusalem has fallen into pagan hands. Jerusalem is described as the origin of the Christian religion and the native soil [*natale solum*] of the only begotten Son of God, whose human presence and glorious miracles have made it more holy and famous than any other region.⁶ To the common disgrace of all, however, it is now being defiled by the inhabitation of the pagans who have driven out and murdered the Christians. The news of this catastrophe made Pope Gregory VIII (c.1105–1187) write a *lamentabile carmen* to all the regions of the world, exhorting the faithful to a new crusade. The papal letter is paraphrased in chapter 3, and we will return to this below. In chapter 4 we learn that the papal envoys reached the court of the Danish King Knud in Odense at Christmas time, and that they related the pope's message to all. Upon hearing it, all the listeners were completely paralyzed with grief until Esbern Snare (1127–1204), the brother of Archbishop Absalon, reminding them of the deeds of their forefathers, incited them to action in a great speech which is rendered in chapter 5. According to chapter 6, 15 leading magnates vowed to go on the expedition and they began organizing and recruiting. This involved preaching "the word" (of the cross; i.e. crusade preaching) in churches and public places, as well as building new ships.

Apparently, these preparations took a couple of years, and when the expedition finally set out, only five of the magnates remained true to their vows, but together they had vested four ships with an estimate of 150 men all in all.⁷ The *Profectio* does not state when they departed, but it can be surmised that it was in the summer of 1191. First, they set sails for Norway in order to meet up with the magnate Ulf of Lauvnes, who led about 200 Norwegians on the expedition. However, Ulf had some business to attend to before he could leave, and chapters 8 to 15 deal with various

4 Skovgaard-Petersen, *A Journey to the Promised Land*, 8.

5 Skovgaard-Petersen, *A Journey to the Promised Land*, 9.

6 It seems a little peculiar that the author would speak of Jerusalem as the *natale solum* (native soil or birthplace) of Christ. Possibly he was thinking of the crusader kingdom of Jerusalem, or he was using the name Jerusalem, *Hierosolyma*, to denote a wider region of holy places rather than the actual city in itself.

7 Skovgaard-Petersen, *A Journey to the Promised Land*, 7.

obstacles taking place in Konghelle, Tønsberg, and Bergen. The dramatic highpoint of the story is reached in chapters 19 to 22 when our crusaders sail into a storm in the North Sea and many of them drown or lose their possessions. The survivors then decided to travel by land to Venice, from where they sailed to Acre and finally reached the Holy Land. By this time a truce had been signed between the Muslims and Christians,⁸ but this at least allowed them to visit Jerusalem and other holy places before they decided to return home, some via Rome and some via Constantinople.

The Papal Letter

The course of events in chapters 1 to 6 corresponds very well to what is known from other sources on the propagation of crusades in the twelfth century: that crusades were proclaimed by a papal call in the form of an encyclical, that papal envoys were sent to negotiate with the kings and preach at royal assemblies, and that the message was spread further through preaching campaigns with the agreement of the local kings and magnates.⁹

The papal encyclicals or crusading bulls were read aloud and used in crusade preaching, and thus perceptions of Jerusalem were transmitted through Western Europe by means of these letters. The papal bull in the *Profectio* is not an exact rendering of any known crusading bull, and it has been a matter of discussion whether it is a paraphrase of the famous bull *Audita tremendi*, issued by Gregory VIII around 29 October 1187, or if it is in fact a fragment of an otherwise unknown bull. This discussion would take us too far here, but I have argued for its originality and authenticity elsewhere.¹⁰ What matters here, is that the author of the *Profectio* used theological themes that had been developed in papal crusade letters and were changed in the course of the twelfth century, especially after the loss of Jerusalem in 1187.

Pope Urban II, who proclaimed the First Crusade in November 1095, indicated in his letters that the purpose of the crusade was to liberate the churches in the East and the Christians living there from Muslim rule. Jerusalem itself is mentioned only briefly

8 The treaty of Jaffa on 2 September 1192.

9 Ane Bysted, *The Crusade Indulgence. Spiritual Rewards and the Theology of the Crusades, c.1095–1216* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 246–47; Penny Cole, *The Preaching of the Crusades to the Holy Land, 1095–1270* (Cambridge MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1991), 65–71.

10 Bysted, *The Crusade Indulgence*, 160, 223–31, 290. The discussion is further complicated by the fact that *Audita tremendi* was issued in several versions. The commonly used edition is in *Quellen zur Geschichte des Kreuzzuges Kaiser Friedrichs*, ed. Anton Chroust, MGH SRG, V, Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1928, 6–10, but in a recent article Thomas W. Smith has demonstrated that the ed. in Gregory VIII, *Epistolae et privilegia*, PL, 202, cols 1539–42 is based on more reliable textual witnesses. References here are to both editions. See Thomas W. Smith, “Audita Tremendi and the Call for the Third Crusade Reconsidered, 1187–1188.” (*Viator*, 49, 2018): 63–101.

in his letters, but one of them describes it as “the Holy city of Christ, embellished by his passion and resurrection.”¹¹ The same arguments are found in Eugenius III’s call for the Second Crusade from 1145–46, but during the papacy of Alexander III (1159–1181), there was a shift of emphasis from the defence of the Eastern churches in general to the defence of the holy places and the city of Jerusalem in particular. In response to reports about the advances of the Muslim forces upon the crusader states, Alexander emphasized that it was the duty of all Christians to defend the places that Christ had sanctified by his corporeal presence on earth and where he had suffered for man and secured his salvation. The Holy Land rightfully belonged to the Christians because this was the land where Christ had lived and died for man.¹²

The duty to defend and fight for the Holy Land where Christ had worked the salvation for man was further accentuated by Gregory VIII in *Audita tremendi*, in which he also expressed deep emotional distress over the news from the East:

When we heard of the severity of the awesome judgement that the hand of God visited on the land of Jerusalem, we and our brothers were disturbed by such a great horror, afflicted by such sorrows, that we scarcely knew what to do or what we should do, save that the psalmist laments and says, “Oh God, the gentiles have invaded your inheritance, they have sullied your holy temple, they have laid waste Jerusalem.”¹³

The Biblical quotation is from Psalm 78:1–3 and had been used already in Baldric of Bourgeuil’s chronicle of the First Crusade.¹⁴ Gregory VIII was the first pope to use it in a crusading bull. It seemed to fit the situation in 1187 very well, and the word “inheritance” [*hereditas*] also underlined the point that the Holy Land was Christ’s own land, and it was used repeatedly by Gregory’s successors.¹⁵ The quotation also occurs in chapter 2 of the *Profectio*, which forms a prelude to the papal letter in chapter 3. In

11 Urban’s letters: Heinrich Hagenmeyer, ed. *Epistulae et chartae ad historiam primi belli sacri spectantes. Die Kreuzzugsbriefen aus den Jahren 1088–1100* (Innsbruck – Hildesheim: 1901; reprint, 1973), 136–38; Rudolf Hiestand, ed. *Papsturkunden für Kirchen im Heiligen Lande. Vorarbeiten zum Oriens Pontificius vol. III*, Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen. Philologisch-Historische Klasse (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985), 88–89; Paul Kehr, *Papsturkunden in Spanien. I: Katalanien*, vol. II: Urkunden und Regesten (Berlin: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1926), 287–88; Louise Riley-Smith and Jonathan Riley-Smith, eds., *The Crusades: Idea and Reality 1095–1274* (London: Edward Arnold, 1981), 37–40. See also Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades. A History* (London: Continuum, 2005), 7–8.

12 Bysted, *The Crusade Indulgence*, 206–07; Eugenius III, *Epistolae et privilegia*, PL, 180, cols 1013–614, here cols 1064–66; Alexander III, *Epistolae et privilegia*, PL, 200, cols 69–1320, here cols 384–85, 1294–96.

13 Translation in Jessalynn Bird, Edward Peters, and James M. Powell, eds., *Crusade and Christendom: Annotated Documents in Translation from Innocent III to the Fall of Acre, 1187–1291* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 5–6. Latin text in Gregory VIII, *Epistolae et privilegia*, PL 202: 1539–42; cf. Chroust, *Quellen*: 6–10.

14 Baldric of Bourgeuil, *Historia Jerusalem*, RHC Occ., IV, Paris, 1879, 9–111, here p. 14.

15 See Bysted, *The Crusade Indulgence*, 207–8; Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), 21.

fact, both chapter 2 and 3 seem to be inspired by a papal bull and have several similarities with *Audita tremendi*.¹⁶ One of them is the assertion that God is punishing the common sinfulness of Christians by letting them lose the Holy Land. Another is the repeated references to sorrow and tears which are prominent in *Audita tremendi*, but perhaps given a more personal touch in the *Profectio*, which lets the pope declare that while he was writing, the stream of his tears has stained the page of the letter.¹⁷

With *Audita tremendi* the idea of the crusade as *imitatio Christi* was reintroduced and intensified in papal crusade calls.¹⁸ The urgent needs of the Holy Land meant that it was the duty of all Christians to work for the recovery of that land where Christ had died on the cross for man, and moreover to follow the example of Christ, “who taught by his own action that one ought to lay down one’s life for one’s brothers.”¹⁹ This is echoed in the papal letter of the *Profectio*:

let them mourn this misfortune of Christ, let them remember that they are indebted to him for their redemption, and let them not suffer this injury to Christ to stay any longer unavenged. In order to redeem us he surrendered himself unhesitatingly to death, death even on the cross, therefore let us in turn take him as an example and not waver from giving our lives for Christ; because anyone who makes his life dearer than Christ does not deserve Christ.²⁰

The Shipwreck

Our travellers did not get the chance to fight for Christ in battle, but the *Profectio* makes it very clear that the sufferings and deaths they met during the storm in the North Sea were just as worthy of spiritual merit. In the face of certain death,

they exhorted one another incessantly and fearlessly, affirming that, since they had undertaken through divine inspiration to be His ambassadors, they should feel little or no terror when they yielded their lives courageously for Christ on that same mission.²¹

It is also pointed out that they died on the same day and in the same hour as Christ, thus imitating his passion.

¹⁶ See Skovgaard-Petersen, *A Journey to the Promised Land*, 29–36.

¹⁷ *Historia de profectione*, 463.

¹⁸ Bysted, *The Crusade Indulgence*, 215–35.

¹⁹ Riley-Smith and Riley-Smith, *The Crusades*, 66; cf. Chroust 1928, *Quellen*: 9; Gregory VIII, *Epistolae et privilegia*: cols 1541–42.

²⁰ *Historia de profectione*, 464; translation lightly adapted from Skovgaard-Petersen, *A Journey to the Promised Land*, 32.

²¹ Skovgaard-Petersen, *A Journey to the Promised Land*, 57; *Historia de profectione*, 485.

By their sufferings they atoned for all their sins, and the author also calls them martyrs, though perhaps a little cautiously: “these men or, if I may say so, martyrs.”²² While references to martyrdom are frequent in chronicles and sermons, it was never promised to the crusaders in the official papal crusading bulls, and this may be the reason for the careful statement.²³ Apart from this, the author does not seem to have doubted that the dead travellers were martyrs. In the following chapters, the merits of the survivors are pointed out when they are described as re-enacting the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites, and as followers of the examples of the apostles and early Christians who shared their possessions in common.²⁴

The Visit to the Holy Places

When at long last the travellers reached the Holy Land, their first reaction according to the chronicle was to cry the tears of joy, because they were finally able to walk around the holy places that they had longed so eagerly to see.²⁵ However, when they came to the holy city itself, their joy was soon turned to sorrow and sobbing, because this was now occupied by “pagans and idolaters.”²⁶ It was especially hard for those of them who had visited the city before and seen it in its former glory and honour, the chronicle adds. Thanks to the truce, the travellers were allowed to visit both the Holy Sepulchre and the river Jordan, but seeing the holy places did not evoke feelings of devotion as they used to, but increased their pain, because the places were now guarded by pagans who treated their Christian prisoners cruelly.

Originally chapter 25 contained a poem lamenting the state of Jerusalem, but this has not been handed down in the preserved copies of the *Profectio*.²⁷ Even without this poem, this part of the story picks up on and elaborates the theme of sorrow over the lost city. The chronicle ends on a more positive note, however, as we hear how the travellers witnessed a miracle in Constantinople on their way home. This story

²² Skovgaard-Petersen, *A Journey to the Promised Land*, 57; *Historia de profectioe*, 485.

²³ See Bysted, *The Crusade Indulgence*, 244–245. Examples from the Third Crusade are Henry of Albano, *De peregrinante civitate Dei*, PL, 204. col. 358, and *Historia peregrinorum*, ed. Anton Chroust, MGH SRG, V, Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1928, 116–172, here p. 163. For further examples and references, see Skovgaard-Petersen, *A Journey to the Promised Land*, 57–60.

²⁴ Chapters 21–22, *Historia de profectioe*, 485–7. See also Skovgaard-Petersen, *A Journey to the Promised Land*, 60–3.

²⁵ Chapter 24, *Historia de profectioe*, 488.

²⁶ “paganis et idolatria,” Chapter 25, *Historia de profectioe*, 489.

²⁷ See the note in *Historia de profectioe*, 489.

serves to tell that the travellers did fulfil the spiritual goal of their journey, even though they did not get to fight for the liberation of Jerusalem.²⁸ Those who died on the journey were martyred in the shipwreck, and the survivors not only got to see the holy places in Jerusalem but were blessed by a glorious miracle, and thus, their journey had not been in vain.

28 As argued convincingly by Skovgaard-Petersen, *A Journey to the Promised Land*, 63, 74.



Fig. 8.1: The Dagmar Cross, front. National Museum of Denmark.

Lukas Raupp

Chapter 8

Importing Jerusalem: Relics of the True Cross as Political Legitimation in Early Twelfth-Century Denmark and Norway

“Among the many outstanding deeds which King Sigurðr performed, one thing in particular is remembered with words of praise: that he voyaged to Jerusalem with his fleet in the seventh year after that city had been freed from the tyranny of the Persians by the grace of God. [...] He performed many bold deeds, and was honoured by King Baldwin with numerous gifts, the foremost of which, and the one rightly to be placed before all the rest, was a piece of wood from the Lord’s cross.”¹

This is how Theodoricus the Monk in his *Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagiensium* (c.1177–1188) explicates the importance of the relic of the True Cross that King Sigurd “Jerusalem-traveller” [*jórsalafari*], co-ruler of Norway, acquired in Jerusalem a few generations earlier. King Sigurd and his contemporary King Erik the Good [Ejegod] of Denmark in fact appear to have been the very first Scandinavians to import relics of the True Cross to their home countries shortly after the First Crusade.² This chapter discusses the impact these relics had as material visualizations of Jerusalem in early twelfth-century Denmark and Norway, focusing on their legitimizing quality with regard to rulership.

The cult of relics was prominent during the Middle Ages, as many local and trans-regional saints and their relics were venerated as intermediaries between man and God. Relics of the True Cross received extraordinary veneration, as they were

¹ Theodoricus Monachus, *Historia de Antiquitate Regum Norwagiensium*, ed. Gustav Storm, Monumenta Historica Norvegiae. Latinske kildeskrifter til Norges historie i middelalderen, Kristiania: A.W. Brøgger, 1880 (trans. *An Account of the Ancient History of the Norwegian Kings*, in *Text Series 11*, trans. David McDougall and Ian McDougall, London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1998): “Inter multa, quæ Siwardus rex egregie gessit, illus præcipue laudibus celebratur, quos Hierosolymam cum classe profectus est septimo, posteaquam illa civitas a tyrannide Persarum Dei misericordia erepta est, anno. [. . .] Multis igitur strenue gestis plurimisque a rege Balduwino honoratus donariis, inter quæ præcipuum et merito ceteris anteponendum fuit portio ligni crucis dominicæ [. . .].”

² Cf. Lukas Raupp, “Das Wahre Kreuz in den nordischen Königreichen zu Beginn des 12. Jhs. – Zu Herrschaftsbegründung und Machtanspruch durch Reliquienbesitz” (Master Thesis, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, 2014), 28f. 47, 63, 68.

closely connected to the Passion of Christ.³ They also served various different purposes: not only were they used during liturgy or carried into battle, but they could also be employed as a means to legitimize rightful rulership by the grace of God.⁴ Among the other *arma Christi* (“weapons of Christ”) was the Crown of Thorns – a powerful object closely connected to Christ triumphant, the protection of the realm, the maintenance of order and justice, and hence to the ruler’s legitimacy.⁵ The Holy Lance was a supreme symbol of victory and legitimate rulership, and the Holy Blood, whose healing powers were evoked during veneration in the High and Later Middle Ages, made the passion relics what they were, because it had touched them when it was spilled during the crucifixion of Christ.⁶

Of all the associations briefly mentioned here, the legitimizing quality – especially that of the True Cross – was certainly not the least important one. Scholars who have discussed this issue have focused mainly on Byzantium as well as the Holy Roman Empire, and more recently on the Kingdom of Jerusalem. Though relics have been the focus of scholarly discourse on numerous occasions, the history of

3 Cf. for instance Anton Legner, *Reliquien in Kunst und Kult: Zwischen Antike und Aufklärung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft (WGB), 1995), 55, 343; Angenendt, Arnold. *Heilige und Reliquien. Die Geschichte ihres Kultes vom frühen Christentum bis zur Gegenwart*. Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1994, 149–166, 214–217; Arnold Angenendt, “Der Heilige. Auf Erden – im Himmel,” in *Politik und Heiligenverehrung im Hochmittelalter*, ed. Jürgen Petersohn, Vorträge und Forschungen (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1994), 33f., 41–44; Berent Schwineköper, “Christus-Reliquien – Verehrung und Politik. Studien über die Mentalität der Menschen des früheren Mittelalters, insbesondere über die religiöse Haltung und sakrale Stellung der früh- und hochmittelalterlichen deutschen Kaiser und Könige,” *Blätter für deutsche Landesgeschichte* 117 (1981): 189–91, 93f.; František Graus, “Mittelalterliche Heiligenverehrung als sozialgeschichtliches Phänomen,” in *Heiligenverehrung in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Peter Dinzelbacher and Dieter Bauer (Ostfildern: Schwabenverlag, 1990), 86f.

4 Since the various qualities and meanings attached to the relics as well as different periods of intensified worship cannot be presented here in detail cf. for instance Nikolas Jaspert, “The True Cross of Jerusalem in the Latin West. Mediterranean Connections and Institutional Agency,” in *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem*, ed. Bianca Kühnel, *et al.*, Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 208–13; Nikolas Jaspert, “Vergegenwärtigungen Jerusalems in Architektur und Reliquienkult,” in *Jerusalem im Hoch- und Spätmittelalter. Konflikte und Konfliktbewältigung, Vorstellungen und Vergegenwärtigungen*, ed. Nikolas Jaspert, *et al.*, Campus Historische Studien (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2001), 252; Schwineköper, “Christus-Reliquien,” 221–24, 47–81.

5 For Crown of Thorn relics in Scandinavia, see Chapter 9 (Lena Liepe), 166–87.

6 Cf. for example Caroline Walker Bynum, “The Blood of Christ in the Later Middle Ages,” *Church History* 71 (2002): 693; Peter Dinzelbacher, “Das Blut Christi in der Religiosität des Mittelalters,” in *900 Jahre Heilig-Blut-Verehrung in Weingarten 1094–1994. Festschrift*, ed. Robert Kruse and Hans Ulrich Rudolf (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1994), 417f.; Gia Toussaint, “Blut im Flakon. Orientalische Fläschchen zur Präsentation des Blutes Christi im Mittelalter,” in *Blut: die Kraft des ganz besonderen Saftes in Medizin, Literatur, Geschichte und Kultur*, ed. Christine Knust and Dominik Groß, Studien des Aachener Kompetenzzentrums für Wissenschaftsgeschichte (Kassel: University Press, 2010), 192, 203f.

relics in Scandinavia in general and passion relics in particular have attracted comparatively little attention so far.⁷

The True Cross: History, Legitimation of Rulership, and Material Visualization of Jerusalem

A brief historical overview of the history of the cross relic inevitably includes the legend of its rediscovery according to which Empress Helena (c.246–c.330), mother of Constantine the Great, discovered it together with the Holy Nails and the crosses of the two thieves who were crucified alongside Christ. One part of the relic was sent to Constantinople, where it remained until the city was sacked by crusaders in 1204. Another part was deposited at Jerusalem, until it was lost when the Persians conquered the city. It was recovered by Emperor Heraclius (610–641), returned to the city for a short period, and was finally sent to Byzantium for protection before Jerusalem was sacked again in 637 – only to be miraculously rediscovered during the First Crusade.⁸ In its aftermath, the True Cross served as a sign of victory and

7 Among the more recent examples are: Lena Liepe, “Kyrkans sanna skatter: Relikerna i Oslo Mariakyrka och kungliga relikdonationer i det senmedeltida Norden,” in *En aktivist for Middelalderbyen Oslo: Festskrift til Petter B. Molaug i anledning hans 70-årsdag 19. desember 2014*, ed. Lisa-Marie Bye Johansen (Oslo: Novus Forlag, 2015); Jón Viðar Sigurdsson, “Distribution of Reliquaries and Relics in the Bishopric of Hólar, c.1320,” in *Paint and Piety: Collected Essays on Medieval Painting and Polychrome Sculpture*, ed. Noëlle L.W. Streecon and Kaja Kollandsrud (London: Archetype Publications, 2014); Raupp, “Das Wahre Kreuz in den nordischen Königreichen” Pia Sentkowski et al., “Das Wahre Kreuz in Skandinavien – Herrschaftslegitimation und transmediterrane Diplomatie am Beispiel der Palästinafahrt Sigurðr Jórslafaris,” *Zentrum für Mittelmeerstudien Working Paper* 6 (2013); Reidar Astås, “Kristus-relikvier i norske middelalderkirker,” <http://www-bib.hive.no/tekster/Astaas-2011-Kristus-relikvier-i-norske-middelalderkirker.pdf> (2011); Haki Antonsson, “Saints and Relics in Early Christian Scandinavia,” *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 15 (2005); Margrete Syrstad Andås, “A Royal Chapel for a Royal Relic?,” in *The Nidaros Office of the Holy Blood: Liturgical Music in Medieval Norway*, ed. Gisela Attinger and Andreas Haug, Senter for middelalderstudier skrifter (Trondheim: Tapir, 2004).

8 The different versions of the rediscovery and the development of the legend or the question of whether Heraklios transferred the relic completely or partially cannot be discussed in detail here. Cf. Holger A. Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das “wahre Kreuz.” Die Geschichte einer Reliquie und ihrer künstlerischen Fassung in Byzanz und im Abendland*, Spätantike, frühes Christentum, Byzanz. Kunst im ersten Jahrtausend, Reihe B: Studien und Perspektiven (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2004), 21–7, 35–43; Holger A. Klein, “Eastern Objects and Western Desire Relics and Reliquaries between Byzantium and the West,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58 (2004): 300f.; Holger A. Klein, “Sacred Relics and Imperial Ceremonies at the Great Palace of Constantinople,” in *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft. Frühmittelalterliche Residenzen, Gestalt und Zeremoniell*, ed. Franz Alto Bauer (Istanbul: Ege Yayınları, 2006), 79–81, 88f.; Legner 1995, *Reliquien in Kunst und Kult*: 73–6; Kelly Holbert, “Relics and Reliquaries of the True Cross,” in *Art and Architecture of Late Medieval Pilgrimage in Northern Europe and England*, ed. Sarah Blick and Rita Tekippe, *Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 337–9, 48f., 57f.; Karin

became the central relic and focal point of the newly founded Kingdom of Jerusalem. According to Nikolas Jaspert, relics of the True Cross, as well as their containers (cruciform reliquaries called *staurothekai*), were “material visualizations of Jerusalem.” When transferred to other areas, they translocated a sacred place in the sense that Jerusalem itself was transferred and knowledge about the meaning of the relic was furthered in the regions in question.⁹ The Jerusalem relic of the True Cross remained in the kingdom of Jerusalem until it was lost at the battle of Hattin in 1187, which precipitated the Third Crusade.¹⁰ The cross as a sign of victory was also associated with legitimate power in Byzantium, referring to the Constantinian tradition and the victory in the sign of the cross at Milvian Bridge. Hence, the relic was carried into battle and paraded in processions as a symbol of legitimate rulership. Likewise, small pieces of the relic were given to foreign dignitaries, and oaths had to be sworn on it.¹¹

Krause, “Konstantins Kreuze. Legendenbildung und Artefakte im Mittelalter,” in *Hybride Kulturen im mittelalterlichen Europa. Vorträge und Workshops einer Frühlingsschule*, ed. Michael Borgolte and Bernd Schneidmüller, *Abhandlungen und Beiträge zur historischen Komparatistik* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2010), 172f., 80f.; Jürgen Krüger, “Die Grabeskirche zu Jerusalem,” in *Sehnsucht nach Jerusalem. Wege zum Heiligen Grab*, ed. Ursula Röper (Berlin: Lukas Verlag, 2009), 34; Schwineköper, “Christus-Reliquien,” 195; Gia Toussaint, “Die Kreuzzüge und die Erfindung des Wahren Kreuze,” in *Hybride Kulturen im mittelalterlichen Europa. Vorträge und Workshops einer Frühlingsschule*, ed. Michael Borgolte and Bernd Schneidmüller, *Abhandlungen und Beiträge zur historischen Komparatistik* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2009), 151; Gia Toussaint, *Kreuz und Knochen. Reliquien zur Zeit der Kreuzzüge* (Berlin: Reimer, 2011), 50f.; Jaspert, “Vergegenwärtigungen Jerusalems,” 251f.; Nikolas Jaspert “Das Heilige Grab, das Wahre Kreuz, Jerusalem und das Heilige Land. Wirkung, Wandel und Vermittler hochmittelalterlicher Attraktoren,” in *Konflikt und Bewältigung. Die Zerstörung der Grabeskirche zu Jerusalem im Jahr 1009*, ed. Thomas Pratsch, *Millenium-Studien zur Kultur und Geschichte des ersten Jahrtausend n. Chr.* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 69, 87.

9 Cf. Jaspert, “Das Heilige Grab, das Wahre Kreuz,” and Jaspert, “The True Cross of Jerusalem in the Latin West,” n.10.

10 Jaspert, “The True Cross of Jerusalem in the Latin West,” 213–5, 20f.; Jaspert, “Das Heilige Grab, das Wahre Kreuz” 69, 86–89; Jaspert 2001, “Vergegenwärtigungen Jerusalems,” 245–7, 53; Nikolas Jaspert, “‘Wo seine Füße standen (Ubi steterunt pedes eius)’. Jerusalemsehnsucht und andere Motivationen mittelalterlicher Kreuzfahrer,” in *Die Kreuzzüge. Kein Krieg ist heilig*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Kotzur (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2004), 183; Giuseppe Ligato, “The Political Meanings of the Relic of the Holy Cross among the Crusaders and in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. An Example of 1185,” in *Autour de la première croisade. Actes du colloque de la Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East*, ed. Michel Balard, *Publications de la Sorbonne, Série Byzantina Sorbonensia* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1996), 319; Alan V. Murray, “‘Mighty Against the Enemies of Christ’. The Relic of the True Cross in the Armies of the Kingdom of Jerusalem,” in *The Crusades and Their Source Essays Presented to Bernard Hamilton*, ed. John France and William Zajac (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 218, 22, 28, 31; Holbert, “Relics and Reliquaries,” 342; Toussaint, *Kreuz und Knochen*, 50f.

11 Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das ‘wahre Kreuz’*, 79, 90f., 171, 76; Klein, “Eastern Objects and Western Desire,” 284; Klein, “Sacred Relics and Imperial Ceremonies,” 80, 89, 94–6; Anatole Frolow, *La relique de la Vraie Croix. Recherches sur le développement d’un culte*, *Archives de l’Orient Chrétien* (Paris: Institut Français d’Études Byzantines, 1961), 286–352; Jaspert, “Vergegenwärtigungen Jerusalems,” 252f.,

Some of these functions were fulfilled by the Holy Lance in the Holy Roman Empire – nonetheless, the Lance apparently needed legitimation itself, as one or several of the Holy Nails were worked into its blade shortly thereafter. The Holy Lance gradually lost importance as soon as a rather impressive piece of the True Cross was available at the beginning of the eleventh century.¹² Similar observations can be made with regard to

55; Peter Schreiner, “Diplomatische Geschenke zwischen Byzanz und dem Westen ca. 800–1200. Eine Analyse der Texte mit Quellenanhang,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58 (2004): 268–82; Klaus Schreiner, “Signa Victricia. Heilige Zeichen in kriegerischen Konflikten des Mittelalter,” in *Zeichen – Rituale – Werte. Internationales Kolloquium des Sonderforschungsbereichs 496 an der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität zu Münster*, ed. Gerd Althoff, Symbolische Kommunikation und gesellschaftliche Wertesysteme (Münster: Rhema, 2004), 262–65, 84, 86; Alexander Pierre Bronisch, *Reconquista und Heiliger Krieg. Die Deutung des Krieges im christlichen Spanien von den Westgoten bis ins frühe 12. Jahrhundert*, Spanische Forschungen der Görresgesellschaft (Münster: Aschendorff, 1998), 291; Krause, “Konstantins Kreuze,” 171–7, 81; Schweineköper, “Christus-Reliquien,” 195–9, 202, 18, 29; Ligato, “The Political Meanings of the Relic of the Holy Cross,” 317; Toussaint, “Die Kreuzzüge und die Erfindung des Wahren Kreuzes,” 152; Alexandru Ștefan Anca, *Herrschaftliche Repräsentation und kaiserliches Selbstverständnis: Berührung der westlichen mit der byzantinischen Welt in der Zeit der ersten Kreuzzüge*, Symbolische Kommunikation und gesellschaftliche Wertesysteme (Münster: Rhema, 2010), 101; Apostolos Spanos and Nektarios Zarras, “Representations of Emperors as Saints in Byzantine Textual and Visual Source,” in *Hybride Kulturen im mittelalterlichen Europa. Vorträge und Workshops einer Frühlingsschule*, ed. Michael Borgolte and Bernd Schneidmüller, Abhandlungen und Beiträge zur historischen Komparatistik (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2009), 63–66, 77; cf. also note 48.

12 Schweineköper, “Christus-Reliquien,” 190–3, 208–15, 220f., 226–33., 242, 245, 270f.; 276–81; Luca Burkart, *Das Blut der Märtyrer. Genese, Bedeutung und Funktion mittelalterlicher Schätze*, Norm und Struktur (Cologne: Böhlau, 2009), 231–33; Peter Worm, “Die Heilige Lanze. Bedeutungswandel und Verehrung eines Herrschaftszeichens,” in *Arbeiten aus dem Marburger Hilfswissenschaftlichen Institut*, ed. Peter Worm and Eisenlohr, *Elementa diplomatica* (Marburg: Universitätsbibliothek, 2000), 179, 82f., 88, 90, 94–204, 10; Jörg Rogge, *Die deutschen Könige im Mittelalter. Wahl und Krönung*, second ed. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft (WBG), 2010), 97; János Bak, “Holy Lance, Holy Crown, Holy Dexter: Sanctity of Insignia in Medieval East Central Europe,” in *Anfologion. Vlast', obshchestvo, kultura v slavianskom mire v srednie veka k 70-letiiu Borisa Nikolaevicha Florii*, ed. Gennadij Litavrin, *Slaviane i ikh sosedi* (Moscow: Indrik, 2008), 56f.; Percy Ernst Schramm, “Die ‘Heilige Lanze’: Reliquie und Herrschaftszeichen des Reiches und ihre Replik in Krakau. Ein Überblick über die Geschichte der Königslanze,” in *Herrschaftszeichen und Staatssymbolik. Beiträge zu ihrer Geschichte vom 3. bis zum 16. Jahrhundert*, ed. Percy Ernst Schramm, MGH Schriften (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1955), 526; Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das ‘wahre Kreuz’*, 38, 91; Stefan Weinfurter, *Herrschaft und Reich der Salier. Grundlinien einer Umbruchzeit*, third ed. (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1992), 56f.; Mechthild Schulze-Dörlamm, “Heilige Nägel und heilige Lanzen,” in *Byzanz. Das Römerreich im Mittelalter*, ed. Falko Daim and Jörg Drauschke, *Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum. Monographien* (Mainz: Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum, 2010), 133–49; Jaspert, “Vergegenwärtigungen Jerusalems,” 264; Bronisch, *Reconquista und Heiliger Krieg*, 317; Franz Kirchweger, “‘Crux plena ligno dominico et lancea sancti Mauriti’i. Das Reichskreuz in der Wiener Schatzkammer und seine Reliquien,” in *Im Zeichen des Kreuzes: Die Limburger Staurothek und ihre Geschichte*, ed. August Heuser and Mathias Theodor Kloft (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2009), 47; Franz-Reiner Erkens, *Herrschersakralität im Mittelalter. Von den Anfängen bis zum Investiturstreit* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2006), 27–33, 156–89.

the Iberian Peninsula¹³ and the Kingdom of Jerusalem. These areas have been studied quite frequently with respect to passion relics, but Scandinavia has usually only played a marginal role or has even been omitted entirely.¹⁴

There is, however, reason to believe that the legitimizing quality of the relic of the True Cross was not limited to the aforementioned areas. According to the surviving sources, two Scandinavian kings, Erik the Good (r. 1095–1103) and Sigurd the Crusader [*jórsalafari*] (r. 1103–1130), were granted gifts of the relic in Byzantium/Jerusalem in the first decade of the twelfth century. Therefore, this chapter now turn to the relics of the True Cross in Norway and Denmark during the period in question by using Nikolas Jaspert's concept of "material visualization of Jerusalem" as a frame of reference.

Scandinavian Kingship

Before turning to the case studies, a few very general characteristics of medieval Scandinavian kingship need to be outlined. In comparison to other regions, Scandinavian kingship was characterized by a relatively weak position with rather limited dynastic claims and access to resources and jurisdiction. As well, an election was necessary, and for a long period martial prowess and success, especially on the battlefield, were crucial for legitimizing power. Royal blood was mandatory, but neither being born in wedlock nor primogeniture were requirements – which allowed for many pretenders. The rather late development of royal insignia in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is also worth mentioning. Furthermore, the introduction of the Christian faith provided a new ideological basis for legitimate rulership, but also increased pressure to adhere to it.¹⁵

13 Schreiner, "Signa Victricia. Heilige Zeichen in kriegerischen Konflikten des Mittelalter," 265; Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das „wahre Kreuz*, 79, 171; Bronisch, *Reconquista und Heiliger Krieg*, 290f, 315f.; Jaspert, "Vergegenwärtigungen Jerusalems," 252f.; Ligato, "The Political Meanings of the Relic of the Holy Cross," 317; Schweineköper, "Christus-Reliquien," 201; Alexander Pierre Bronisch, "Krönungsritus und Kronenbrauch im Westgotenreich von Toledo," *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte/Germanistische Abteilung* 116 (1999): 41; Bronisch, "Krönungsritus und Kronenbrauch im Reich von Asturien und León," *Studi medievali Ser. 3*, no. 39 (1998): 332f.; Worm, "Die Heilige Lanze," 109; Deborah Gerish, "The True Cross and the Kings of Jerusalem," *The Haskins Society Journal* 8 (1996): 140.

14 An example is the works of Anatole Frolov, who attempted to record as many mentions of cross relics and reliquaries as possible in the 1960s. These works substantially still form the basis of almost any publication concerning the cross, but he mentions only very few Scandinavian examples (the majority of which are part of late medieval/early modern relic lists). cf. Frolov, Anatole. *La relique de la Vraie Croix. Recherches sur le développement d'un culte*. Archives de l'Orient Chrétien. Paris: Institut Français d'Études Byzantines, 1961, 300f., No. 278, 282; 309f., No. 297; 544, No. 826; 597–99., No. 959, 960; 611–15, No. 992, 994; Anatole Frolov, *Les reliquaires de la Vraie Croix*, Archives de l'Orient Chrétien (Paris: Institut Français d'Études Byzantines, 1965).

15 For a summary cf. Raupp, "Das Wahre Kreuz in den nordischen Königreichen," 12–15, cf. also Sentkowski et al., "Das Wahre Kreuz in Skandinavien," 14; Erich Hoffmann, "Coronation and Coronation

Relics of the True Cross in Denmark and their Relation to Erik the Good

The first passion relic to reach Scandinavia appears to have been the piece of the True Cross which, according to the Danish chronicler Saxo Grammaticus (c.1160–c.1220), was sent to Slangerup from Byzantium by King Erik the Good of Denmark (c.1056–1103), one of Svend Estridsen's numerous sons who were to succeed their father and successively each other, at the beginning of the twelfth century. Cooperation with the church to make up for the family's weak claim to the throne had already been essential to Svend

Ordines in Medieval Scandinavia,” in *Coronation Medieval and Early Modern Monarchic Ritual*, ed. János Bak (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 125–43; Michael Gelting, “The Kingdom of Denmark,” in *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy. Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus’, c. 900–1200*, ed. Nora Berend (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 87–89; Birgit Sawyer and Peter Sawyer, *Medieval Scandinavia: From Conversion to Reformation, circa 800–1500* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 39, 62, 84, 89f., 92f., 216; Else Roesdahl, “The Scandinavian Kingdom,” in *From Viking to Crusader. The Scandinavians and Europe, 800–1200*, ed. Else Roesdahl and David Mackenzie Wilson (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), 32, 39f.; Dieter Strauch, *Mittelalterliches nordisches Recht bis 1500. Eine Quellenkunde*, Ergänzungsbände RGA (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 21, 48–50, 63; Alastair Carroll, “The Role of the Varangian Guard in Byzantine Rebellions and Usurpations, 988–1204” (PhD Thesis, Queens University of Belfast, 2005), 154, 56, 60; Elisabeth Vestergaard, “A Note on Viking Age Inauguration,” in *Coronation Medieval and Early Modern Monarchic Ritual*, ed. János Bak (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 122; Birgit Sawyer and Peter Sawyer, “Scandinavia Enters Christian Europe,” in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia*, ed. Knut Helle, The Nordic Series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 158f.; Philip Line, *Kingship and State Formation in Sweden 1130–1290*, The Northern World (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 33; Jón Viðar Sigurdsson, “The Norse Community,” in *The Norwegian Domination and the Norse World c.1100–1400*, ed. Steinar Imsen (Trondheim: Tapir Academic Press, 2010), 65f.; Thomas Lindkvist, “Early Political Organisation. Introductory Survey,” in *Cambridge History of Scandinavia*, ed. Knut Helle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 166; Thomas Lindkvist, “Kings and Provinces in Sweden,” in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia*, ed. Knut Helle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 225–9; Knut Helle, “Towards Nationally Organised Systems of Government. Introductory Survey,” in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia*, ed. Knut Helle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 347; Thomas Lindkvist, “Legitimation of Power and Crusades as Europeanisation in Medieval Sweden,” in *The Reception of Medieval Europe in the Baltic Sea Region. Papers of the XIIth Visby Symposium Held at Gotland University Visby*, ed. Jörn Staecker, Acta Visbyensia (Visby: Gotland University Press, 2009), 33; Sverre Bagge, “Ideologies and Mentalities,” in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia*, ed. Knut Helle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 469–73; Sverre Bagge, *Cross and Scepter: The Rise of the Scandinavian Kingdoms From the Vikings to the Reformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 37f., 66f.; Sverre Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom. State Formation in Norway, c.900–1350* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2010), 160, 66, 75, 77f.; Sverre Bagge, “Kingship in Medieval Norway. Ideal and Reality,” in *European Monarchy. Its Evolution and Practice from Roman Antiquity to Modern Times*, ed. Heinz Durchhardt, et al. (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1992), 41f.; Klaus von See, *Königtum und Staat im skandinavischen Mittelalter*, Skandinavistische Arbeiten (Heidelberg: Winter, 2002), 15f. Cf. also Chapter 4 (Bjørn Bandlien) in the present volume, 59–85.

Estridsen's politics.¹⁶ The same is true for Erik, who, for example, played a role in the canonization of his brother Knud and the establishment of the archbishopric of Lund.¹⁷ Erik died on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, during which he is reported to have been granted the relic in Constantinople by Emperor Alexios Komnenos, after having asked for relics:

Reluctant to let such a distinguished guest go without a gift, he told Erik to demand whatever suited his fancy. But as the other spurned any riches, the emperor realized he longed more than anything for sacred remains and presented him with the hallowed relics of saints' bones. Erik warmly accepted the holy gift and when it had been endorsed with the imperial seal, made sure that these treasures were conveyed to Lund and Roskilde. As he would not allow his place of origin without any objects of veneration, he had transported to Slangerup a fragment of the Holy Cross together with the sanctified bones of St Nicholas. He erected a church in that town and the spot where we now see the altar is reported to be where his mother gave birth to him.¹⁸

The gift of the "divine torture wood/crossbeam" [*patibulum*], as Saxo calls it, as part of the emperor's display of legitimate power corresponds with Byzantine custom of the time – and asking for relics elegantly avoided humiliation as well.¹⁹

16 Raupp, "Das Wahre Kreuz in den nordischen Königreichen," 22; Henning Dehn-Nielsen, *Kings and Queens of Denmark* (Copenhagen: Rosenborg Castle, 2007), 16f.; Erich Hoffmann, *Königserhebung und Thronfolgeordnung in Dänemark bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters*, Beiträge zur Geschichte und Quellenkunde des Mittelalters (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1976), 23–28; Dominik Waßenhoven, *Skandinavien unterwegs in Europa (1000–1250). Untersuchungen zu Mobilität und Kulturtransfer auf prosopographischer Grundlage*, Europa im Mittelalter (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2006), 185, 278, 80f.

17 Raupp, "Das Wahre Kreuz in den nordischen Königreichen," 22; Dehn-Nielsen, *Kings and Queens of Denmark*, 22; Gelting, "The Kingdom of Denmark," 89, 95f.; Hoffmann, *Königserhebung und Thronfolgeordnung*, 61, 64; Thomas Foerster, *Vergleich und Identität. Selbst- und Fremddeutung im Norden des hochmittelalterlichen Europas* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2009), 80f., 83f., 94; Thomas Riis, *Les institutions politiques centrales du Danemark 1100–1332*, Odense University Studies in History and Social Sciences (Odense: Odense University Press, 1977), 105f.; Sawyer and Sawyer, *Medieval Scandinavia*, 215; Lindkvist, "Legitimation of Power and Crusades," 34.

18 *Gesta Danorum* Book 12, ch. 7 (trans. Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum: The History of the Danes*, 2 vols, ed. and trans. Karsten Friis-Jensen and Peter Fisher, Oxford Medieval Texts, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2015): "Et ne tantum hospitem in donatum dimitteret, complacita postulare precepit. Quem quum facto opum contemptu sacros potissimum cineres exoptare cognosceret, honorandis ossium reliquiis donat. Ille religiosum munus cupide amplexatus, id ipsum imperatoria bulla assignatum Lundiam Roskyldiamque deportandum curavit. Et ne ortus sui locum ueneratione uacuum sineret, Slangathorpian cum Nicolai sacratissimis ossibus diuini patibuli particulam transtulit. Quippe et oppidi illius templum molitus et eo loci, ubi nunc aram uidemus, matre editus proditur." Cf. also Raupp, "Das Wahre Kreuz in den nordischen Königreichen," 4, 18, 25f.; Waßenhoven, *Skandinavien unterwegs in Europa*, 177f.; Krijna N. Ciggaar, "Denmark and Byzantium from 1184 to 1212. Queen Dagmar's Cross, a Chrysobull of Alexius II and an 'Ultramarine' Connection," *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 13 (2000): 124; Krijna N. Ciggaar, *Western Travellers to Constantinople: The West and Byzantium, 962–1204*, The Medieval Mediterranean (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 111.

19 Raupp, "Das Wahre Kreuz in den nordischen Königreichen," 25–7; Ciggaar, "Denmark and Byzantium from 1184 to 1212:" 119; Schreiner, "Diplomatische Geschenke zwischen Byzanz und dem

Furthermore, it seems likely that Erik, via his father Svend Estridsen, was acquainted with Harald the Hardruler (d. 1066) – the most famous Varangian of all times and indeed important enough to be mentioned in a contemporary Byzantine source.²⁰ Danish coins imitating Byzantine models²¹ and twelfth-century relic-finds in Denmark²² also contribute to the overall picture of well-established connections to Byzantium.²³ Three existing cross relics and reliquaries are fairly well-known and of interest in this context: the so-called Dagmar Cross, the Roskilde Cross, and the Orø Cross (Figs. 8.1–8.4).

Westen,” 253–5, 64–8; Klein, “Eastern Objects and Western Desire Relics,” 288f., 91f.; Édina Bozóky, *La politique des reliques de Constantin à Saint Louis: Protection collective et légitimation du pouvoir* (Paris: Beauchesne, 2006), 21; Anca, *Herrschaftliche Repräsentation*, 97–108.

20 *Vademecum des byzantinischen Aristokraten. Das sogenannte Strategikon des Kekaumenos*, In *Byzantinische Geschichtsschreiber 5*, ed. Hans-Georg Beck, Graz: Verlag Styria, 1956.; Raupp, “Das Wahre Kreuz in den nordischen Königreichen,” 27; Daniel Föller, “. . . der den König selbst davon erzählen hörte.” Die Jerusalemreise Haralds ‘des Harten’ und das konstruktive Potenzial gedächtniskritischer Historie,” in *Fluchtpunkt Geschichte: Archäologie und Geschichtswissenschaft im Dialog; aus einer Veranstaltung der Arbeitsgemeinschaft “Theorie in der Archäologie” . . . am 8. Oktober 2007 im Rahmen der 78. Jahrestagung des Nordwestdeutschen Verbands für Altertumskunde in Schleswig*, ed. Stefan Burmeister (Münster: Waxman, 2011), 293; Waßenhoven, *Skandinavien unterwegs in Europa*, 202, 78. It is interesting to note that Harald himself is somehow connected to the cross in Jerusalem as *Heimskringla* mentions him as paying homage to the relic by giving money to the church of the Holy Sepulchre, although Daniel Föller has deconstructed this account of Harald’s journey to Jerusalem and his establishment as crusader “avant la lettre”, Föller, “. . . der den König selbst davon erzählen hörte.” See also Daniel Föller, “Wikinger als Pilger. Drei norwegische Könige, zwei Runensteine und der Wiederaufbau der Grabeskirche,” in *Konflikt und Bewältigung. Die Zerstörung der Grabeskirche zu Jerusalem im Jahr 1009*, ed. Thomas Pratsch, Millennium-Studien zur Kultur und Geschichte des ersten Jahrtausend n. Chr. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), for parallel sources to the account in *Heimskringla*. However, it is not unlikely that Harald was given this aura after his great-grandson Sigurd had brought the cross relic to Norway in order to establish a harbinger of a “Sigurdian” Jerusalem tradition on a literary level. Cf. also Christopher Norton, “Archbishop Eystein, King Magnus and the Copenhagen Psalter – A New Hypothesis,” in *Eystein Erlendsson – erkebiskop, politiker og kirkebygger*, ed. Kristin Bjørlykke (Trondheim: Nidaros Domkirkes restaureringsarbeider, 2013), 205 with regard to Magnus Erlingsson and this tradition.

21 Raupp, “Das Wahre Kreuz in den nordischen Königreichen,” 27; Hans Hildebrand, “Sveriges medeltid. Kulturhistorisk skildring,” in *Kyrkan* (Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt & Söners Förlag, 1898–1903), 795–7; Gelting, “The Kingdom of Denmark,” 90f.; Dehn-Nielsen, *Kings and Queens of Denmark*, 17; Søren Kaspersen, “Majestas Domini – Regum et Sacerdotium (II). Das Leben des Motivs in Skandinavien während der Kirchenkämpfe unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Dänemarks im 12. Jahrhundert,” *Hafnia: Copenhagen Papers in the History of Art* 10 (1985): 58f.; Roland Scheel, *Skandinavien Und Byzanz: Bedingungen Und Konsequenzen Mittelalterlicher Kulturbeziehungen*, 2 vols., Historische Semantik (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck Ruprecht, 2015).

22 Raupp, “Das Wahre Kreuz in den nordischen Königreichen,” 28; cf. Ciggaar, “Denmark and Byzantium from 1184 to 1212,” 118, 20–4, 40–2; Fritze Lindahl, *Dagmarkorset, Orø- og Roskildekorset* (Copenhagen: Nationalmuseet, 1980), 3–15; Dehn-Nielsen 2007, *Kings and Queens of Denmark*: 18; note 25.

23 For the latest, most detailed, and extensive publication on Scandinavia and Byzantium cf. Scheel, *Skandinavien und Byzanz*, however only a few pages are devoted to relics (374–81).



Fig. 8.2: The Dagmar Cross, reverse. National Museum of Denmark.

The Dagmar Cross

The Dagmar Cross measures 4.3×2.9 cm, is made of gold and enamel, and is a Byzantine work from around 1100 (though scholars have also proposed a date of around 1200). Today it is kept in the National Museum of Denmark (Figs. 8.1 and 8.2). It is supposed to have reached Scandinavia around 1200 and was presumably rediscovered at the end of the seventeenth century in the royal burial place of St. Bendt's church in Ringsted. The discovery was made when a new grave was being made in the same place, and the relic has usually been associated with the first spouse of King Valdemar II, Queen Dagmar (also known as Margrethe, c.1186–1212). It may, however, also have been found in one of the nearby graves and belonged to Richiza, queen of Sweden (1210–1216) and sister to King Valdemar II (r. 1202–1241). Since all three of the mentioned royals had family connections in the east – Minsk and Novgorod – the relic may have come this way from Bohemia or, after the fall of Constantinople, from the Holy Land. There have been different hypotheses by, for example, Susanne Bangert, Fritze Lindahl, or Roland Scheel, yet the information

available is too nebulous for the drawing of definitive conclusions.²⁴ Krijnie Ciggaar suggests that, besides the possibility that the cross may have reached Denmark in the course of Byzantine delegations/embassies in 1184 or 1195, a connection to Dagmar and the possible use of the cross as insignia are likely. Still, she mentions, as does Fritze Lindahl, that the x-ray of the reliquary cross did not reveal a cross splinter.²⁵ Nevertheless, the Dagmar Cross is universally regarded as a *staurotheka*. Roland Scheel goes so far as to suggest that it is likely to be identical with the cross relic sent to Denmark by Erik the Good.²⁶ The Dagmar Cross gained a lot of public attention when a copy of it was given to Princess Alexandra as a wedding gift by her father Frederik VII of Denmark in 1863, containing a cross splinter from the Ranvaik-shrine (which is now in Copenhagen). It has been well known in popular culture and as a national heirloom, as the many reproductions available as souvenirs still bear witness.²⁷

The Roskilde Cross

In 1806, the Roskilde Cross was found hidden in a wooden crucifix dating to the second half of the thirteenth century and sold during an auction. In this case, the cross splinter is still extant and contained within the reliquary, which is of gold and measures 6 × 3.7 cm (Fig. 8.3). Apparently, it had been made more than 100 years before it was placed in the crucifix, and was perhaps kept in Roskilde significantly earlier in the twelfth century. Svend, bishop of Roskilde (1074–1088), is known to have sent numerous relics from Byzantium to Denmark in 1087. Whether the Roskilde Cross may have been among those, or among the ones ascribed to Erik the Good, is impossible to determine, since there are no written records that may provide detailed information to support either option.²⁸

24 Susanne Bangert, “Dagmarkorset – Danmarks nationalsmykke,” in *Arven fra Byzans*, ed. Øystein Hjort (Aarhus: Tidsskriftet Sfinx, 2010), 267–71; Lindahl, *Dagmarkorset, Orø- og Roskildekorset*, 4–7; Ciggaar, “Denmark and Byzantium from 1184 to 1212,” 118, 20–4, 40–2; Jörn Staecker, *Rex regum et dominus dominorum. Die wikingerzeitlichen Kreuz- und Kruzifixanhänger als Ausdruck der Mission in Altdänemark und Schweden*, Lund Studies in Medieval Archaeology (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1999), 177–80, 433f.; Scheel, *Skandinavien Und Byzanz*, 378–80.

25 Ciggaar, “Denmark and Byzantium from 1184 to 1212,” 124, 40–2; Lindahl, *Dagmarkorset, Orø- og Roskildekorset*, 6.

26 Scheel, *Skandinavien Und Byzanz*, 375–81. Though Scheel himself admits there are numerous other possibilities. Cf. especially 379.

27 Bangert, “Dagmarkorset,” 267, 73–81; Lindahl 1980, *Dagmarkorset, Orø- og Roskildekorset*: 4f.; Scheel, *Skandinavien Und Byzanz*, 375.

28 Lindahl, *Dagmarkorset, Orø- og Roskildekorset*, 12–15; Staecker, *Rex regum et dominus dominorum*, 153, 429f.; Waßenhoven, *Skandinavien unterwegs in Europa*, 279.



Fig. 8.3: The Roskilde Cross. National Museum of Denmark.

The Orø Cross

The Orø Cross (c.1100) is a golden pectoral cross made in the north but inspired by Byzantine work (Fig. 8.4). It was found in 1849 by Bodil Margrethe Hansdatter at Orø in Zealand. This cross has also survived lacking its former contents. There are, however, traces of a fastening for holding a cross splinter. The inscription reads OLAF C VNVnCE (King Olav). Therefore, the cross reliquary has been associated with St Olav of Norway.²⁹

Connections to the Mediterranean and Dynastic Legitimation

Even though none of these three reliquary crosses can be directly related to King Erik without considerable caution, objects of this kind appear to have been present in

²⁹ Lindahl, *Dagmarkorset, Orø- og Roskildekorsset*, 8–11; Staecker, *Rex regum et dominus domino-*
rum, 164–72, 431f.



Fig. 8.4: The Orø Cross, National Museum of Denmark.

Denmark during roughly the same period of time when he is reported to have acquired the relic of the True Cross. Therefore, it is not unlikely that Erik may well have been familiar with the meaning of the relic and Byzantine concepts of rulership. His family's rather weak claim to the Danish throne would definitely have been supported by the relic,³⁰ and placing it at his birthplace would certainly not have been unintentional.³¹ As well, Saxo credits Erik with the same miracle as the one ascribed to Empress Helena, mother of Constantine, who allegedly made it possible to bury bodies on Cyprus with the help of the cross relic.³² This seems to be an imported legitimation strategy from the

30 Raupp, "Das Wahre Kreuz in den nordischen Königreichen," 27f.

31 *Gesta Danorum* (as above) – it appears the cross relic (or at least a cross relic) may still have been there in Saxo's own time in the early thirteenth century, hence the reference to the church and altar.

32 Lukas Raupp, "Inde et Cyprius dictus est. Zum Tod Erik Ejegods auf Zypern im Jahr 1103," in *Das Mittelmeer und der Tod. Mediterrane Mobilität und Sepulchralkultur*, ed. Alexander Berner, et al. (Paderborn: Fink Schöningh, 2016), 524–7; Scheel, *Skandinavien Und Byzanz*, 390; Poul Jørgen Riis, "Where Was Erik the Good Buried?," *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 13 (2000): 148–53; Paul Riant, *Expéditions et pèlerinages des Scandinaves en Terre Sainte au temps des croisades*, 2 vols. (Paris: impr. de A. Lainé et J. Havard, 1865–1869), 161f.; Sigfús Blöndal, *The Varangians of Byzantium: An*

Mediterranean.³³ Thus, at least on a literary level, the cross relic appears to have had a legitimizing quality, perhaps also prompted by strained relations and competition with the Holy Roman Empire.³⁴ The shock caused by the battle of Hattin – where the king of Jerusalem had lost the relic – may also have played a role.³⁵ Yet another factor may be found in Valdemarian dynastic politics, which successfully aimed at establishing Knud Lavard (1096–1131) as a new dynastic saint, in the course of which his parents King Erik and Queen Bodil were apparently also given a saintly aura, by presenting them as Mediterranean dynastic saints. Both had died on their pilgrimage to the Holy Land – Erik on Cyprus and Bodil in Jerusalem where she was buried in the valley of Jehoshaphat.³⁶ The reference to St Helena as mother of Constantine and finder of the True Cross seems to fit this pattern – a material visualization of Jerusalem would certainly have supported these associations.

Erik was indeed associated with the cross relic throughout the Middle Ages and even up to early modern times, for example in the so-called Danish Rhymed Chronicle (ca. 1460).³⁷ He is reported to have sent back the relic to his birthplace,

Aspect of Byzantine Military History, ed. Benedikt S. Benedikz, trans. Benedikt S. Benedikz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 133.

33 Raupp, “Inde et Cyprius dictus est,” 522, 26f.

34 Foerster, *Vergleich und Identität*, 179f. The way the relic was used in the Holy Roman Empire (see above) may also have been a source of inspiration, cf. also Raupp, “Das Wahre Kreuz in den nordischen Königreichen,” 29.

35 Cf. for instance Jaspert, “The True Cross of Jerusalem in the Latin West”; Murray, “‘Mighty Against the Enemies of Christ,’” 2017f.

36 See Chapter 11 (Denys Pringle), 200. Moreover, see Raupp, “Inde et Cyprius dictus est,” 517–28; Scheel, *Skandinavien Und Byzanz*, 382–392; Karsten Friis-Jensen, “In the Presence of the Dead. Saint Canute the Duke in Saxo Grammaticus’s *Gesta Danorum*,” in *The Making of Christian Myths in the Periphery of Latin Christendom (c.1000–1300)*, ed. Lars Boje Mortensen, 195–216. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2006, 196; 213f.; Hoffmann, *Königserhebung und Thronfolgeordnung*, 93–108, 20–5, 70; Hoffmann, “Coronation and Coronation Ordines,” 132; Hoffmann, “Politische Heilige in Skandinavien und die Entwicklung der drei nordischen Reiche und Völker,” in *Politik und Heiligenverehrung im Hochmittelalter*, ed. Jürgen Petersohn, Vorträge und Forschungen (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1994), 288–90.

37 *Den danske Rimkrønike*, ed. Helge Toldberg, Universitets-Jubilæets danske Samfunds Skriftserie 402, 1, Copenhagen: J.H. Schultz Forlag, 1961 (the relic is also mentioned in the Low German version):

“Saa gaff han meg syn gaffue from/helly mentz been som ieg bad om/Och aff thz helly korss en parth/thz sende ieg hiem tijl slangdorp ful snarth/Forthi ieg ther fødher waar/som høwe alther i kyrken stor. And so he [the emperor] gave me his gift from holy men’s bones which I asked for and a part of the Holy Cross, which I sent home to Slangerup at once, for I was born there where the high altar stands in the church [translation by author].” Saxo is by no means the only source to refer to the cross, as it is usually suggested, although the later mentions are likely to be influenced by his *Gesta*. Cf. for instance *Compendium Saxonis*, ed. M.C. Geertz, *Scriptores Minores Historiæ Danicæ Medii Ævi*, 1, Copenhagen: Selskabet for Udgivelse af Kilder til dansk Historie, 1917–1918, 195–439, Book 12; Albert Krantz, *Denmaerckijche, Swedijche vnd Norwaegijche Chronica*, trans. Heinrich Eppendorf, Straßburg 1545, Book 5, ch. 5 (also mentioned in the German version).

but since Erik died on his way to Jerusalem³⁸ no actual usage of the relic is mentioned in the sources. This leaves the manner in which it may have been employed by his successors as an open question. However, it seems possible that the cross relic played a role in legitimizing the dynasty. Recent Danish scholarship has stressed the importance of crusading ideology for Danish kingship.³⁹ In this light, a material visualization of Jerusalem could have been all the more important – yet, the sources provide no concrete evidence to support this hypothesis.⁴⁰ The opposite is true of Erik’s Norwegian contemporary King Sigurd Magnusson, for whom Erik’s journey may well have been an inspiration.⁴¹

38 Whether he died on his way to or from Jerusalem is difficult to determine since both variants are mentioned in the sources. Nevertheless, scholars generally seem to assume he did not reach the city. Cf. Raupp, “Inde et Cyprius dictus est,” 512; Waßenhoven 2006, *Skandinavien unterwegs in Europa*, 177f.; *The Works of Sven Aggesen, Twelfth-Century Danish Historian*, trans. Eric Christiansen, Viking Society for Northern Research, London: University College London, 1992.

39 Cf. for instance Janus Møller Jensen, “King Erik Emune (1134–1137) and the Crusades. The Impact of Crusading Ideology on Early Twelfth-Century Denmark,” in *Cultural Encounters During the Crusades*, ed. Kurt Villads Jensen, et al., University of Southern Denmark Studies in History and Social Sciences (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2013), 93–101; Ane Bysted et al., eds., *Jerusalem in the North: Denmark and the Baltic Crusades, 1100–1522* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2012), 21.

40 Though Møller Jensen suggests a possible connection of Erik’s son Erik Emune and Erik’s brother Niels to the piece of the True Cross Sigurd the Crusader had placed in Konghelle, cf. Jensen, “King Erik Emune (1134–1137) and the Crusades,” 95, 99.

41 Though *Heimskringla* only mentions survivors of the expedition led by Skofte Ogmundsson in 1102 as inspiration, it is not unlikely that the participants of Erik’s expedition had also been heard of in Norway before Sigurd put to sea. An explicit comparison of the two kings’ reputations with regard to their expeditions can be found in *Knýtlinga saga*. See Raupp, “Das Wahre Kreuz in den nordischen Königreichen,” 35, 43, 56–8; cf. also Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, 3 vols, trans. Alison Finlay and Anthony Faulkes, London: Viking Society for Northern Research, University College London, 2016, vol. 3, *Magnússon saga; Knýtlinga saga – Danakonunga sögur*, ed. Bjarni Guðnason, Íslenzk Fornrit 35, Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1982, 9–321; Waßenhoven, *Skandinavien unterwegs in Europa*, 178, 86, 241, 70f., 90; Dominik Waßenhoven, “Rómavegr. Skandinavische Pilgerwege nach Rom,” in *Pellegrinaggio e Kulturtransfer nel Medioevo eu-ropo. Atti del 1. Seminario di studio dei Dottorati di Ricerca di Ambito Medievistico delle Università di Lecce e di Erlangen*, ed. Hubert Houben, Pubblicazioni del Dottorato in Storia dei Centri delle Vie e delle Culture dei Pellegrinaggi nel Medioevo Euromediterraneo (Galatina: Congedo, 2006), 116; Gary B. Doxey, “Norwegian Crusaders and the Balearic Islands,” *Scandinavian Studies* 68 (1996): 144f.

Relics of the True Cross in Norway and their Relation to King Sigurd the Crusader

Before addressing the case of King Sigurd, it is important to note that most of the accounts dealt with in this section belong to the genre of saga, more precisely the Kings' Sagas. These have often been dismissed as historical sources due to a lack of differentiation. However, sagas cover the whole range from fiction to contemporary historiography and should therefore be treated accordingly. Employing all the same necessary caution as would be applied to any other medieval narrative source – due to oral tradition, the survival of the sources is in later copies and variations, etc. – they are the most important narrative sources for the history of Norway and Iceland in the Middle Ages.⁴²

Sigurd Magnusson (c.1090–1130), co-ruler of Norway and sole king from 1122/23 until his death, gained fame by leading an expedition to Jerusalem (1107/08–1110/11), during which he aided the crusaders in the siege of Sidon (Lebanon) and was granted a relic of the True Cross by King Baldwin [*Baldvini*] of Jerusalem:

King Baldvini gave a fine banquet to King Sigurðr and many of his men with him. Then King Baldvini gave King Sigurðr many holy relics, and now a piece of the Holy Cross was taken with the consent of King Baldvini and the Patriarch, and they both swore oaths on a holy relic that

⁴² For fairly recent overviews cf. Shami Ghosh, *Kings' Sagas and Norwegian History. Problems and Perspective* The Northern World (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 1–23, 95–112, 78–201; Knut Helle, “Hvor står den historiske sagakritikken i dag?,” *Collegium Mediaevale. Interdisciplinary Journal of Medieval Research* 24 (2011): 52–86; Ármann Jakobsson, “Inventing a Saga Form: The Development of the Kings' Sagas,” *Filologia germanica* 4 (2012); cf. also Lars Lönnroth, Vésteinn Ólason, and Anders Piltz, “Literature,” in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia*, ed. Knut Helle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 498–503; Ármann Jakobsson, “Royal Biography,” in *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, ed. Rory McTurk, Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), 388–90; Sawyer and Sawyer, *Medieval Scandinavia*, 16–26; Gudrun Lange, *Die Anfänge der isländisch-norwegischen Geschichtsschreibung*, *Studia Islandica* (Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóðs, 1989), 9; Sverre Bagge and Sæbjörg Walaker Noreide, “The Kingdom of Norway,” in *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy. Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus', c.900–1200*, ed. Nora Berend (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 159f.; Sverre Bagge, “From Sagas to Society. The Case of Heimskringla,” in *From Sagas to Society. Comparative Approaches to Early Iceland*, ed. Gisli Pálsson (Enfield Lock: Hisarlik, 1992), 61, 68–70, 74f.; Diana Whaley, “Scaldic Poetry,” in *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, ed. Rory McTurk, Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), 481, 88f.; Sverre Bagge, “Die Spielregeln ändern. Norwegische Politik im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert,” in *Die Spielregeln der Mächtigen. Mittelalterliche Politik zwischen Gewohnheit und Konvention*, ed. Claudia Garnier and Hermann Kamp (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft (WBG), 2010), 146; Sverre Bagge, “From Fist to Scepter: Authority in Norway in the Middle Ages,” in *Authorities in the Middle Age Influence, Legitimacy and Power in Medieval Society*, ed. Sini Kangas, et al., *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), 178f.; Waßenhoven, *Skandinavien unterwegs in Europa*, 40f., 50–4.

this piece of wood was of the holy cross that God Himself was tormented on. After that this holy relic was given to King Sigurðr, on condition that he and twelve other men with him first swore that he would promote Christianity with all his might and establish in his country an archbishop's see, if he could, and that the cross should be kept there where the blessed King Óláfr lay, and that he should introduce tithes and pay them himself.⁴³

43 Snorri Sturluson 2016, *Heimskringla*, vol. 3, *Magnússona saga*, ch. 11: “Baldvini konungr gerði veizlu fagra Sigurði konungi ok liði miklu með honum. Þá gaf Baldvini konungr Sigurði konungi marga helga dóma, ok þá var tekinn spánn af krossinum helga at ráði Baldvina konungs ok pátriarka, ok sóru þeir báðir at helgum dómi, at þetta tré var af inum helga krossi, er guð sjálf var þíndr á. Síðan var sá heilagr dómr gefinn Sigurði konungi, með því at hann sór áðr ok tólf menn aðrir með honum, at hann skyldi fremja kristni með öllum mætti sínum ok koma í land erkibyskupsstóli, ef hann mætti, ok at krossinn skyldi þar vera, sem inn helgi Óláfr konungr hvíldi, ok hann skyldi tíund fremja ok sjálf gera.” Another rendering of the event is found in *Morkinskinna. Knytlinga saga* chs 53/54 (trans. *Ágrip af Noregskonungasögum*, In *Text Series*, ed. Matthew James Driscoll, second ed, A Twelfth-Century Synoptic History of the Kings of Norway, 10, London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2008): “[. . .] en síðan ferðaðisk Sigurðr konungr ór landi til Jórsla með sex tögum skipa fjórum vetrum eftir fráfall Mognúss föður síns, ok hafði með sér fjölmennt ok góðmennt – ok þó þá eina er fara vildu – sat á Englandi enn fyrsta vetrinn, en annan út til Jórsla, ok sætti þar mikilli tígn, ok þá þar dýrligar gørsimar. eiddisk konungrinn af krossinum helga ok öðlaðisk, en eigi þó fyrr en tólf menn ok sjálf hann enn þrettándi svöru at hann skyldi fremja kristni með öllum mætti sínum, ok erkibyskupsstól koma í land ef hann mætti, ok at krossinn skyldi þar vera sem inn helgi Óláfr hvíldi, ok at hann skyldi tíund fremja ok sjálf gera.” (Translation: “King Sigurðr travelled abroad to Jerusalem with sixty ships. He had with him a large and goodly company, though only those who wanted to go. He stayed in England the first winter and spent the next on the journey to Jerusalem, where he was received with great honour and given splendid treasures. The king asked for a fragment of the True Cross and was given one, but not until twelve men, and he himself the thirteenth, had sworn that he would advance Christianity with all his might and establish an archbishop's see in his country if he could, and furthermore that the Cross would be kept where St Óláfr lay, and that a tithe, which he himself was to pay as well, would be levied.”) The description in *Morkinskinna* is not dissimilar to the one in *Heimskringla*, albeit it includes a detailed dialogue between King Sigurd and King Baldwin, explicitly stating that Sigurd was well aware of the importance of the relic, since he knew it would add to his fame in both the short and the long run: “Sigurðr konungr hugsaði optliga hvat hann skal þess kjósa er honum sé mest til frama, ok hugsaðisk honum svá til at þat mætti honum verða mest höfuðgæfa, bæði í bráð ok lengðar, ef hann fengi at þiggja af krossinum helga er várr Dróttinn var þíndr á, því at engi maðr hafði fyrr nátt norðr higat í lönd at þiggja af þeim helgum dómi krossins er at Jórslum er varðveittr; en af þeim var miðlat, sem í Miklagarði var.”, cf. *Morkinskinna: The Earliest Icelandic Chronicle of the Norwegian Kings (1030–1157)*, trans. Theodore Andersson and Kari Ellen Gade, Ithaca – London: Cornell University Press, 2000, (*Morkinskinna*, 2 vols, ed. Ármann Jakobsson and Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson, Íslenzk Fornrit 23/24, Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 2011); *Hulda-Hrokkinskinna*, 2 vols, ed. Kongelige nordiske Oldskriftselskab, Formanna sögur 6/7, Copenhagen, 1831–1832; *Saga Sigurðar Jórslafara; Ágrip af Noregskonunga sögum. Fagrskinna – Noregs konunga tal*, ed. Bjarni Einarsson, Íslenzk Fornrit 29, Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1985 (trans. *Fagrskinna, A Catalogue of the Kings of Norway*, In *The Northern World*, trans. Alison Finlay, 7, Leiden: Brill, 2004): “Gaf Baldvini konungr með ráði Patriarkans af krossinum helga nokkurn hlut ok marga aðra helga dóma.”; “King Baldvini, with the agreement of the Patriarch, gave king Sigurðr a piece of the Holy Cross and many other holy relics.” For Theodoricus' account cf. Theodoricus Monachus 1880, *Historia de Antiquitate Regum Norwagiensum*: ch. 33 (trans. Theodoricus Monachus 1998, *An Account of the Ancient History of the Norwegian Kings*: 52.

Baldwin (r.1100–1118) was the very first king to actually bear this title in the newly founded Kingdom of Jerusalem, although his brother had ruled before him.⁴⁴ The crusader state met its need for legitimation by using the cross, as has been demonstrated in detail by Giuseppe Ligato and especially by Nikolas Jaspert.⁴⁵ It is most likely that the crusaders were exposed to the Byzantine emperor's way of using the relic to demonstrate his power when they travelled to Jerusalem via Byzantium – all but one of their leaders had to swear an oath to him on the relic.⁴⁶ This may have served as a model for the relics' subsequent usage by Baldwin and in the kingdom of Jerusalem.⁴⁷ Sigurd visited both places.⁴⁸

44 Nikolas Jaspert, *Die Kreuzzüge*, sixth ed. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft (WBG), 2013), 38, 42; Nikolas Jaspert, "Jerusalem und sein Königshaus," in *Saladin und die Kreuzfahrer*, ed. Alfried Wiczorek, et al., Publikationen der Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen/ Schriftenreihe des Landesmuseums für Natur und Mensch Oldenburg (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2005), 61; Giuseppe Ligato, "Baldovino I. Re di Gerusalemme, 'Dominici Sepulcri vexillifer,'" in *Militia Sancti Sepulchri. Idea e istituzioni. Atti del Colloquio Internazionale tenuto presso la Pontificia Università del Laterano 10–12 aprile 1996*, ed. Kaspar Elm and Cosimo Damiano Fonseca (Città del Vaticano: n.p., 1998), 365–73.

45 Ligato, "The Political Meanings of the Relic of the Holy Cross," 327; Ligato, "Baldovino I. Re di Gerusalemme," 361, 74, 80; Jaspert, "The True Cross of Jerusalem in the Latin West," 213f.; Jaspert, "Das Heilige Grab, das Wahre Kreuz," 87; Jaspert, "Vergegenwärtigungen Jerusalems," 253.

46 Except Raimund of Toulouse, cf. Jaspert, *Die Kreuzzüge*, 39f.; Michael Grünbart, *Das Byzantinische Reich* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft (WBG), 2014), 97; Anca 2010, *Herrschaftliche Repräsentation*, 104; Anca, "Konfliktbewältigung und Konsensfindung in Byzanz während der ersten Kreuzzüge," in *Konfliktbewältigung und Friedensstiftung im Mittelalter*, ed. Roman Czaja, et al. (Torún: Deutsches Historisches Institut Warschau, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2012), 203–6; Frolow 1961, *La relique de la Vraie Croix*: 286, No 56.

47 Raupp, "Das Wahre Kreuz in den nordischen Königreichen," 42.

48 Cf. for example Waßenhoven, *Skandinavien unterwegs in Europa*, 265f.; Doxey, "Norwegian Crusaders and the Balearic Islands," 150, 56; Jaime Ferreiro Alemparte, *Arribadas de normandos y cruzados a las costas de la Península Ibérica* (Madrid: Soc. Española de Estudios Medievales, 1999), 62–5; Richard W. Unger, "The Northern Crusaders: The Logistics of English and Other Northern Crusader Fleets," in *Logistics of Warfare in the Age of the Crusades. Proceedings of a Workshop held at the Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Sydney, 30 September to 4 October 2002*, ed. John H. Pryor (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 251–3; Schreiner, "Diplomatische Geschenke zwischen Byzanz und dem Westen," 264–7, 79; Blöndal, *The Varangians of Byzantium*, 136–40; Richard MacGillivray Dawkins, "The Visit of the King Sigurd the Pilgrim to Constantinople," in *EIE MNHMHN Σ. ΛΑΜΠΡΟΥ*, ed. Amilkas Alivizatos and et al. (Athens: 1935), 55. That knowledge about the meaning of the cross was present in pre-crusading Scandinavia is indicated by two surviving homily books, which have been dated to around 1200, though they are apparently based on late eleventh-/early twelfth-century collections. Cf. for *The Icelandic Homily Book*, *Perg. 15 4° in the Royal Library, Stockholm*, in *Íslensk Handrit 3*, ed. Andrea de Leeuw van Weenen, Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 1993; Kristin B. Aavitsland, "Visualisert didaktikk? Det talte og det malte ord i norsk middelalder," in *Vår eldste bok. Skrift, miljø og biletbruk i den norske homilieboka*, ed. Odd Einar Haugen and Åslaug Ommundsen, Bibliotheca Nordica (Oslo: Novus, 2010), 226–34; David McDougall, "Homilies (West Norse)," in *Medieval Scandinavia. An*

As in the case of Denmark, there is an extant cross relic in Norway roughly dated (c.1050–1150) to the period in question. The so-called Tønsberg Cross was found by a worker close to St Mary's Church near the centre of the medieval town of Tønsberg, during the digging of ditches in the late nineteenth century. It was handed in by a certain Mr Rask of Vallø oil refinery. It is apparently a double pendant cross (7.1cm/2.2cm (4.1cm)) of a similar type as the Roskilde cross, with a cruciform slit in which the relic is still visible (Fig. 8.5).⁴⁹ Yet, a direct connection to Sigurd cannot be established, and the circumstances of the discovery remain somewhat hazy.

Contrary to his promise made in Jerusalem, Sigurd did not bring the relic to Nidaros (Trondheim). Rather, he placed it in his residence at Konghelle, where he had a church erected to house it.⁵⁰ This apparently is an unambiguous statement respecting who was entitled to it,⁵¹ especially if one takes into account that the area around Konghelle was borderland and by no means undisputed.⁵² Securing the place by using the relic as a “shield” against non-Christians, as it is later described in the sources, and sacralising it at the same time are both important functions of the Jerusalem relic, mirroring the way it was used in the kingdom of Jerusalem.⁵³ Sigurd seems to have been eager to legitimize his rule, especially since he and his two brothers Olav and Eystein ruled the kingdom of Norway

Encyclopedia, ed. Phillip Pulsiano and Kirsten Wolf, Garland Encyclopedias of the Middle Ages (New York – London: Garland, 1993), 290.

49 Staecker, *Rex regum et dominus minorum*, 153f.; Frolow, *La relique de la Vraie Croix*, 301, No 282; Thor Kielland, *Norsk guldsmedkunst i middelalderen* (Oslo: Steenske Forlag, 1927), 59f., 165, 293, No 24; J.J.A. Worsaae, *Nordiske Oldsager i Det Kongelige Museum i Kjøbenhavn* (Copenhagen: Kittendorff & Aagaards Forlag, 1859), 185, No. 608a.

50 Ágrip, ch. 53; Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, vol. 3, *Magnússona saga*, ch. 19; *Morkinskinna*, ch. 82. Cf. Raupp, “Das Wahre Kreuz in den nordischen Königreichen,” 48f.; Astås, “Kristusrelikvier,” 8; Waßenhoven, *Skandinavien unterwegs in Europa*, 266; Lars Hermanson, “The Town of Kungahälla as a Power Base. Norway’s Baltic Sea Policies, 1123–1135,” in *The Reception of Medieval Europe in the Baltic Sea Region. Papers of the XIIIth Visby Symposium Held at Gotland University Visby*, ed. Jörn Staecker, Acta Visbyensia (Visby: Gotland University Press, 2009), 45; Axel Christophersen, “Konghelle i middelalderen. Momenter til diskusjon,” in *Kungahälla. Problem och forskning kring stadens äldsta historia*, ed. Hans Andersson, et al., Lund Studies in Medieval Archaeology (Uddevalla: Bohusläns Museums Förlag, 2001), 206–10; Andås, “A Royal Chapel for a Royal Relic?,” 188.

51 Raupp, “Das Wahre Kreuz in den nordischen Königreichen zu Beginn des 12. Jhs,” 49; Christophersen, “Konghelle i middelalderen,” 202, 09.

52 Raupp, “Das Wahre Kreuz in den nordischen Königreichen,” 49; Hermanson, “The Town of Kungahälla as a Power Base,” 43; Christophersen, “Konghelle i middelalderen,” 201–4, 209.

53 Sentkowski et al., “Das Wahre Kreuz in Skandinavien,” 17,18; Hermanson, “The Town of Kungahälla as a Power Base,” 46; Raupp, “Das Wahre Kreuz in den nordischen Königreichen,” 49;



Fig. 8.5: The Tønsberg Cross, Oslo University Museum of Cultural History.

jointly.⁵⁴ Stressing his status as a crusader king, who had imported this “material visualisation of Jerusalem” and thus had brought Jerusalem itself to Norway, while at the same time not yielding it to St Olav (whom any of the members of the royal family could claim as their patron)⁵⁵ suggests that the placing of the relic was by no means unintentional.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the cross relic is (possibly) indirectly referred to in the so-called contest of the kings – a game that seems to have been

Jaspert, “The True Cross of Jerusalem in the Latin West,” 214–216, 20f. Cf. also Jensen, “King Erik Emune (1134–1137) and the Crusades,” 95 and note 69.

54 Raupp, “Das Wahre Kreuz in den nordischen Königreichen,” 44–46; Sentkowski et al., “Das Wahre Kreuz in Skandinavien,” 14–17.

55 For an overview on St. Olav cf. Øystein Ekroll, “The Cult of St. Olav in the Norse Cultural Sphere – and Outside It,” in *‘Ecclesia Nidrosiensis’ and ‘Noregs veldi’. The Role of the Church in the Making of Norwegian Domination in the Norse World*, ed. Steinar Imsen, ‘Norgesveldet’ Occasional Papers (Trondheim: Tapir Academic Press, 2012) and the same author’s contribution to this volume: Chapter 14 (Øystein Ekroll), 270–98.

56 Raupp, “Das Wahre Kreuz in den nordischen Königreichen,” 4f.; Hermanson, “The Town of Kungahälla as a Power Base,” 46; Astås, “Kristus-relikvier,” 8; Jensen, “King Erik Emune (1134–1137) and the Crusades,” 95.

common at drinking bouts in medieval Scandinavia⁵⁷ – but is of course highly unlikely to have happened in the exact fashion described in Snorri Sturluson’s *Heimskringla*, particularly because there is a slightly different account of the event in *Morkinskinna*.⁵⁸ In addressing his brother and co-ruler Eystein, Sigurd states his accomplishments and exploits abroad:

You must have heard that I fought very many battles in Serkland that you must have heard tell about, and that I won the victory in all of them and many kinds of treasure such that none like them have ever come into this country. I was considered the more highly where I met noblest people, but I think you have not yet ceased to be a stay-at-home.⁵⁹

The general tension between the two kings, their slightly strained relationship, and the placing of the two brothers in different spheres – Sigurd the warrior and adventurer, Eystein the politician and lawgiver – is present in all the sources even in the contemporary non-Scandinavian ones. After all, Sigurd really did go to Jerusalem and Eystein remained in Norway. The reference to the Mediterranean – the traditional “Reputationsraum” for Scandinavians – is certainly worth noting. Thus, the relic both visualized and granted legitimacy and was able to connect both old (success, the king as “best man”) and new (Christian, kingship as divine office) ideologies of kingship in an age of transition. Consequently, Sigurd’s rule remained unchallenged after his brothers’ deaths.

Furthermore, the relic of the True Cross also played an important role in the wars of succession (c.1130–1240) precipitated by Sigurd’s attempt to establish his only son Magnus as his sole successor. Harald, an alleged son of Sigurd’s father King Magnus Barefoot (r. 1093–1103), travelled to Sigurd’s court and was accepted as a relative under the condition that he must not claim the throne during Sigurd’s or his son’s lifetime – which he swore. However, the oath was broken immediately after Sigurd’s death in 1130 – both Magnus and Harald had themselves elected and pronounced

57 Sentkowski *et al*, “Das Wahre Kreuz in Skandinavien,” 14–17. Cf. also Marianne Kalinke, “Sigurðar saga Jónsalafara. The Fictionalization of Fact in *Morkinskinna*,” *Scandinavian Studies* 56, no. 1 (1984): 162 for the drinking bouts.

58 *Morkinskinna* ch. 78: 131–134. Cf. also Sentkowski *et al*, “Das Wahre Kreuz in Skandinavien:” 14–17; Raupp, “Das Wahre Kreuz in den nordischen Königreichen,” 44–6; Kalinke, “Sigurðar saga Jónsalafara,” 163f.; Foerster, *Vergleich und Identität*, 152–4; Heinz Klingenberg, “Das Herrscherportrait in *Heimskringla*. ± gross – ± schön,” in *Snorri Sturluson. Kolloquium anlässlich der 750. Wiederkehr seines Todestages*, ed. Alois Wolf, ScriptOralia (Tübingen: Narr, 1993), 121–6; Halvdan Koht, “Kong Sigurd på Jorsal-ferd,” *Historisk Tidsskrift* 5 (1924): 167.

59 Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, vol. 3, *Magnússona saga*, ch. 21: “Heyrt muntu þat hafa, at ek átta orrostur mjök margar í Serklandi, er þú munt heyrt hafa getit, ok fekk ek í qllum sigr ok margs konar gørsimar, þær er eigi hafa slíkar komit hingat í land. Þóttu ek þar mest verðr, er ek fann gøfgasta menn, en ek hygg, at eigi hafir þú enn hleypt heimdraganum.” Cf. also *Hulda-Hrokinskinna*: ch. 26, *Saga Sigurðar Jónsalafara*.

king by different Things.⁶⁰ After a short period of uneasy coregency, the two kings clashed at Färlöv [*Fyrileif*], where “King Magnús had the Holy Cross carried before him in battle”⁶¹ – a usage similar to the way it was used as a sign of victory in Jerusalem – but certainly also as a visual representation of legitimacy and divine approval directed at friend and foe alike.⁶² When Magnus was later defeated at Bergen, Harald tried to gain possession of the relic that Magnus had arguably also used as insignia, as a personal talisman or for protection: “Magnús had had the Holy Cross with him since the battle of Fyrileif had taken place, and he would not tell where it had got to now.”⁶³ The importance of the relic is stressed by the fact that Bishop Rainald, one of Magnus’s supporters, was hanged for not revealing its hiding place.⁶⁴ Taking the relic from Magnus would also have meant both a form of denunciation of the legitimacy of his rule as well as a legitimation of Harald’s claim in this context.⁶⁵ The cross (or perhaps several cross relics) is mentioned on several occasions during the subsequent civil war period,⁶⁶ also with respect to Sigurd:

And he kept to some of this, for he imposed a tithe, but the rest he disregarded, and this would have caused great harm had not God intervened miraculously. Sigurðr built a church on the frontier, and put the Cross there, almost in the heathen’s hands – as later happened – thinking this would act to protect the country, but this proved ill-advised, for the heathens came, burned the church and captured the Cross and the priest and took both away.

60 Sentkowski *et al.*, “Das Wahre Kreuz in Skandinavien,” 8, 10, 21.

61 Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, vol. 3, *Magnúss saga blinda ok Haralds gilla*, ch. 3: “Magnús konungr lét bera fyrir sér krossinn helga í orrostu.” Cf. also *Morkinskinna* ch. 89: 155. “Magnús konungr lét bera fyrir sér krossinn helga í orrostu þessi.”; *Hulda-Hrokkinskinna* 1831–1832: ch. 4, *Saga Haralds Gilla*. This is not mentioned in *Fagrskinna*, and whether *Ágrip* originally contained the passage remains an open question, since there is a lacuna in the manuscript (AM 325 II 4to). Theodoricus ends his account after Sigurd’s demise, thus omitting further information on the relic.

62 Raupp, “Das Wahre Kreuz in den nordischen Königreichen,” 53f.; Sentkowski *et al.*, “Das Wahre Kreuz in Skandinavien,” 17f.; Norton, “Archbishop Eystein, King Magnus and the Copenhagen Psalter,” 207; Astås, “Kristus-relikvier:” 9. For the use in Jerusalem cf. especially Murray, “Mighty Against the Enemies of Christ”.

63 Snorri Sturluson 2016, *Heimskringla*, vol. 3, *Magnúss saga blinda ok Haralds gilla*, ch. 8: “Krossinn helga hafði Magnús haft með sér, síðan er Fyrileifarorrosta hafði verit, ok vildi hann ekki til segja, hvar þá var kominn”; Raupp 2014, “Das Wahre Kreuz in den nordischen Königreichen zu Beginn des 12. Jhs:” 55; Sentkowski *et al.* 2013, “Das Wahre Kreuz in Skandinavien,” 17f.; Hermanson, “The Town of Kungahälla as a Power Base,” 46; Norton, “Archbishop Eystein, King Magnus and the Copenhagen Psalter,” 207; Hege Roaldset, *Mariakirken i Oslo. De religiøse funksjonene* (Oslo: Unipub forlag, 2000), 78–90. For the use as phylactery as such cf. for example Ligato 1996, “The Political Meanings of the Relic of the Holy Cross,” 326; Schreiner, “Signa Victricia,” 290f.; Staecker, *Rex regum et dominus dominorum*, 64.

64 Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, vol. 3, *Magnúss saga blinda ok Haralds gilla*, ch. 8; Raupp, “Das Wahre Kreuz in den nordischen Königreichen,” 54.

65 Raupp, “Das Wahre Kreuz in den nordischen Königreichen,” 55.

66 Raupp, “Das Wahre Kreuz in den nordischen Königreichen,” 63; Astås, “Kristus-relikvier,” 9–14; Norton, “Archbishop Eystein, King Magnus and the Copenhagen Psalter,” 194–7.

Thereafter such a great heat came upon the heathens that they thought themselves almost burning and this terrified them as a bad omen, and the priest told them that this fire came from God's might and the power of the Holy Cross, so they put out a dinghy and put both the Cross and the priest ashore. The priest thought it unwise to subject the Cross a second time to such danger and moved it in secrecy north to the place where it had been sworn on oath that it would be kept, to the shrine of St Óláfr, and there it has remained ever since.⁶⁷

The consequences of Sigurd's choice of not keeping his promises made in Jerusalem is thus related in the so-called summary of the King's Sagas [*Ágrip af Nóregs konungasögum*], written around 1190 by an anonymous author with probable connections to the archbishop's see in Nidaros.⁶⁸ With the Battle of Hattin and the victory of Sverre Sigurdsson in mind – the wrong king from the church's point of view – the author of *Ágrip* seems to make it clear that neither the king is entitled to what belongs to St Olav. This appears to be very much in line with Archbishop Eystein Erlendsson's (ca. 1120–1188) policies of championing the kings of Norway as vassals of St Olav, who, as Bjørn Bandlien has recently argued, also acquired traits of a crusader saint.⁶⁹ The Birchlegs (Sverre's faction) proved to be successful⁷⁰ – I will only suggest here that this may have brought about a possible conflict with regard to the relic. However, the legitimizing quality does not appear to have been limited to the True Cross, but was possibly attributed to other relics of the Passion, for instance parts of the crown of thorns and the Holy Blood.⁷¹

67 *Ágrip* 2008: chs 53/54: “Ok helt hann þessu sumu, þvíat tíund framði hann, en hinu brá hann, er til mikils geigs myndi standa, ef eigi hefði guð þann geig með jartegnum leyst; reisti kirkju við land-senda ok setti þar krossinn nálga undir vald heiðinna manna – sem síðan gafsk – hugði þar til lands gæzlu ok varð at misræðum. Kómu þar heiðnir menn ok brenndu kirkjuna, tóku krossinn ok kennimanninn ok fluttu hvártveggja braut. Kom síðan at inum heiðnum hiti svá mikill at þeir þóttusk nálga brenna, ok óttuðusk þann atburð sem skyssi, en prestrinn segir þeim at sá bruni kómr af guðs megni ok af kraft ens [he]lga kross, ok þeir skutu þá báti ok settu bæði til lands, krossinn ok prestinn. Ok með því at prestinum þótti eigi heilt at setja hann annat sinni undir sama vāða, þá flutti hann krossinn á launungu norðr til staðarins til ins helga Óláfs, sem hann var svarinn, ok nú er hann síðan.”; Snorri Sturluson 2016, *Heimskringla*, vol. 3, *Magnúss saga blinda ok Haralds gilla*, ch. 11. It is worth noting that *Heimskringla* does not state that the cross was brought to Trondheim.

68 Cf. for instance *Ágrip* 2008: xii.

69 Cf. Chapter 4 (Bjørn Bandlien), 77–85. For Eystein cf. Chapter 14 (Øystein Ekroll), 281–83, and Erik Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein – Statsmann og kirkebygger* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1996), 99–129.

70 Norton, “Archbishop Eystein, King Magnus and the Copenhagen Psalter,” 207f.

71 This has rarely been brought up or been discussed in detail thus far, though royal contexts have been suggested (e.g. Liepe, “Kyrkans sanna skatter,” 81, 92; Astås, “Kristus-relikvier,” 14, 21f.; Andås, “A Royal Chapel for a Royal Relic?”; Norton, “Archbishop Eystein, King Magnus and the Copenhagen Psalter,” 196f., 201–5; Roaldset, *Mariakirken i Oslo*, 77–94; Arne Odd Johnsen, “Ad Filip IV's relikviegaver til Hákon V (1303–1304),” *Historisk tidsskrift* 44 (1965); Arne Odd Johnsen, “Ad Filip IV's relikviegaver til Hákon V,” *Historisk Tidsskrift* 47 (1968); Adam Oberlin, “Vita Sancti, Vita Regi The Saintly King in Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar,” *Neophilologus* 95, no. 2 (2011): 321f.; Ciggaar, “Denmark and Byzantium,” 142. They form an essential part of my work-in-progress dissertation project, as well as the relation of passion relics to other relics.

Conclusions

The relic of the True Cross which Erik the Good is said to have sent home from Byzantium may have had an impact with regard to legitimizing his dynasty – particularly because it is not unlikely that Erik was familiar with Byzantine concepts of rulership. The material visualization of Jerusalem may also have been used in order to strengthen the position of Knud Lavard as a dynastic saint by stressing the connection his father Erik had to the relic. Moreover, it may have played a role for Erik's successors as well, since crusading became important to Danish royalty. The perception of the relic of the True Cross as being both a “symbol of dynastic lordship and interreligious strife” appears to have been transferred to Scandinavia in an even more pronounced manner in the case of King Sigurd: its usage by Sigurd and his immediate successors in Konghelle and on the battlefield, reported in various sources, even suggests it may have undergone (or at least have been intended to) a similar development as a “focal point” of legitimate rulership in early twelfth-century Norway as it did in the kingdom of Jerusalem.

In conclusion, it is likely that passion relics, especially the True Cross, played an important role in medieval Scandinavian politics: the Northern kingdoms' need for legitimation caused by their late Christianization and weak dynastic claims could in some cases partially be compensated for by employing relics.⁷² Since the relics imported by both Sigurd the Crusader and Erik the Good may well have been the first of their kind to reach Denmark and Norway, the impact they had could certainly have been even more far-reaching. Though many references to the relics derive from non-contemporary sources, it is highly plausible that they were essential to Scandinavian, especially Norwegian, politics of succession and legitimation.⁷³ To guarantee either, importing Jerusalem to Scandinavia via these “material visualizations” appears to have been a means worth resorting to, as in the two cases of early⁷⁴ relic translation briefly addressed here. This was achieved by copying and

⁷² Particularly because numerous pretenders claimed the throne and the various succession laws in Norway were rarely adhered to, cf. Raupp, “Das Wahre Kreuz in den nordischen Königreichen,” 65–8; Ulrike Sprenger, *Sturla Þórðarsons Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Germanistik und Skandinavistik (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2000), 27, 40; Bagge 2010, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, 41, 63; Bagge, “From Fist to Scepter,” 167f.; Bagge, *Cross and Scepter*, 55; Strauch, *Mittelalterliches nordisches Recht bis 1500*, 26–9; Sawyer and Sawyer, *Medieval Scandinavia*, 171; Hoffmann, “Coronation and Coronation Ordines,” 125–7.

⁷³ Raupp, “Das Wahre Kreuz in den nordischen Königreichen,” 67f., both actually and on a literary level.

⁷⁴ Raupp, “Das Wahre Kreuz in den nordischen Königreichen,” 28f. 47, 63, 68; Astås, “Kristusrelikvier,” 11.

mirroring the way the relic of the True Cross was used in Byzantium and Jerusalem. In the case of King Sigurd, Jerusalem even became part of his very name – *Sigurðr Jórsalafari* – as he is referred to in many medieval sources or in an even more pronounced manner in the common variant *Jorsala Sigurðr*.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Cf. for example: *Morkinskinna*, ch. 73: 106, 82: 141, 103: 215; *Heimskringla: Magnússona saga* ch. 30: 271; *Haraldssona saga*, ch. 17: 324; *Ágrip*, ch. 29: 42f.; *Groenlendinga Þátr*: 273; *Hulda-Hrokkinskinna. Saga Sigurðar Jórsalafara* ch. 43: 159, 53: 174, *Saga Inga Haraldssonar* ch. 17: 231, *Saga Hákonar Herðibreiðs* ch. 21: 280; *Sverris saga* ch. 3: 7, 85: 130, 95: 147, 98: 151. *Boðlunga saga*: 146, *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* ch. 343: 183, 352: 197; *Knýtlinga saga* ch. 81: 237, 88: 246; 93: 256, 100: 264, 124: 308; *Ágrip af sögu Danakonunga*: 332f.; *Hungurvaka* ch. 6: 26f.; *Orkneyinga saga*, ch. 88/89. For the second variant cf. for instance *Morkinskinna* II: 114, *Fagrskinna*: 371; *Hemings Þátr Áslákssonar*: 44; *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða*, ch. 7: 9.



Fig. 9.1: St Mary's Church, Oslo. Reconstruction of the façade by Harald Sundt, 1926. The church, erected in the twelfth century and demolished in 1542, was a royal chapel with its own chapter, independent of the bishop of Oslo.

Lena Liepe

Chapter 9

The Crown of Thorns and the Royal Office in Thirteenth- and Fourteenth-Century Scandinavia

Inventory lists and diplomas reveal that precious pieces of Christ's crown of thorns were in the possession of several Scandinavian rulers in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In three cases the thorn relics are reported to have been gifts from the French kings Philip III and Philip IV to their Scandinavian counterparts, thus forming a direct link to the Holy Crown that King Louis IX had brought to Paris and placed in the Sainte-Chapelle. This chapter explores how these thorn relics, and also other passion relics such as fragments from the Cross, not only served as tangible presences of Jerusalem in the royal churches where they were kept, but may also have contributed to the ideological construction of the king as a ruler by divine right after the model of Louis IX. It is further suggested that Philip IV's gift to Norwegian king Magnus V Haakonsson of a relic of St Louis (Louis IX) together with the thorn relic may be read as a message about the obligations of a Christian ruler to take on the role of the crusader in the winning back of the kingdom of Jerusalem.

“The treasures here accounted for are in St Mary's Church in Oslo in Your Majesty's realm Norway.” These are the opening words of an inventory of the valuables of the said church, compiled in 1523 or 1524 for King Christian II of Denmark (1481–1559).¹ The list is long: it contains a large cross mounted with gold and gems, a silver base for yet another cross, a gilded image of the French royal saint Louis IX, a gilded image of the Swedish royal saint Erik, two chalices with patens in gold and a smaller chalice made from silver, three censers, two small gilded crosses, four

¹ DN, vol. 8, 528. The date of the inventory is deduced from its mention in the text of Hans Mule (d. 1524), the later bishop of Oslo, who is referred to as *mesther Hans Mule*. Mule was elected bishop by the chapter of Oslo Cathedral in 1521, but was ordained only in the autumn of 1524, when the pope's consent was finally given. Nicolay Nicolaysen assumed that the inventory list was written before 1521 (Nicolay Nicolaysen, *Norske fornlevninger. En oplysende fortegnelse over Norges fortidslevninger, ældre end reformationen og henførte til hver sit sted*, Foreningen til norske fortidsminnesmerkers bevaring (Kristiania: Carl C. Werner & Comp's Bogtrykkeri, 1862–1866), 30 n. 3). In doing so he overlooked Hans Arildson's concluding words about all the treasures being transferred to Akerhus Castle the days before the Swedish troops invaded Oslo, i.e. in late March 1523. Thus, the list must have been compiled sometime between April 1523 and August/September 1524 (cf. DN, vol. 8, 528 n. 1).

silver crowns, large and small clasps in precious metal, three gilded and silver-plated bowls, a large gilded monstrance for the main altar, two smaller monstrances, some ten to twelve books with gilded covers studded with pearls and gems, the church's vestments and liturgical textiles, and its collection of letters and documents. Listed are also a number of objects that belong to a particular category of church treasures, namely, reliquaries in precious metal: two gilded angels holding a fragment of the Lord's crown of thorns; a silver-plated board set with relics; a tall, gilded reliquary; and three or four smaller reliquaries, one gilded and the others silver plated. The compiler of the list, Hans Arildson, concludes by informing the king that all the valuables had been transferred from the church to Akershus Castle only days before the Swedish and Lübeck troops arrived in Oslo, i.e. at the end of March 1523.

A French source from the early fourteenth century provides additional information regarding the acquisition of the thorn reliquary supported by angels and the gilded statuette of St Louis. This 1304 account of the jewels belonging to King Philip IV of France (1268–1314) reveals that a gift was sent that year from the French king to the “Roi de Noroi”, in other words, to King Haakon V Magnusson of Norway (1270–1319). The gift consisted of two gilded silver angels with a thorn relic, as well as an image made from silver of St Louis, adorned by a golden crown and holding a finger bone from the saint. Arne Odd Johnson, who was the first to bring this source to light, makes the likely assumption that the thorn reliquary and the silver figure are identical to the items mentioned in the 1523/24 list, and he further suggests that King Haakon bequeathed the reliquaries with their content to St Mary's Church as part of the institutionalization of that church as a royal chapel.²

A further, albeit indirect, connection exists between King Haakon and the silver-plated board set with relics listed in the 1523/24 inventory. In his will, written sometime between 1312 and 1319, King Haakon donated seventy marks in pure silver to the Church of the Apostles in Bergen, to be used for the manufacturing of a relic board “ad modum tabule reliquiarum, que in ecclesia beate Marie virginis in Osloya,” that is, like the one found in St Mary's Church in Oslo.³ The second decade of the fourteenth century thus represents a *terminus ante quem* for the Oslo relic board.

Inhabited Liturgical Space

A medieval church interior was an inhabited space: it was filled by the presence of the saints in the form of their relics. In the main altar, the altar grave or *sepulcrum*

² Arne Odd Johnsen, “Ad Filip IV's relikviégaver til Håkon V (1303–1304),” *Historisk tidsskrift* 44 (1965): 153–4.

³ DN, vol. 4, 128.

contained relics deposited there by the bishop when the church was consecrated. Additional relics, if such existed, could be kept in shrines and in reliquaries small enough to be put on display and carried around in processions at the major church feasts. Today, few traces remain in Scandinavia of the once prolific medieval cult of saints' relics. After the Lutheran reformation, the saints became obsolete, their remains were no longer deemed to communicate heavenly glory, and the shrines and reliquaries that had once held them were for the most part confiscated and lost.⁴ Perhaps because of their physical absence, relics have until fairly recently failed to attract the scholarly attention they deserve, and their importance for medieval spirituality as well as for political legitimation long remained only a minor feature of medieval cultural history. Recently, however, international research on relics started to boom, as made evident by a major exhibition of relics and reliquaries titled *Treasures of Heaven*, staged in 2010–2011 in collaboration between the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore and the British Museum, as well as a wealth of publications on relics and relic veneration in medieval Christianity.⁵

The study of relics allows for a wide array of approaches. Topics dealt with include the institutional framework of the cult of relics, the role of relics in the devotional life of the individual, and, not least, relics as forceful political resources within medieval public life.⁶ The present essay explores the role of relics in late

⁴ For an overview of surviving reliquaries, see Erik Horskjær and Rune Norberg, "Relikvarium," in *KLNM* with references.

⁵ Recent scholarship on relics include Martina Bagnoli et al., eds., *Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics and Devotion in Medieval Europe* (London: The British Museum Press, 2011); Philippe Betia, *Les reliques de la passion du Christ: Histoire et spiritualité* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012); Édina Bozóky, *La politique des reliques de Constantin à Saint Louis: Protection collective et légitimation du pouvoir* (Paris: Beauchesne, 2006); Jean-Luc Deuffic, ed. *Reliques et sainteté dans l'espace médiéval*, *Pecia. Ressources en médiévisique 8–11* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005); Charles Freeman, *Holy Bones, Holy Dust. How Relics Shaped the History of Medieval Europe* (London – New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011); Cynthia Hahn, *Strange Beauty: Issues in the Making and Meaning of Reliquaries, 400–circa 1204* (University Park PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013); Cynthia Hahn, *The Reliquary Effect. Enshrining the Sacred Object* (London: Reaktion Books, 2017); Cynthia Hahn and Holger A. Klein, eds., *Saints and Sacred Matter. The Cult of Relics in Byzantium and Beyond*, *Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Symposia and Colloquia* (Dumbarton Oaks: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2016); Robyn Malo, *Relics and Writing in Late Medieval England* (Toronto – Buffalo – London: Toronto University Press, 2013); Henk van Os, *The Way to Heaven. Relic Veneration in the Middle Ages* (Baarn: de Prom, 2000); and James Robinson, Lloyd de Beer, and Anna Harnden, eds., *Matter of Faith: An Interdisciplinary Study of Relics and Relic Veneration in the Medieval Period*, vol. 195, *Research publication* (London: The British Museum Press, 2015).

⁶ To the titles listed in the previous footnote can be added a number of important works from the 1980s and 1990s: Arnold Angenendt, *Heilige und Reliquien. Die Geschichte ihres Kultes vom frühen Christentum bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1994); Édina Bozóky and Anne-Marie Helvétius, eds., *Les reliques: Objets, cultes, symboles. Actes du colloque international de l'Université du Littoral-Côte d'Opale (Boulogne-sur-Mer) 4–6 septembre 1997* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999); Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints. Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, *Haskell Lectures on History*

medieval Scandinavia as instruments for the legitimation of royal authority.⁷ The objects in question are passion relics: primarily pieces of the crown of thorns, but also fragments of Christ's cross. The 1523/24 inventory of the treasury of St Mary's Church in Oslo serves as the point of departure, and a number of relics and reliquaries mentioned there will be explored as constituents of a larger pattern of relic use and relic donations associated with royal power in medieval Scandinavia. As vestiges of the most crucial event in the history of salvation, Christ's sacrificial death on the cross on Golgotha, passion relics played an extraordinarily powerful role in the conceptualization of Jerusalem as the pivotal centre of the Christian universe. Their connection to the Holy City was not merely metaphorical, but real: the presence of a passion relic in a Scandinavian church room meant that Jerusalem – in the past, present, and future sense: as the site of the crucifixion, as the earthly destination of pilgrims and crusaders alike, and as the heavenly abode of all blessed after the end of time – became part of the here and now of the faithful.⁸ The fact that a number of thorn relics were in royal possession in Scandinavia in the later Middle Ages adds yet a dimension to the rich weave of symbolic meaning spun around Jerusalem as the centre of medieval Christendom by drawing on the association of this most precious of passion relics to the ideology of the sovereign as a ruler by divine right.

Thorn Relics in Norway and Sweden

The thorn reliquary given by Philip IV to Haakon V Magnusson in 1304 was not the only one of its kind in Scandinavia. Thirty years earlier, in 1274, a similar gift was exchanged between the fathers of the two monarchs when Philip III of France (1245–1285) presented King Magnus VI Haakonsson (1238–1280, posthumously known as Magnus *lagabøte* [the Lawmender]) with a thorn relic in a container made from rock

of Religions. New series 2 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981); Patrick J. Geary, *Furta Sacra. Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978); Patrick J. Geary, "Sacred Commodities: The Circulation of Medieval Relics," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge – New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Nicole Herrmann-Mascard, *Les reliques des saints. Formation coutumière d'un droit*, Société d'histoire du droit, Collection d'histoire institutionnelle et sociale 6 (Paris: Éditions Klincksieck, 1975); Anton Legner, *Reliquien in Kunst und Kult: Zwischen Antike und Aufklärung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft (WGB), 1995); and Anton Legner, *Reliquien. Verehrung und Verklärung. Skizzen und Noten zur Thematik und Katalog zur Ausstellung der Kölner Sammlung Louis Peters im Schnütgen-Museum* (Cologne: Schnütgen-Museum der Stadt Köln, 1989).

⁷ For the role of passion relics in political legitimation in twelfth-century Scandinavia, see Chapter 8 (Lukas Raupp), 140–65.

⁸ Cf. the introduction to this volume, Chapter 1 (Kristin B. Aavitsland), 18.

crystal and held by a silver angel.⁹ The gift was collected in France by Archbishop Jon, who brought it to Bergen, up until the early fourteenth century the seat of government of the Norwegian king. At first it was kept in Bergen Cathedral; it was then translated to the Church of the Apostles in Bergen. The transfer concurred with the foundation, by King Magnus in 1275, of a new church to replace the existing structure. The new Church of the Apostles was consecrated in 1302, when Haakon V Magnusson had succeeded to the throne.¹⁰ An inventory from 1523 of the treasury of the Church of the Apostles confirms that the thorn reliquary was at that time still part of the church's treasury.

Several more instances of possession and exchange of thorn relics in Scandinavian royal circles in the fourteenth century are documented in written sources. In 1304, the same year that Haakon V Magnusson received the thorn relic and the finger relic of St Louis from King Philip IV, the Norwegian king himself presented a thorn from Christ's crown of thorns to the Swedish bishop Brynolf Algotsson of Skara (1248–1317). The gift is described in an office for the celebration of the Feast of the Thorn, September 2, *De Spinea Corona*. The text does not specify whether the thorn originated from the thorn relic that Haakon V Magnusson had received that same year, or from the relic given to Magnus VI Haakonsson in 1274, or if it had been obtained by other means.¹¹ In 1346, King Magnus Eriksson and Queen Blanca of Norway and Sweden bequeathed a thorn relic in a crystal container studded with gems, together with an unspecified number of other relics deriving from Christ, to the abbey church of the Birgittine monastery in Vadstena. At the time of the donation, the monastery existed only in the mind of the founder, St Birgitta, and in their will the royal couple undertook to realize the plan.¹²

A letter written by King Birger of Sweden (1280–1318) in 1311 offers a remarkable testimony of the solemnity with which royal owners approached their relics. In the missive, the king entrusted the chapter of the Uppsala Cathedral with the task of

⁹ For King Magnus VI Haakonsson and his mending of Norwegian law, see Chapter 23 (Jørn Øyrehagen Sunde) 500–19.

¹⁰ Nicolaysen 1862–1866, *Norske fornlevninger*: 425–6, 28; *Monumenta Historica Norvegiæ. Latinske Kildeskrifter til Norges Historie i Middelalderen*, ed. Gustav Storm. Kristiania: A. W. Brøgger, 1880, 73, 146, 194, 332. The reliquary is described in the *Breviarium Nidrosiensis lectiones* for the celebration of the Feast of the Crown of Thorns, November 9 (*Islandske Annaler indtil 1578*, ed. Gustav Storm. Christiania: Grøndahl & Søns Bogtrykkeri, 1888, 161–2.)

¹¹ Ann-Marie Nilsson, *Sånger till fyra kyrkofester i Skara stift*, vol. 62, Skara stiftshistoriska sällskaps skriftserie (Skara: Skara stiftshistoriska sällskap, 2011), 83–4; Henrik Schück, “Ur gamla anteckningar X. De spinea corona,” *Samlaren. Tidskrift utgifven af Svenska Litteratursällskapets arbetsutskott* 39 (1918). On the question of whether Brynolf Algotsson himself is the author of the office, see Toni Schmid, “Smärre liturgiska bidrag VII. Från Capella Regia,” *Nordisk tidskrift för bok- och biblioteksväsen* 20 (1933): 40 and Anders Piltz, “Medeltidskyrkans genrer ca 1150–1520,” in *Den svenska litteraturen 1. Från forntid till frihetstid 800–1718*, ed. Lars Lönnroth and Sven Delblanc (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1987), 71–2.

¹² SDHK, 5307.

safeguarding a number of treasures, among them the royal regalia and a collection of relics, that, due to the king's exacting duties and frequent travelling, were not being treated with proper reverence. The deacons were commanded to place the relics temporarily in the church and to keep a close watch on them.¹³ The letter makes special mention of one of the relics: an angel with a thorn from the crown of thorns [*angelum cum spina de corona Domini*]. Thus, King Birger owned a thorn reliquary akin to the ones that Magnus VI Haakonsson and Haakon V Magnusson had received from France, and it seems reasonable to ascribe a similar origin to King Birger's relic. Support for this theory is provided by the first *lectio* in an undated office for May 4, the day of the Feast of the Crown of Thorns.¹⁴ According to Toni Schmid, the *lectio* was probably written by one of the clerics of the chapel at the Stockholm royal palace.¹⁵ It tells how, in 1288, King Philip of France gave “*vnam spinam de corona sancta*” to King Magnus Birgersson (1240–1290, posthumously known as Magnus *Ladulås* [Barnlock]), and it is logical to assume that this is the relic that twenty years later was in the possession of King Birger. The office is not an entirely original product: Schmid has noted that the second and third *lectio* are copied verbatim from the Skara office *De Spinea Corona*.¹⁶ The Stockholm office can thus have been written no earlier than 1304, i.e. fifteen years or more after the alleged gift took place. Its part dependence on the Skara office does not necessarily diminish the informative value of the first *lectio*. Further, whether its assertion of a French royal origin of the thorn relic is historically accurate or not, it shows the importance attached to the very notion of the thorn as a relic deriving from the Holy Crown in Paris.¹⁷

Reliquaries supported by angels are by no means a feature unique to Scandinavia. In his magisterial *Die Reliquiare des christlichen Kultes und ihre Entwicklung* (1940), Joseph Braun accounts for a number of relic containers of various kinds – shrines, troughs, ciboria and ostensories – where angels form part of the design; and figure reliquaries shaped as angels are recorded in several registers of objects in precious metal that were confiscated from Swedish churches during the Reformation (cf. below). Nor

13 SDHK, 2435; Hans Hildebrand, “Sveriges medeltid. Kulturhistorisk skildring,” vol. 3:5 *Kyrkan* (Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt & Söners Förlag, 1898–1903), 641–3.

14 Not to be confused with the Feast of the Thorn that was celebrated in Skara on September 2, the day that King Håkon V Magnusson according to the legend gave the thorn to Bishop Brynolf.

15 Schmid, “Smärre liturgiska bidrag VII. Från Capella Regia,” 38.

16 Schmid, “Smärre liturgiska bidrag VII. Från Capella Regia,” 41.

17 In a study of the relics of Skara Cathedral, Harald Widéen constructs a genealogy for the Norwegian and Swedish thorn relics premised on the assumption that the thorn presented to Bishop Brynolf came from one of the two French relic gifts. He further hypothesizes that King Birger's thorn relic was entrusted to Brynolf during his student days in Paris, for him to bring home to King Magnus Birgersson (Harald Widéen, “Skara domkyrkas medeltida relikier,” in *Skarastudier. Minnesskrift II*, Svenska Humanistiska Förbundets Skrifter (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1951), 30). Neither assertion can be verified in historical sources.

were angels reserved for thorn reliquaries. The museum of San Domenico in Bologna has in its collections a crystal reliquary shaped as a miniature shrine supported by two angels and holding a relic of St Louis given to the church in 1297 by King Philip IV of France: in other words, a gift analogous to the ones received by Magnus VI Haakonsson and Haakon V Magnusson of Norway, but meant to house a relic of the French saintly king instead of a thorn relic.¹⁸ Additionally, the St-Pierre-St Paul Church in Maubeuge in northern France owns a reliquary held by an angel and containing the veil of the Merovingian saint Aldegunde.¹⁹ A fifteenth-century reliquary held by three angels and containing a finger bone is today at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, whereas the Detroit Institute of Arts owns a fourteenth-century reliquary of French origin, possibly made in Paris, with two angels supporting a rock-crystal container with an unidentified bone.²⁰

It is clear, then, that rock-crystal reliquaries supported by angels were in circulation in various contexts in the later Middle Ages. It is nonetheless remarkable that in Scandinavia, between 1274 and 1346, there were three royal examples of thorn relics supported by angels and of alleged French origin. And not surprisingly, these works have attracted the attention of several scholars. Norwegian historians in particular have considered Magnus VI Haakonsson's and Haakon V Magnusson's reception and ownership of the thorn relics in the light of contemporary ideological notions of the nature of royal power, focusing on not only the relics themselves, but also their physical surroundings and the institutional context in which they existed.

The Norwegian Thorn Relics and the Royal Chapels

Magnus VI Haakonsson's founding of a new Church of the Apostles in Bergen the year after receiving the thorn relic from Philip III has led historians to make comparisons with the choices King Louis IX of France (1214–1270, the future St Louis) made for the most prominent of all thorn relics, namely, the Holy Crown, which the French king bought from Emperor Baldwin II of Constantinople in 1239. To house the acquisition, consisting not only of the Holy Crown but also an additional number of passion relics, Louis IX built Sainte-Chapelle within the precincts of the royal palace on Île de la Cité in Paris. Sainte-Chapelle was consecrated in 1248 and quickly attained status as one of the most celebrated and admired buildings of the Middle Ages. It forms part of a long tradition of oratories and chapels

¹⁸ Joseph Braun, *Die Reliquiare des christlichen Kultes und ihre Entwicklung* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder & Co. Gmbh. Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1940), 177, figs. 03–04.

¹⁹ Braun, *Die Reliquiare des christlichen Kultes*, 314, fig. 17.

²⁰ Walters Art Museum, acc.no. 57.690; Detroit Institute of Arts, acc.no. DIA 28.147. I wish to thank Noëlle Lynn Wenger Streeton for providing me with details about the Detroit reliquary.

raised in connection to royal palaces for the purpose of housing relics.²¹ It is possible that Magnus VI Haakonsson intentionally attempted to affiliate himself with this tradition when he laid the foundation for the new Church of the Apostles in the royal apple orchard in Bergen.²² Although there are no sources explicitly stating so, historians have more or less assumed that the new church was built in large part to provide a fitting setting for the costly relic.²³ Neither the exact location of the church nor its design are known today, but based on presumed remains of the building, Hans-Emil Lidén and Ellen Marie Magerøy suggest that it may have been a one-aisled structure with a polygonal eastern end, much along the lines of Sainte-Chapelle in Paris.²⁴

During this period, St Mary's Church in Oslo was also rebuilt, to enhance its grandeur. The initiative behind the reconstruction has been attributed to Haakon V Magnusson, and the work may have begun as early as the 1290s, when he was still a duke.²⁵ The fact that King Haakon's will, written in 1312–1319, provided no funds for the work leads Sverre Bagge to conclude that it had been finished by then.²⁶ Randi Horgen dates the completion of the building to 1302, based on the burial of King Haakon's father-in-law, Prince Witzlaw, in the church at the turn of the year 1302–1303.²⁷ As part of the renovations, the nave, dating back to the 1070s, gained a monumental west-facing section, whereas the eastern part was enlarged with a new transept and a straight-end chancel, all built in brick.²⁸

The Church of the Apostles in Bergen and St Mary's Church in Oslo both belonged to a group of royal chapels, fourteen in all, for which King Haakon V

21 Inge Hacker-Sück, "La Sainte-Chapelle de Paris et les chapelles palatines du Moyen Âge en France," *Cahiers archéologiques. Fin de l'antiquité et Moyen Âge* 13 (1962).

22 *Lovgivningen under Kong Magnus Haakonssøns Regjeringstid fra 1263 til 1280, tilligemed et Supplement til første Bind*, ed. Rudolf Keyser and Peter Andreas Munch, Norges gamle love indtil 1387 II, Christiania: Chr. Grøndahl, 1848.

23 Reidar Astås, "Kristus-relikvier i norske middelalderkirker," <http://www-bib.hive.no/tekster/Astaas-2011-Kristus-relikvier-i-norske-middelalderkirker.pdf> (2011); Sverre Bagge, *Den kongelige kapellgestlighet 1150–1319* (Bergen – Oslo – Tromsø: Universitetsforlaget, 1976), 166; Anders Bugge, "Norge," in *Nordisk kultur 23. Kirkebygninger og deres udstyr* (Oslo: Aschehoug & Co.s forlag / Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag / Copenhagen: J. H. Schultz forlag, 1933), 244; Gerhard Fischer, *Norske kongeborger I*, Norske minnesmerker (Oslo: J. W. Cappelen forlag, 1951), 231; Hans-Emil Lidén and Ellen Marie Magerøy, *Bergen. Norges kirker*, vol. I, Norske minnesmerker (Oslo: Riksantikvaren/Gyldendal Norsk forlag, 1980), 137; Molland, Einar. "Reliker: Norge." In *KLNM*, col. 52; Nicolaysen 1862–1866, *Norske fornlevninger*: 425; Schmid, "Smärre liturgiska bidrag VII. Från Capella Regia," 36.

24 Lidén and Magerøy, *Bergen. Norges kirker*, vol. I, 138.

25 Bagge, *Den kongelige kapellgestlighet*, 174–75; Randi Horgen, "Håkon Vs Mariakirke i Oslo. Bygningsbeskrivelse og tolkninger I, II" (Master Thesis, University of Oslo, 1995), vol. I, 17–20.

26 Bagge, *Den kongelige kapellgestlighet*, 174.

27 Horgen, "Håkon Vs Mariakirke i Oslo," vol. I, 20.

28 See Horgen, "Håkon Vs Mariakirke i Oslo," for a building description and attempted reconstruction of St. Mary's Church.

Magnusson acquired a special papal consent, in 1308, allowing him to separate the chapels from the main church organization and treat them as an administrative unit with special privileges. The privileges meant that the clerics were, to a degree, disengaged from episcopal jurisdiction and were instead subordinated to the provost of the Church of the Apostles in Bergen. The provost received the title *magister capellarum regis*, magister of the royal chapels, and was granted power to propose to the king candidates for the various offices at the chapels, to be ordained by any bishop. The king thus had exclusive right of patronage to the chapels.²⁹ Even before the 1308 papal consent, King Haakon had granted extensive privileges to St Mary's Church in Oslo, incorporating the clerics in the secular ranking order of his officials, and promoting the provost to royal chancellor "for all eternity." As a chancellor, the provost safeguarded the royal seal, promulgated royal letters, counted among the king's main advisors, kept accounts of the royal estates and incomes, and acted as a royal envoy.³⁰ A first initiative to establish royal chapels with colleges of clerics functioning as royal officials seems to have been taken already by King Haakon IV Haakonsson in the thirteenth century, and was to a certain extent continued by Magnus VI Haakonsson, but it was Haakon V Magnusson who, by attaining the papal privilege in 1308, formalized the system whereby the chapel clergy de facto became royal officials, part of the royal administration.³¹ The appointment of the Oslo provost as magister of the royal chapel formed an essential part of the transfer of the royal government from Bergen to Oslo in the early fourteenth century.

Scholars studying the royal chapels have focused primarily on the clergy as an instrument for the royal exercise of power, both from an executive point of view and as part of the royal power politics vis-à-vis the church and the nobility.³² In his study of the royal chapels and their clergy, however, Sverre Bagge points out that the significance of the clergy's religious responsibilities should not be underestimated. A Christian monarch needed clerics who could celebrate Mass, receive confessions and give absolution, and, not least, hold requiems for the salvation of the monarch and the royal family and retinue.³³ The chapels were potentially important also from a political-ideological point of view, as sites for the propagation of the medieval idea of the divine right of kings. According to high medieval sacropolitical philosophy, the royal office was founded on religious authority: a king received his position by the grace of God, and the continuous liturgical celebration in the royal chapels served as a manifestation of royal sovereignty as a divinely sanctioned institution. In a Norwegian context, the notion of the monarch as *rex imago*

²⁹ DN, vol. 1, 113; Bagge, *Den kongelige kapellgestlighet*, espec. 24, 89–95.

³⁰ DN, vol. 1, 143; see Bagge, *Den kongelige kapellgestlighet*, 89–90, 149–53.

³¹ Bagge, *Den kongelige kapellgestlighet*, 59–88.

³² Cf. Bagge, *Den kongelige kapellgestlighet*, 11–15.

³³ Bagge, *Den kongelige kapellgestlighet*, 158–9.

Dei and *rex iustus* – the image of God and God’s righteous representative on earth – finds its main expression in *The King’s Mirror* [*Konungs Skuggsiá*], written c.1250 during the reign of Haakon IV Haakonsson.³⁴ Here, the king is defined as the anointed of the Lord, ruling by authority bestowed by God directly. His demand for complete submission from the subjects is absolute, but he is also morally obliged to imitate God in wisdom and to rule over his realm as God rules the universe.³⁵

This sacro-political ideology is a key factor in Hege Roaldset’s study of the religious functions of St Mary’s Church in Oslo. She interprets the relics given by Philip IV to Haakon V Magnusson as essential components in the Norwegian king’s staging of himself as a divine ruler in the model of the French monarchy, and in particular Louis IX. She draws attention to the fact that a royal chapel founded by Haakon V Magnusson on the island of Tyssøy was dedicated to St. Louis, and she makes a comparison between the king’s presentation of a thorn relic to the Skara bishop and the distribution of St Louis relics by French kings to foreign rulers and religious institutions.³⁶ Her conclusion is that King Haakon deliberately sought to model himself on Louis IX as a royal ideal.³⁷ She further agrees with Arne Odd Johnsen in assuming that King Haakon placed the thorn relic and the St Louis relic in St Mary’s Church as part of a strategy to promote Oslo as the new political centre of the realm, thereby favouring the Oslo church over the Church of the Apostles in Bergen with regard to relics.³⁸

Considering that the Church of the Apostles already possessed that most precious of relics, a thorn from the crown of thorns, it is questionable whether St Mary’s Church gained any advantage in that respect. If it is correct, as is assumed by Johnsen and Roaldset, that Haakon V Magnusson placed the relics in the church, it may be that he was deliberately attempting to emulate Magnus VI Haakonsson’s

34 *The King’s Mirror* is also discussed at length in Chapter 23 (Jørn Øyrehagen Sunde), 501–5.

35 “The king represents divine lordship: for he bears God’s own name and sits upon the highest judgment seat upon earth [. . .] it is the duty of everyone upon earth to respect and honor the royal title which an earthly man holds from God [. . .] For God himself calls the king His anointed, and every king who possesses the full honors of royalty is rightly called the Lord’ anointed.” *The King’s Mirror* (*Speculum regale – Konúngs skuggsjá*. (New York-Oxford: The American-Scandinavian Foundation/ London: Humphrey Mildford-Oxford University Press, 1917), 247–8. “[S]ince the king holds his title from God, it is surely his duty to suit his decisions to divine examples.” *King’s Mirror*, 290. Cf. Sverre Bagge, *The Political Thought of the King’s Mirror* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1987), 86–112; Sverre Bagge, “Introductory Essay,” in *Kongespeilet*, ed. and trans. Anton Wilhelm Brøgger (Oslo: De norske bokklubbene, 2000), xxi, xlii–liv, and Stefka Georgieva Eriksen, “Popular Culture and Royal Propaganda in Norway and Iceland in the 13th Century,” *Collegium Medievale. Interdisciplinary Journal of Medieval Research* 20 (2007).

36 Cf. Jacques Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, trans. Gareth Evan Gollrad (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 234–8, 702.

37 Hege Roaldset, “Mariakirken i Oslo: de religiøse funksjonene” (Master thesis, University of Oslo, 1996), 72.

38 Johnsen, “Ad Filip IV’s relikviegaver,” 153–164; Roaldset, “Mariakirken i Oslo,” 70, 72.

deposition of his thorn relic in the Church of the Apostles thirty years earlier. It should be remembered that both churches were key institutions in the establishment of the royal chapels as instruments for the royal administration. This does not diminish the value of Roaldset's contention that the thorn relics symbolically served to confer divine authority to the secular royal power. Being parts of a crown, the thorns by definition carried royal connotations. The *lectiones* for the Feast of the Holy Crown in Sainte-Chapelle praise the crown as a guaranty of the French monarchy: its glory, it is said, contributes to the elevation of the unshakeable royal throne.³⁹ In all instances in Scandinavia where the circumstances of acquisition of a thorn relic are known, a royal person appears as the donor. There are, however, also references to thorn relics without any known royal connection: the relic collection of Lund Cathedral included a fraction of the crown of thorns contained in a small golden crown, and an inventory from 1515 of the relics belonging to Our Lady's Church in Copenhagen lists a monstrance with a thorn relic, in both cases with no indication of how or from whom the relics were obtained.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the indications of royal patronage with regard to furnishing important ecclesiastic institutions with thorn relics are strong enough to support the idea that the relics could carry a special value as tokens of the sacro-political construction of the monarchy as divinely instituted, and the sovereign as the Lord's anointed representative on earth.

The Silver Statuette and the Relic Board

The second item in King Philip IV's gift to Haakon V Magnusson, the silver statuette of St Louis containing a finger bone from the saint, can be interpreted as a further contribution to the symbolic construction of royal power as a divine right to rule emanating directly from the will of God, this because St Louis was the paragon of royal sovereignty by divine right. Moreover, he was the crusader king *par excellence* of the later Middle Ages. He had taken the cross twice, mounting crusades to Muslim territories in North Africa, and from the moment of his death in 1270 on the second crusade in Tunis, moves were taken to confirm his sanctity by canonization. This came through in 1297, making St Louis the last king of the Middle Ages to be canonized.⁴¹ In the early fourteenth century, the calls to take the cross and recover the Holy Land were as strong as ever, not least in Norway where the

³⁹ Claudine Billot, *Les saintes chapelles royales et princières* (Paris: Éditions du patrimoine, 1998), 12.

⁴⁰ Göran Axel-Nilsson, *Thesaurus Cathedralis Lundensis. Lunds domkyrkas medeltida skattsamling*, vol. 30, Acta Regiae Societatis Scientiarum et Litterarum Gothoburgensis, Humaniora (Gothenburg: Kungl. Vetenskaps- och Vitterhetssamhället, 1989), 90 (the thorn relic of Lund Cathedral); SRD vol. VIII, 264; Niels-Knud Liebgott, *Hellige mænd og kvinder* (Højbjerg: Wormianum, 1982), 124 (the thorn relic of Our Lady's Church, Copenhagen).

⁴¹ Gaposchkin, *The Making of St Louis*.

archbishop of Nidaros was urged repeatedly by the pope in Avignon to contribute to a new crusade by preaching and collecting money from the people. Seen in this light, it is tempting to read the gift's combination of a thorn relic and a relic of St. Louis as a message about the holy duty of a Christian king to support by all means the winning back for Christendom of the kingdom of Jerusalem.

Reliquaries of this nature – a figurine depicting the saint from whom the relic inside supposedly derived – was a common feature of late medieval relic collections. In Scandinavian written sources from the Late Middle Ages and the Reformation, several notations of such reliquaries are found. *Ordo in ostensione sanctarum reliquiarum*, a ritual from the end of the 1470s prescribing the order in which to display the contents of the treasury of Lund Cathedral, lists five silver figure reliquaries: St Lawrence (two), St Mary Magdalene, St Sigfrid, and St Knud.⁴² The relic inventory from Our Lady's Church in Copenhagen contains six figure reliquaries.⁴³ Swedish confiscation registers from the time of the Reformation document the seizure of a number of figures in precious metal: from St Nicholas Church in Stockholm images of St Barbara, St Henrik of Finland, and St Catherine; from Västerås Cathedral images of St John, St Jerome, St Sebastian, and St Lawrence; from Bälänge Church in Uppland two images in gilded silver showing St Nicholas and the Virgin; from St. Mary's Church in Visby, Gotland, three angels in silver and an image made from pure gold; from the monastery of the Order of St John in Eskilstuna a gilded image of St John; from Stora Kopparberg Church in Dalarna two silver images; from Vika Church in Dalarna one silver image; and from Perno Church in Finland three images representing St Lawrence, St Michael, and St Erik.⁴⁴

The only work of this kind that has survived to the present day in Scandinavia is a silver statuette depicting St Catherine of Alexandria. The figure belongs to the so-called Linköping Treasure, a hoard unearthed in 1676 in a field outside the Swedish town of Linköping. An inscription on the socle informs that the statuette was bequeathed by the prebendary priest Nils Johanson Lenck in Stockholm in 1509, supposedly to Linköping Cathedral.⁴⁵ An annotation from the eighteenth century

⁴² SRD, vol. VIII, 446–56. See also Axel-Nilsson, *Thesaurus Cathedralis Lundensis* and Hildebrand "Sveriges medeltid," 614–24. All figure reliquaries but one are recorded as containing relics from several saints. The exception is the statuette of St. Knud, where a wrist bone from the Danish royal saint is the only object held within.

⁴³ SRD, vol. VIII, 260–8; Liebgott, *Hellige mænd og kvinder*, 118–28.

⁴⁴ Olle Källström, *Medeltida kyrksilver från Sverige och Finland förlorat genom Gustav Vasas konfiskationer* (Stockholm: Svenska kyrkans diakonistyrelses bokförlag, 1939); Carl R. af Ugglas, "Prolegomena till ett studium av det kyrkliga guld- och silversmidet i Sverige," *Konsthistorisk tidskrift* IV (1935); Horskjær and Norberg, "Relikvarium," 58.

⁴⁵ Statens Historiska Museum (the Museum of National Antiquities), Stockholm, inv. no. SHM 5. Hildebrand, "Sveriges medeltid. Kulturhistorisk skildring," 639–41; Carl R. af Ugglas, *Kyrkligt guld- och silversmide*, Ur Statens historiska museums samlingar 2 (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrands Förlag, 1933), 39.

states that it then contained a bone from St Catherine of Vadstena, in all likelihood a misunderstanding due to a mix-up of saints.⁴⁶ The 1523/24 inventory of the treasures of St Mary's Church in Oslo mentions two gilded saints' images, the St Louis statuette and an image of St Erik. Relics of the Swedish saintly king were on several occasions removed from the shrine in Uppsala Cathedral and sent to churches abroad.⁴⁷ The Oslo statuette may well have contained relics of the saint, although no sources survive to validate that this was in fact the case.

The 1523/24 inventory features yet another relic container with royal connotations: the silver-plated relic board. King Haakon V Magnusson alludes to what in all likelihood is this board when he bequeathed silver for the manufacturing of a similar item for the Church of the Apostles in Bergen. The board in question was probably a panel-shaped reliquary of a format commonly associated with Byzantine *staurothekai*, reliquaries of the True Cross known to have existed from at least the tenth century onwards. After the Crusader conquest of Constantinople in 1204 and the ensuing influx of Eastern Roman objects into Western Europe, the type became increasingly common in the West. Surviving exemplars, together with numerous references in written sources, testify to its popularity in the later Middle Ages.⁴⁸ A panel reliquary could comprise a single panel, or it could be a diptych or a triptych. The early Byzantine *staurothekai* were normally made to contain fragments of the True Cross. Cross relics were equally the centre pieces of many Western panel reliquaries, but here often supplemented by additional relics. Unusual for a relic, the wooden fragment of the Holy Cross was often left bare and visible, mounted in a cavity in the centre of the panel. Other relics were instead wrapped up in silk and either placed in glass receptacles or secured behind a metal cover perforated by ornamented openings or windows. Other varieties had the relics mounted behind rock crystals set in the frame of a painting, enamel or relief. A label, or *cedula*, identifying the saint in question, was attached to each relic.

Providing that King Haakon's instructions about the manufacturing of a panel reliquary for St Mary's Church were followed, at least two such objects have existed in Norway. Interestingly, King Haakon's daughter Ingeborg (1301–1361), spouse of the Swedish duke Erik Magnusson (1282–1318), donated two gold panels to Uppsala Cathedral more or less at the same time as her father drew up his will. Carl R. af Ugglas identified the panels as probable panel reliquaries, and posited that the donation was made in 1318, i.e. the year Ingeborg was recognized as regent during the minority of her son, Magnus Eriksson, after the death, in prison, of Erik Magnusson and the deposition from power of King Birger, the brother of Erik.⁴⁹ Swedish and Danish sources contain a number of references to panel reliquaries in churches,

⁴⁶ Hildebrand, "Sveriges medeltid," 641.

⁴⁷ SDHK, 33512; SDHK, 22977.

⁴⁸ Braun, *Die Reliquiare des christlichen Kultes*, 262–76.

⁴⁹ SDHK, 4947; af Ugglas, "Prolegomena," 25.

several of which were donated by royal personages. In 1377, Queen Margrethe I of Denmark (1353–1412) gave a gilded panel set with relics to the Cistercian monastery in Ås, Halland.⁵⁰ In 1454, Vadstena Monastery recorded the ownership of a *tabula* in gold, donated by King Erik of Pomerania (1381–1459) and Queen Philippa.⁵¹ In 1478, Kristina, daughter of King Karl Knutsson Bonde of Sweden (1408–1470), presented Vadstena Monastery with a golden panel set with relics that her father had bequeathed to the monastery.⁵² In 1503, the chapter of Strängnäs Cathedral turned over a number of pawned items, among these a panel reliquary, to the Swedish regent Sten Sture (c.1440–1503), who undertook to either cover the loan or return the objects.⁵³ In none of these cases is information provided about what relics the panels contained. Considering the noble rank of the donors, it is not unlikely that several may have held a precious cross relic in their centre: fragments of the Holy Cross belonged to the highest rank in the medieval hierarchy of relics, and they feature in at least three more instances of royal donations to Scandinavian churches.

The True Treasures of the Church

St Mary's Church in Oslo was not alone among the royal chapels to receive relics from King Haakon V Magnusson. The seventy marks pure silver that he bequeathed to the Church of the Apostles in Bergen were intended not only for a panel reliquary but also for the making of two arm reliquaries and “two silver woven cloths set with relics” [*duos textus argenteus cum reliquiis in eisdem existentibus*].⁵⁴ Additionally, St Olav's Church on Avalsnes and St Michael's Church in Tønsberg were given the proprietary right to relics already present in the churches, but theretofore apparently owned by the king.⁵⁵ The donations can be understood in part to be an investment in the churches as components in the newly established system of royal chapels. Seen from a Nordic perspective, however, they also fit into a larger pattern of late medieval royal endowments of costly reliquaries with relics to important

⁵⁰ SDHK, 11078.

⁵¹ *Scriptores rerum Svecicarum medii aevi ex schedis praecipue Nordinianis collectos dispositos ac emendatos*, ed. Ericus Michael Fant, I, Uppsala, 1818,; Hildebrand, “Sveriges medeltid,” 643; af Ugglas, “Prolegomena,” 25.

⁵² SDHK, 30357. I wish to thank Jonas Carlquist, who drew my attention to this diploma.

⁵³ Källström, *Medeltida kyrksilver*, 261 n. 2.

⁵⁴ The silver woven cloths set with relics were presumably *Reliquientüchlein*, textile cloths with relics fastened onto them, of the kind described and illustrated by Joseph Braun in *Die Reliquiare des christlichen Kultes*. At the time of Braun's writing, one such cloth from the late thirteenth century existed in the Halberstadt Cathedral. Braun, *Die Reliquiare des christlichen Kultes und ihre Entwicklung*: 508–509, Figs. 95, 96.

⁵⁵ DN, vol. 4, 128.

ecclesiastic institutions. To the donations already accounted for can be added a further four from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The thorn reliquary that King Magnus Eriksson and Queen Blanca of Sweden bequeathed to the monastery in Vadstena in 1346 was accompanied by two head reliquaries with relics from the 11,000 virgins, a silver cross with a cross relic and three reliquaries made from *gams ægg*, probably ostrich eggs.⁵⁶ In 1376, the chapter of Lund Cathedral received a monstrance made from beryl, mounted on a gold base and containing unspecified relics, from Queen Margrethe I of Denmark.⁵⁷ The cathedral's late medieval ritual *Ordo in ostensione sanctorum reliquiarum* lists a gem-studded golden cross with a cross relic donated by Queen Margrethe, and an ostensory with yet another cross relic offered by Queen Dorothea of Denmark.⁵⁸

A gift of this sort was indeed a regal present, and it was not uncommon for the monetary value of the donated items to be carefully recorded in the sources. The 1304 account of the jewels of King Philip IV of France specify the material value of the two reliquaries sent to the *Roi de Noroi* as 595 livres and 10 sous. The 1523/24 inventory of the treasures of St Mary's Church in Oslo records the weight of each reliquary in lots, marks and pounds. Haakon V Magnusson's will from 1312–1319 stipulated the value of the silver to be used for the making of the panel reliquary and the two arm reliquaries, whereas no mention is made of their planned content, the relics: it is unclear whether they formed part of the church's existing collection or were to be acquired from elsewhere. Nonetheless, for medieval society the main value of a reliquary lay not in the luxurious materials and exquisite craftsmanship: it was the relic, or relics, inside that constituted the true treasure. This point is made clear in the very first recounting of the veneration of saints' relics among the early Christians, a letter written by the Christian congregation of Smyrna after the martyrdom of their bishop, St. Polycarp, in 155:

We took up his bones, which are more valuable than precious stones and finer than refined gold, and deposited them in a suitable place. There gathering together, as we are able, with joy and gladness, the Lord will permit us to celebrate the birthday of his martyrdom in commemoration of those who have already fought in the contest.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ SDHK, 5307.

⁵⁷ SDHK, 10893; SRD, vol. VIII, 454–55; Göran Axel-Nilsson, *Storpolitiskt furstebröllop i Lund på drottning Margaretas tid. Gotisk prakt under romanska valv då Erik av Pommern äktade Filippa av England* (Lund: Gleerupska Universitetsbokhandelns förlag, 1985), 6–7; Axel-Nilsson, *Thesaurus Cathedralis Lundensis*, 36, 105; Carl Georg Brunius, *Skånes konsthistoria för medeltiden* (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1850), 559.

⁵⁸ SRD, vol. VIII, 447; Axel-Nilsson, *Storpolitiskt furstebröllop i Lund*, 12; Axel-Nilsson, *Thesaurus Cathedralis Lundensis*; Hildebrand, "Sveriges medeltid," 615.

⁵⁹ Joseph Barber Lightfoot, J. R. (transl.) Harmer, and Michael W. Holmes, "The Martyrdom of Polycarp," in *The Apostolic Fathers* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990), 18.

The splendour of the relic containers was to be seen as a means, not an end in itself. The sumptuousness of the exteriors conveyed both the infinitely higher value of the content within, and the glory of the saints' continued existence in the Heavenly Jerusalem. Just as the saints in the kingdom of heaven were surrounded by jewelled walls and walked through gates of pearls on streets paved with gold (Rev 21:10–21), their remains on earth were held in containers made from the most precious materials available. The analogy between the gem-studded container and the divine abode extended to the saints themselves: they were the living stones, the *lapides vivi* (1 Pet 2:5) of the New Jerusalem, making up the very fabric of the *civitas dei* that would receive the blessed at the end of time.⁶⁰ In this image, the saints and the Heavenly City merged into one radiant body, metaphorically communicated to the beholder by the golden glow of the casket.

In one instance, documents indicate that the royal gift was conditional. In receiving a gilded panel reliquary from Queen Margrethe I of Denmark in 1377, the Cistercians of Ås Monastery were committed to celebrating a daily requiem for the souls of the queen's deceased parents and their relatives in addition to a yearly Mass for the same persons on the anniversary of the death of her father, King Valdemar IV of Denmark.⁶¹ This observance required of the monastery is in line with practice observed by Sverre Bagge of the celebration of requiems for the royal family and retinue among the main duties of the clergy of the royal chapels in Norway. Yet another of Queen Margrethe's gifts may have carried familial connotations. The title deed to the beryl monstrance presented by the queen to the chapter of Lund Cathedral in 1376 mentions only the queen as donor, but in the ritual *Ordo in ostensione sanctarum reliquiarum* it is her young son, King Olav Haakonson (1370–1387), who is named as the benefactor. Göran Axel-Nilsson suggests that the bequest was initiated by Queen Margrethe on the occasion of the formal election of the child Olav as king that year.⁶²

Actions such as these should be understood as more than expressions of personal piety. For a medieval regent such as Queen Margrethe, the personal was always

⁶⁰ Legner 1995, *Reliquien in Kunst und Kult*, 4; Jean-Claude Schmitt, "Les reliques et les images," in *Les reliques: Objets, cultes, symboles. Actes du colloque international de l'Université du Littoral-Côte d'Opale (Boulogne-sur-Mer) 4–6 septembre 1997*, ed. Edina Bozóky and Anne-Marie Helvétius (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), 152.

⁶¹ SDHK, 11078.

⁶² Axel-Nilsson, *Thesaurus Cathedralis Lundensis*, 36, 105. According to Axel-Nilsson, the donation took place in conjunction with a celebration of the newly elected king in Lund in 1376. No such celebration is recorded in the written sources, however. Nor has it been possible to validate Axel-Nilsson's assertion that Queen Margrethe I donated the cross reliquary to Lund Cathedral on the occasion of Erik of Pomerania's marriage to Philippa in the Cathedral, October 6, 1406 (Axel-Nilsson, *Storpolitiskt furstebröllop i Lund*, 12; Axel-Nilsson, *Thesaurus Cathedralis Lundensis*, 37–8, 89).

political, even for relics. As noted above, Hege Roaldset concludes that, through the manner in which he chose to keep his relics from the French saintly king, Haakon V Magnusson purposefully imitated Louis IX as a Christian ideal king.⁶³ And in a similar manner, Queen Margrethe's donations can be understood as a sacro-political message about her regency as a divinely sanctioned position of authority. In his book *Holy Bones and Holy Dust: How Relics Shaped the History of Medieval Europe*, Charles Freeman presents numerous examples of how the possession of relics – the more numerous and potent, the better – could translate into political power. The presence of a saint, through his or her relics, conveyed status to the site and to the institution administering it; and these relics served as effective weapons in the struggle for power and authority. Charlemagne distributed relics of Frankish saints across his empire to consolidate his authority, and by the first millennium, saints, in the form of their relics, were taken to regional councils in southern France to help enforce *Pax Dei*, the Peace and Truce of God, in protection of the church and the common population against the consequences of rampant rivalry and warfare between members of the nobility.⁶⁴ The competition for control over the cult of relics from important saints in Italian city-states in the High and Late Middle Ages offers further proof of the importance of relics in medieval power politics.⁶⁵ If Axel-Nilsson is correct in assuming that Queen Margrethe gifted the chapter of Lund Cathedral with the beryl monstrance on the occasion of the election of Olav as king, the donation can be understood as an effort to secure the backing of the saints, and of the chapter of the cathedral, for the new monarch.

Relic Collections and Relic Feasts

Judging from surviving records from the cathedrals of Lund and Uppsala and Our Lady's Church in Copenhagen, the royal gifts helped to expand relic collections that could grow to considerable dimensions, although not to the extent seen on the Continent, where the largest collections counted thousands of relics.⁶⁶ A list of the relics of Uppsala Cathedral compiled in 1344 enumerates relics from fifty-seven identified saints and an additional number of anonymous saints.⁶⁷ The ritual from Lund Cathedral contains relics from 207 named saints and a host of

⁶³ Roaldset, "Mariakirken i Oslo," 118.

⁶⁴ Freeman, *Holy Bones, Holy Dust*, 75, 80–4.

⁶⁵ Freeman, *Holy Bones, Holy Dust*, 157–8.

⁶⁶ Angenendt, *Heilige und Reliquien*, 158–62; Holger A. Klein, "Sacred Things and Holy Bodies: Collecting Relics from Late Antiquity to the Early Renaissance," in *Treasures of Heaven. Saints, Relics and Devotion in Medieval Europe*, ed. Martina Bagnoli, et al. (London: The British Museum Press, 2011), 59–64; Legner 1995, *Reliquien in Kunst und Kult*: 103–116.

⁶⁷ SDHK, 4953.

unidentified saints distributed in fifty-seven reliquaries and shrines. The inventory made in 1515 of relics belonging to Our Lady's Church in Copenhagen lists forty-one reliquaries holding over two hundred relics. In contrast, Stavanger Cathedral in 1517 possessed a mere thirty relics, eight of which had been recently acquired in Rome.⁶⁸

Whether their numbers were large or small, relics constituted an essential feature of the sacral environment of the church to which they belonged. The church interior was an arena where heaven and earth merged, and the saints, through their relics, contributed to this melding of the worldly and the divine. The saints existed simultaneously in the Heavenly Jerusalem and in the shrines and reliquaries where their earthly remains rested. The relics mediated the presence of the saints. A relic was still part of the living saint; the bones and knuckles were not just lifeless matter, leftovers from a deceased individual. The relics *were* the saints, alive and capable to act on behalf of mankind.⁶⁹ This presence, however, was not necessarily allowed to manifest itself visually before the eyes of the faithful. The relics were enclosed in shrines and reliquaries, and even when they were visible in rock-crystal containers, they were wrapped up in protective covers of silk that shielded them from direct view. Furthermore, for most of the year the reliquaries and their contents were safely stored in the treasuries, to be brought out and put on display only on special occasions, such as the important church feasts, when they were solemnly paraded in the processions that constituted an essential feature of any major liturgical celebration.⁷⁰ Thus, according to Axel-Nilsson, most of the relics of Lund Cathedral were kept in the canons' sacristy adjacent to the chancel.⁷¹ The ritual *Ordo in ostensione sanctorum reliquiarum* does, however, describe three reliquaries of copper as being placed permanently on the main altar, and ends by stating that "Moreover, in many spaces in the church and in particular on the altars – there are around sixty of them – there are expensive relics from many saints."⁷²

In the later Middle Ages, the display of the relic collections of large ecclesiastical institutions was frequently formalized into a *festum reliquiarum* or *ostensio reliquiarum*, a feast when the cathedral's collection of relics was brought out and

⁶⁸ DN, vol. 4, 1074.

⁶⁹ Arnold Angenendt, "Der Kult der Reliquien," in *Reliquien. Verehrung und Verklärung. Skizzen und Noten zur Thematik und Katalog zur Ausstellung der Kölner Sammlung Louis Peters im Schnütgen-Museum*, ed. Anton Legner (Cologne: Schnütgen-Museum Stadt Köln, 1989); Derek Krueger, "The Religion of Relics in late Antiquity and Byzantium," in *Treasures of Heaven. Saints, Relics and Devotion in Medieval Europe*, ed. Martina Bagnoli, et al. (London: The British Museum Press, 2011); Legner 1995, *Reliquien in Kunst und Kult*.

⁷⁰ Herrmann-Mascard, *Les reliques des saints*, 168–9.

⁷¹ Axel-Nilsson, *Thesaurus Cathedralis Lundensis*, 17.

⁷² SRD, vol. VIII, 455.

shown publicly.⁷³ The heading of the ritual from Lund Cathedral, *Ordo in ostensione sanctarum reliquiarum* – “Order for the display of the holy relics” – leads Axel-Nilsson to infer that it was written as an instruction for the public presentation of the relics at the relic feast, which in the Lund diocese fell on July 11.⁷⁴ The list from Our Lady’s Church in Copenhagen, where the relic feast fell on the first Sunday after the Feast of St Jacob, July 25, likewise has been assumed to state the order in which the church’s reliquaries were to be arranged at the feast, or possibly carried in procession during the celebration.⁷⁵ In 1419, Vadstena Monastery received permission from the pope to acquire relics and put them on view, and in 1420 a letter was issued by ten cardinals granting one hundred days of indulgence for anyone attending the relic display in the abbey church on certain dates.⁷⁶

Relic displays can be understood as instruments for the construction of cathedrals and abbey churches as public institutions, sites for interaction between the ecclesiastic institution and the laity. Being a royal chapel, St Mary’s Church in Oslo was a different kind of establishment, and no information exists that speaks to the public presentation of the church’s relics, or other rituals connected to them. However, it is by no means unthinkable that such activities occurred: in Paris, King Louis IX initiated a public display of the relics of Sainte-Chapelle on Good Friday, with himself in a leading role. A drawing by Matthew Paris in *Chronica Majora* depicts the king standing on an outdoor tribune, holding the chapel’s cross reliquary in his raised hands while exclaiming *ecce crucem domini*, and beside him, his brother holds the Holy Crown (Fig. 9.2).⁷⁷ Other sovereigns followed suit: by the mid-fourteenth century, emperor Charles IV had instituted the yearly demonstration of the national relics of Bohemia into a ritual that turned an entire section of the capital, Prague, into a sacralized territory.⁷⁸

⁷³ Herrmann-Mascard, *Les reliques des saints*, 206–16; Hartmut Kühne, *Ostensio reliquiarum: Untersuchungen über Entstehung, Ausbreitung, Gestalt, und Funktion der Heiltumsweisungen im römisch-deutschen Regnum* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2000); Legner, *Reliquien in Kunst und Kult*, 88–119.

⁷⁴ Axel-Nilsson, *Thesaurus Cathedralis Lundensis*, 84.

⁷⁵ Thelma Jexlev, “Vor Frue kirkes relikvier. To senmiddelalderlige fortegnelser,” in *Historiske meddelelser om København. Årbog* (Copenhagen: Selskabet for Københavns historie / Københavns kommune, 1976), 29. There are, in fact, two lists from 1515: one itemizes the reliquaries only, whereas the other provides their contents as well. Thelma Jexlev presumes that the two lists were the result of different uses: the shorter list was a guide for the clerics when they arranged the reliquaries for display, and the longer list was read aloud when the reliquaries were put on exhibit, perhaps one by one, so as to better allow members of the audience to pay observance to their preferred saints, say their prayers and make their offerings (Jexlev, “Vor Frue kirkes relikvier,” 40).

⁷⁶ SDHK, 19311; SDHK, 19440.

⁷⁷ Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, Parker MS 16 fol. 141v. Cf. Legner, *Reliquien. Verehrung und Verklärung*, 88.

⁷⁸ Cf. Legner, *Reliquien. Verehrung und Verklärung*, 88.

Legitimizing the Royal Office



Fig. 9.2: St Louis of France publicly displays the passion relics of Sainte Chapelle on Good Friday. Drawing from Matthew Paris' *Chronica Majora*, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, Parker MS 16 fol. 142v.

It remains speculation whether similar ceremonies were staged in St Mary's Church in Oslo: no sources survive that indicate that this was the case. If, indeed, the thorn relic and the other treasures of the chapel were shown in public, the audience need not have been limited to the king and his family and courtiers. As noted by Roaldset, promulgations of indulgences for visitors to St Mary's Church on four different occasions during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries provide evidence that some degree of accessibility of the church existed beyond what might have been expected considering its status as a royal chapel connected to the palace.⁷⁹ Indulgences are by definition intended to attract visitors to the institution in question. The 1308 papal consent allowing King Haakon V Magnusson to turn the fourteen churches into royal chapels with special privileges included a general indulgence of 465 days to all penitents who visited any of the churches on its specific feast day or during eight successive days. St Mary's Church received additional privileges in 1386 (forty days indulgence for those who visited or in any way helped the church), 1401 (full indulgence for anyone who visited the church on Mary's Ascension Day, August 15, and gave a donation), and 1439 (forty days indulgence for penitents who

⁷⁹ Roaldset, "Mariakirken i Oslo," 82–3.

visited and helped the church on certain days).⁸⁰ Roaldset's survey of letters of donation issued in favour of the church provides further evidence of a wide spectrum of visitors to the church. During the first half of the thirteenth century, the donors belonged exclusively to the royal family, the nobility and the clergy. After the middle of the fourteenth century, however, burghers and farmers began to appear in the documents, and in the first half of the fifteenth century the majority of the benefactors belonged to these two latter categories.⁸¹

Veneration of the relics of St Mary's Church was not a privilege reserved for the elevated circles of the royal court. The indulgences demonstrate that, at certain times at least, the general public enjoyed entrance to the church. To the extent that the relics were on display in the church – as they most likely were on those days for which indulgences were granted – anyone visiting could turn in prayer to Christ's crown of thorns, St Louis, or any of the other saints – today nameless – whose relics were contained in the panel reliquary and the other reliquaries recorded by Hans Arildson in 1523/24.

From a general point of view, the spiritual benefits offered by St Mary's Church did not differ very much from that of cathedrals and abbey churches with significant relic collections. The distinguishing feature of the church lies in its special status as a royal chapel, augmented by the presence of relics with doubly royal connotations: a piece from the holiest of crowns, a bone from the saintliest of kings, both, moreover, having arrived in the form of gifts from one monarch to another. The thorn relic in particular falls into a pattern of passion relics in royal possession in Scandinavia in the thirteenth, fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. When the relics were bequeathed to ecclesiastic institutions, complete with sumptuous reliquaries made of gold, silver and rock crystal, they contributed not only to the future salvation of the donor, but also to the promotion of the ideal of royal sovereignty as a divine right, sanctioned by God's will and subject to no authority but God's.

⁸⁰ DN vol. 1,114; vol. 4, 530; vol 17, 214; and vol. 5, 682.

⁸¹ Roaldset, "Mariakirken i Oslo," 83–93.



Fig. 10.0: The Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem. The twelfth-century paintings of St Knud and St Olav are on column no. 2 and 3 to the right.

**Part II: The Holy City: Travels, Perceptions,
and Interactions**

Anthony Bale

Chapter 10

From Nidaros to Jerusalem; from *Feginsbrekka* to Mount Joy

Several sources testify to pilgrims' ritualized emotional responses at high-lying spots from where they first could lay eyes on their sacred destination. The hill Mount Joy outside Jerusalem is often referred to as the prototype for such practices. This short chapter questions this assumption and shows how readings of sacred landscapes in the Latin West came to shape the pilgrims' perception of the Holy City.

Above the Norwegian city of Trondheim rises the hill known as *Feginsbrekka* (literally "hill of joy/grace").¹ The hill provides a panorama of the city, known in the Middle Ages as Nidaros (Niðaróss). *Feginsbrekka*'s utility was as a place from which pilgrims could view the object of their pilgrimage, the shrine of St Olav (d. 1030) at Nidaros. The main pilgrims' route from the south would have taken visitors via *Feginsbrekka* (pilgrimage to Olav's shrine having been established by 1070, when Adam of Bremen mentions it). It is then perhaps unsurprising that, at least according to *Sverris saga*, Sverre Sigurdsson (d. 1202), king of Norway and alleged descendant of St Olav, knelt at *Feginsbrekka* and prayed towards Nidaros. The text describes how at *Feginsbrekka* Sverre "alighted from his horse, fell upon his knees, and said his prayers" and then delivered a stirring speech to his men, for the victory they could claim in Nidaros.²

As Bjørn Bandlien says, "Sverrir (Sverre) never went to the Holy Land . . . Instead, he made the Holy Land come to him".³ At Nidaros, Sverre had already built a fortress called Zion, a *translatio imperii* which not only made Sverre a new

¹ For previous brief notices of the site see Kristin B. Aavitsland, "Defending Jerusalem: Visualizations of a Christian Identity in Medieval Scandinavia," in *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem*, ed. Bianca Kühnel, Galit Noga-Banai and Hanna Vorholt, 121–32, Turnhout: Brepols, 2014; Bjørn Bandlien, "Hegemonic memory, Counter-Memory, and Struggles for Royal Power: The Rhetoric of the Past in the Age of King Sverrir Sigurðsson of Norway," *Scandinavian Studies* 85 (2013); Edmond-René Labande, *Pauper et peregrinus: problèmes, comportements et mentalités du pèlerin chrétien* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 227–31.

² *The Saga of King Sverri of Norway*, ed. and trans. J. Sephton, London: David Nutt, 1899.

³ Bandlien, "Hegemonic memory, Counter-Memory, and Struggles for Royal Power," 356.

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Noah, Moses, or David, gazing from the mountain to his Promised Land, but made of Nidaros a new Jerusalem. Feginsbrekka, a joyous mountain overlooking the city, resonated too with a Holy Land memory: that of Mount Joy (*Mons Gaudii*, *Monjoie*), a hill outside Jerusalem from which it became customary for pilgrims coming from Europe to take their first view of the Holy City and pray, weep, and experience a kind of divine joy. Crusader-era Palestine had not one but two Mount Joys: one at or near Mount Scopus, founded by the Spanish crusader Rodrigo Álvarez (d. 1187), whose Order of Mount Joy endured for only a handful of years;⁴ and another, at Nabi Samwil, about seven kilometres north-west of Jerusalem, a site which endured for much longer and was home, during the twelfth century, to crusader fortifications and a Premonstratensian abbey, the remains of which survive today (Fig. 10.1).⁵ The church structure at Nabi Samwil is a fascinating hybrid building, still simultaneously a church, mosque, and synagogue.⁶ European Christian pilgrims travelling from Jaffa to Jerusalem, from the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries, regularly stopped there and, whilst they rarely mention the building, they do mention the vista of the holy city, partaking of an emotional, pious ritual similar to that performed by Sverre.

The pilgrims' custom of viewing Jerusalem and praying to it may long predate Sverre and the Crusades. Indeed, Jewish encomia to Jerusalem are concerned with its status as a joyful thing beheld: *yefeh nof*, a beautiful view, as the city is still sometimes called, based on the description in Ps 48(47):2–3 (“the city of our God, in his holy mountain. / With the joy of the whole earth is mount Sion founded”). As early as the sixth century, the Piacenza Pilgrim described in his vivid account how he and his companions fell down and kissed the ground as they approached Jerusalem, in a precursor to the emotional rituals of devotion we see in the later Middle Ages.⁷ Certainly, within a few years of the Frankish crusaders' conquest of Jerusalem, an emotional ritual had developed at the Mount Joy sites on the approach to the city. By 1106–8 (therefore within a decade of the Frankish conquest of

⁴ See Benjamin Z. Kedar, “Jerusalem’s Two *Montes Gaudii*,” in *Crusader Landscapes in the Medieval Levant: The Archaeology and History of the Latin East*, ed. Michaela Sinibaldi, et al. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2016).

⁵ See Denys Pringle, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem: A Corpus*, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993–2009), 2: 85–93.

⁶ Today, Nabi Samwil (Palestine) contains little more than the religious building and extensive archaeological remains; the surrounding village was destroyed by the Israeli army in the early 1970s and the surrounding area is designated a National Park. It is located just north of the settlement of Ramot, and is accessible by bus from west Jerusalem. The synagogue is located in the crypt of the building and is easily visited; the mosque and the church are often open to visitors.

⁷ Aubrey Stewart, ed. *Of the Holy Places Visited by Antoninus Martyr (c.560–570 A.D.)* (London: Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, 1884), 15.

Jerusalem in 1098–9) the abbot Daniil, visiting from Kiev, described a “flat hill about a verst [just over 1 km] from the road to Jerusalem.” He continued,

on this hill all dismount from their horses and place little crosses there and bow to the Church of the Resurrection on the road to town. And no one can hold back tears at the sight of that desired land and the Holy Places where Christ our God suffered his Passion for the sake of us sinners.⁸

Slightly later travellers, like the German pilgrim Theoderic, explicitly record their “joy” on first seeing the city; Theoderic writes of “a small church” from which “pilgrims have their first view of this city [of Jerusalem] and, moved with great joy, put on their crosses. They take off their shoes, humbly trying to seek the person who for them was pleased to come to this place as a poor and humble man.”⁹ In Theoderic’s account, the joy resides in the view, which stimulates a moment of imitative penitence in which to enter the holy city barefoot, “poor and humble.” Similar accounts proliferate throughout the crusader period (although not all pilgrims mention Mount Joy) and it is clear from maps and images of the period that Mount Joy had become an established, named locus.¹⁰

However, the Premonstratensians abandoned their monastery at Mount Joy/Nabi Samwil in 1187, a prelude to Saladin’s capturing of Jerusalem. Even so, Ambroise, the Norman chronicler of the Third Crusade (1189–1192) writing in the early 1190s, records the continuity of the ritual at Mount Joy in the context of conflict with Saladin’s forces:

we came to Mountjoy. There our hearts were filled with joy at the site of Jerusalem. We went down on our knees, as all should. We could see the Mount of Olives, the starting point for the procession when God submitted to His Passion. Then we came to the city where God conquered His inheritance.¹¹

Apart from a brief moment in the 1240s, when the site may have been briefly ceded to the Franks, 1187 marks the end of formal western Christian occupation of Nabi Samwil. Yet Mount Joy continued as a Latin Christian pilgrimage site throughout the Middle Ages. From the 1240s onwards, there does not appear to have been a

⁸ John Wilkinson, Joyce Hill, and W. F. Ryan, eds, *Jerusalem Pilgrimage 1099–1185* (London: Hackluyt Society, second series 167, 1988), 127.

⁹ Wilkinson, et al., *Jerusalem Pilgrimage*, 310.

¹⁰ For example, “Mons Gaudii” appears, with a supplicating pilgrim, on the famous crusader map of c.1170 (The Hague, Royal Library MS 76 F5, f. 1r). In a crusader diagram of the Holy Land, “Mons Gaudii” appears as an important nodal point on the way to Jerusalem, adjacent to Samuel’s tomb (London, British Library Harley MS 658, g. 39v). On a later twelfth-century pilgrimage map (Brussels, Bib. Roy. MS 9823–24, f. 157r), a group of pilgrims stands on “Mons Gaudii”; the pilgrims face Jerusalem and one of them gestures towards it from the hill’s summit.

¹¹ *The History of the Holy War: Ambroise’s Estoire de la Guerre Sainte*, 2 vols, translated by Marianne Ailes, ed. Marianne Ailes and Malcolm Barber, Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2003.



Fig. 10.1: Mount Joy: Nabi Samwil (Palestine).

church or formal (Latin) Christian shrine on Nabi Samwil, although there were well-established sites of Jewish and Muslim worship within what had been the crusaders' church. Nonetheless, to take the vista of Jerusalem from Nabi Samwil remained a venerable and recognised part of the pilgrimage route. Intriguingly, the view itself seems to have been the shrine as it were; once the church had become a mosque and synagogue, there was no institutional shrine, but rather an emotional and ritual marker, embodied in the taking of the vista.

Sir John Mandeville, whose widely-read *Book of Marvels & Travels* (which first appeared in French or Anglo-French, c.1356) offered a kind of *summa* of western European knowledge of the Middle East and was translated into most vernacular languages from Gaelic to Danish, wrote that

Two miles from Jerusalem is Mount Joy, a fair and pleasant place. And there lies the prophet Samuel in a fair tomb. And it is called Mount Joy because there pilgrims may first see Jerusalem, the sight of which gives them great joy after their labours.¹²

The Christian pilgrims' hearts and eyes were focussed on the final attainment of Jerusalem, shimmering in the distance and full of spiritual promise, as feeling and viewing were mapped onto the landscape.

The Frankish crusaders adapted local religious customs, especially those of the Greek Christians, but they also imported their own religious and cultural sensibilities.¹³ It is clear that one of the traditions they imported from Europe concerned the act of looking at the object of one's pilgrimage from afar and emotionally marking that moment of laying one's eyes on this object. The fact that this was a ritualised sensibility imported to Palestine becomes evident if we look at the European parallels on which the site was clearly modelled. The term "Mount Joy" is not a proper noun referring to a specific place but was rather a noun of place given to a mountain from which a pilgrim viewed the object of their journey. Sites called Mount Joy were widespread in Western Europe and had in common with each other an elevated location from which the vista of one's destination could be taken and a feeling of joy felt thereon. It is hard to establish which is the earliest place known as Mount Joy, but several examples certainly pre-date the First Crusade. The site formerly known as Montjovis (Mount of Jupiter) at Limoges may have been renamed Mons Gaudii as early as the 940s, to honour the body at St Martial in whose name a chapel was erected;¹⁴ the Monte do Gozo (literally "mount of joy") overlooking Santiago de Compostela, the hill from which the cathedral of St James at Santiago comes into view from the pilgrims' *camino*, is a direct parallel to the Jerusalem site; and Monte Mario near Rome, familiar to almost any pilgrim or visitor approaching Rome from the north, was known as Mount Joy by the eleventh century.¹⁵ Each of these sites was

12 "ii myle fro Ierusalem is the Mount Joiye that is a faire place and lykyng. And ther lith Samuel the prophete in a faire tounge. And it is yclepid Mount Joiye for there pilgrymes may first se to Jerualem, of whiche sight thei have grete joiye aftir here traveyl," M. C. Seymour, ed. *The Defective Version of Mandeville's Travels*, Early English Text Society OS 319 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 39.

13 On interactions between the Crusaders and local religious traditions see Anthony Bale, "God's Cell: Christ as Prisoner and Pilgrimage to the Prison of Christ," *Speculum*, no. 91 (2016); Andrew Jotischky, "Holy Fire and Holy Sepulchre: Ritual and Space in Jerusalem from the Ninth to the Fourteenth Centuries," in *Ritual and Space in the Middle Ages*, ed. Frances Andrews (Donington: Harlaxton Medieval Studies, 2011); Hans Eberhard Mayer, "Latin, Muslims and Greeks in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem," *History* 63 (1978); Christopher MacEvitt, *The Crusades and the Christian Worlds of the East: Rough Tolerance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

14 Henri Diament, "Une interprétation hagio-toponymique de l'ancien cri de guerre des français: Montjoie Saint-Denis!," *Romance Notes* 12 (1971).

15 Referred to as Mount Joy in the twelfth-century *Chronica regia S. Pantaleonis* and by Otto of Friesing (d. 1158); see Charles du Cange, *Glossarium Ad Scriptores Mediae et Infimae Latinitatis*, 3 vols. (Niort: Favre, 1883), s. v., *Mons Gaudii* for further references. Kedar 2016, "Jerusalem's Two

referred to as a “Mount Joy” in the period around 1096, when the First Crusade was launched and the Mounts of Joy were identified in the Holy Land and they too provide a context for Sverre Sigurdsson’s display of piety at Feginsbrekka.

Far from being based on any one “original” site, a Mount Joy could be anywhere. Hugh of St Cher (d. 1263) wrote, in a commentary on Prov 26:8 (“As he that casteth a stone into the heap of Mercury . . .”) that pilgrims made a pile of stones at the point from which they first see the monastery to which they are travelling, and any such pile is called *Mons gaudii*.¹⁶ The Frankish crusader Raymond d’Aiguilers records a story in which the Count Bohemond is instructed, upon his return home from Jerusalem to Provence, to have a church built there for the Holy Lance and “this spot shall be called Mount of Joy.”¹⁷ This sensibility seems to have endured in the West and is reflected in the sense of “Mount Joy” in the pilgrimage narrative known as *Purchase His Pilgrimes*, dated to 1425:

Here begins the route that is marked, and made with Mount Joys, from London in England to Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, and thence to Rome, and thence to Jerusalem, and back to England, and the names of all the cities on the way, and their system of government, and the names of their currency that they use along this route.¹⁸

So the whole Christian world was made legible – punctuated as it were – with “Mount Joiez” which acted as markers, via ascent and vision, of the landscape’s direction and the spiritual rewards it held. There were literally dozens of these sites throughout Europe; in England, it is clear that there was a hill known as “Munjoie” in an area just outside the Yorkshire town of Pontefract;¹⁹ and Harbledown, overlooking Canterbury, played a similar role although there is no record as far as I am aware of it being called Mount Joy.

These sites thus provided the template on which the crusaders modelled their emotional experience of this landscape, as the hills around Jerusalem were differentiated and marked by their spiritual uses to the Latin Christians; in turn, the

Montes Gaudii” gives further examples of twelfth-century Mount Joys, including those at Oviedo and Arles.

¹⁶ See further Pierre Irgoin, “Montjoies et oratoires,” *Bulletin Monumental* 94 (1935).

¹⁷ Raymond d’Aiguilers, *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem*, edited and translated by John Hugh Hill and Laurita L. Hill, Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1968. This story emerges from Provençal legends about St Trophimus of Arles.

¹⁸ “Here beginneth the way that is marked, and made wit Mount Joiez from the London of Engelond unto Sent James in Galis, and from thennez to Rome, and from thennez to Jerusalem: and so againe into Englelond, and the namez of all the Citeez be their waie, and the maner of her gouernaunce, and namez of her silver that they use be alle these waie.” The medieval manuscript on which this account is based is now lost. Samuel Purchas, *Purchas his Pilgrimes*, 20 vols. (London: Hakluyt Society, 1905–1907), 7:526.

¹⁹ Laura Slater, “Finding Jerusalem in medieval Pontefract,” *Northern History* 60 (2014).

Mount Joy in the Holy Land gave rise to new Mount Joys, authorised through pilgrims' experiences, and reading about pilgrimage, in the east. So, whilst Sverre's Norse Mount Joy seems to have been modelled, at least in part, on the crusaders' Palestinian Mount Joy, the Palestinian Mount Joy was itself modelled on European sacred hills.

These sites did not only shape the pilgrims' understanding of the landscape but also the emotional and visual rituals associated with the landscape. Similar rituals concerning vision and emotion developed around the Holy Land pilgrimage, including ceremonies of prayer that took place in Venetian galleys when the coast of the Holy Land was first spotted; and ritualised lamenting and viewing that took place from the Church of *Dominus Flevit*, which commemorated Christ's weeping over Jerusalem (Matt 23:37-39; Luke 19:41-44). The Mount Joy subjected the landscape to scopic and emotional regimes, in which the pilgrim could see what they were trained, in their mind's eye, to see, and feel what they were trained, in their emotional and ritual *habitus*, to feel.



Fig. 11.1: Țarțūs (Tortosa), Latin cathedral. Interior, showing the Marian shrine incorporated into the N arcade in a similar manner to the Virgin's House in the church of the Annunciation in Nazareth.

Denys Pringle

Chapter 11

Scandinavian Pilgrims and the Churches of the Holy Land in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries

The accounts of Scandinavian journeys to the Holy Land in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, whether preserved in sagas, chronicles, itineraries or charters, not only constitute a valuable source of information about travel, warfare, politics and the ideology of north European pilgrims and crusaders, but also contribute more specifically to the body of western European literature from this period reflecting the state of the Holy Land and its inhabitants at the time of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. This chapter focuses on just one aspect of the latter: the information that such texts give us about the condition of the Holy Places and their sanctuaries and churches.

Historical sources record a number of pilgrimages to Jerusalem from Scandinavian lands in the century before the First Crusade. While some, like that attributed to Olav I Tryggvason (r. 995–1000) following his disappearance during the sea battle of Svoldr in September 1000,¹ are purely legendary, others are more securely documented. These include the penitential pilgrimages made in 1052 and 1095 respectively by the fratricides Svend Godwinson, cousin of the Danish king Svend II Estridsen (r. 1047–1074), and Lagman Gudrodsson, king of Man and the Isles, neither of whom survived the return journey.²

After the First Crusade, the number of northerners visiting the Holy Land increased exponentially, though it is not always easy to distinguish which of them were pilgrims and which crusaders, especially as many of those who went to fight also visited the Holy Places. On his penitential pilgrimage in 1103, for example, Erik the Good of Denmark (r. 1095–1103) was accompanied by a company of knights, as well as by his queen, Bodil (d. 1103), whose marriage to him had been a cause of his earlier excommunication by the archbishop of Hamburg. After travelling overland to Constantinople, where he was received by Emperor Alexius Comnenus, he

¹ Paul Riant, *Expéditions et pèlerinages des Scandinaves en Terre Sainte au temps des croisades*, 2 vols. (Paris: impr. de A. Lainé et J. Havard, 1865–69), 1:102–19.

² Florence of Worcester (Florentius Wigorniensis), *Chronicon ex Chronicis*, 2 vols, ed. Benjamin Thorpe (London: English History Society, 1848), 1:209–10; *Cronica Regum Mannie & Insularum: Chronicles of the Kings of Man and the Isles*, BL Cotton Julius Avii, ed. and trans. George Broderick ([Douglas]: Manx Museum and National Trust, 1979), fol. 33v; Riant, *Expéditions et pèlerinages*, 1:125, 129

proceeded eastwards by sea but died in Paphos on 10 July 1103, leaving his companions to continue the pilgrimage without him.³ On the other hand, the participants in the Danish-Norwegian expedition to join the Third Crusade in 1191, described in the anonymous *De Profectione Danorum in Hierosolymam*, arrived in Acre a year after setting out to find that the fighting was already over, but were still able to visit the Holy Places in Jerusalem before returning home.⁴

An early reference alluding to one of the principal churches of medieval Jerusalem is the notice given in an epitomized version of Robert of Ely's life of Earl Knud that Queen Bodil, having proceeded to Jerusalem following the death of Erik the Good in Cyprus in July 1103, herself died there on the Mount of Olives and was buried in the Kidron Valley, or valley of Jehoshaphat.⁵ Paul Riant embellished this brief report by asserting that the queen was buried in the church of St Mary of Jehoshaphat, in the burial chapel to the left of the monumental staircase leading down to the tomb of the

3 Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum* 12.6.3–12.7.6, ed. Jørgen Olrik and Hans Ræder, 2 vols (Copenhagen: Levin and Munksgaard, 1931–62), 1:335–9; ed. and trans. Karsten Friis-Jensen and Peter Fisher eds. and trans., *Gesta Danorum: The History of the Danes*, 2 vols, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2015), 882–93; Eric Christiansen trans., *Danorum Regum Heroumque Historia*, Books x–xvi, 3 vols, BAR International Series 84 and 118.1–2 (BAR Publishing: Oxford, 1980–81), 1:98–104, 273–78; *Knýtlinga Saga* 79–81, ed. Carl af Peters, *Scavorum expugnatorens* and Emil Olson, *Sögur Danakununga* (Copenhagen, 1919–25), 188–95; Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards trans., *Knytlinga Saga: The History of the Kings of Denmark* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1986), 119–23; Svend Aggesen, *Regum Daniae Historia* 6, in SRD, 1:42–64; Eric Christiansen; trans., *The Works of Sven Aggesen, Twelfth-Century Danish Historian*, Viking Society for Northern Research (London: University College London, 1992), 67–8; Robert of Ely, *Vita S. Canuti Ducis* 1, SRD, 4:256–61; *Excerpta ex Roberti Elgensis Vita Kanuti Ducis*, MGH SS, 29:9; Riant, *Expéditions et pèlerinages*, 1:152–63; Janus Møller Jensen, “Scavorum expuglator: Conquest, Crusade, and Danish Royal Ideology in the Twelfth Century,” *Crusades* 2 (2003): 68–70; Janus Møller Jensen, “Erik I of Denmark (d. 1102),” in *The Crusades: An Encyclopedia*, 4 vols, ed. Alan V. Murray (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 2:406–7. It is not clear from which source Riant (*Expéditions et pèlerinages*, 1:157–63) derived the figure of 3,000 for the number of knights and footsoldiers who accompanied the king. Elsewhere he (Riant, *Expéditions et pèlerinages*, 1:163–66) suggests linking Erik's expedition with the arrival in Palestine in 1106 of an English, Flemish and Danish contingent and Baldwin I's aborted plan for attacking Sidon, as described by Albert of Aachen (10.1–7, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, ed. and trans. Susan B. Edgington, Oxford Medieval Texts [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007], 718–25); but the dates do not appear to agree. For King Erik the Good and his expedition, see also Chapter 8 (Lukas Raupp), 147–64.

4 SRD, 5:341–62 (for the description of Jerusalem, see p. 361). See also Karen Skovgaard-Petersen, *A Journey to the Promised Land: Crusading Theology in the Historia de profectione Danorum in Hierosolymam (c.1200)* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2001); Riant, *Expéditions et pèlerinages*, 1.286–95; and Chapter 7 in this book (Ane Bysted), 132–9.

5 *Bothildis mortua in monte Olivarum, sepulta in valle Iosaphat*: Robert of Ely, *Vita Kanuti ducis*, MGH SS, 29:9; SRD, 4:257; cf. Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum* 12.7.6, ed. Olrik and Ræder, 1:339; ed. and trans. Friis-Jensen and Fisher, 2:892–3; Benjamin Z. Kedar and Christian Westergård-Nielsen, “Icelanders in the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem: A twelfth-century account,” *Medieval Scandinavia* 11 (1979): 193–212, at 199.

Virgin Mary.⁶ However, although Latin monks were already serving this church by 1102–1103, when they were seen there by the Anglo-Saxon pilgrim Saewulf,⁷ it is extremely doubtful whether the rebuilding of the destroyed Byzantine upper church and the addition of the monumental stair to the crypt would have begun by that date. The chapel referred to by Riant is more likely that built for Queen Morphia, the wife of Baldwin II, who died on 1 October in 1126 or 1127 and whose daughter, Melisende, the wife of King Fulk, was buried in a chapel facing it on 11 September 1161.⁸ None the less, even if the precise location of her tomb is uncertain, it may well be significant – as well as appropriate – that Bodil, like the later queens of Jerusalem, should have been laid to rest in close proximity to the tomb of the Virgin Mary.

The crusaders who accompanied King Sigurd Magnusson of Norway to the East between 1107 and 1112 participated in capturing Sintra and Lisbon in Portugal from the Muslims, as well as the Balearic Islands, before proceeding eastward to assist Baldwin I of Jerusalem in blockading and capturing Sidon in October–December 1110 and attempting to take Tyre. Before the attack on Sidon, Sigurd also undertook pilgrimages to the Holy Sepulchre and to the place of Christ's Baptism in the River Jordan, near Jericho.⁹ During the council of war in Jerusalem at which it was decided to lay siege to Sidon, Baldwin also gave Sigurd, with the agreement of the patriarch, Gibelin of Arles, a fragment of the True Cross, on condition (in Snorri Sturluson's words),

that he and twelve other men with him first swore that he would promote Christianity with all his might and establish in his country an archbishop's see, if he could, and that the cross should be kept there where the blessed King Ólafr lay, and that he should introduce tithes and pay them himself.¹⁰

This relic would evidently have been taken from the piece of the Cross kept by the Latins in the church of the Holy Sepulchre. In 1120–1121, Ansellus, the precentor of

6 Riant, *Expéditions et pèlerinages*, 1:88, 162–63; cf. Camille Enlart, *Les Monuments des croisés dans le royaume de Jérusalem: architecture religieuse et civile*, 2 vols. + 2 albums, Bibliothèque archéologique et historique 7–8 (Paris: Geuthner, 1925–28), 2:230.

7 Saewulf, *Peregrinationes Tres*: Saewulf, John of Würzburg, Theodericus, ed. Robert B.C. Huygens, *Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis* 139 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1994), 69.

8 William of Tyre, *Chronicon* 18.32, ed. Robert B.C. Huygens, *Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis* 63 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986), 858; Denys Pringle, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem: A Corpus*, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993–2009), 3:288–90, 98–300, pls CLIX–CLXI, figs 49, 51.

9 Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla* 3.10, trans. Alison Finlay and Anthony Faulkes, 3 vols, Viking Society for Northern Research (University College London: London, 2011–15), 3:151–52; cf. Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana* 11.26–34, ed. and trans. Susan B. Edgington, 798–809; Fulcher of Chartres (*Fulcherus Carnotensis*), *Historia Hierosolymitana*, ed. Heinrich Hagenmeyer (Heidelberg: Winters, 1913), 543–48; Riant, *Expéditions et pèlerinages*, 1:172–215.

10 Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla* 3.11, trans. Alison Finlay and Anthony Faulkes, 3:152; cf. Riant, *Expéditions et pèlerinages*, 1:188–90. For this and other relics of the True Cross in Scandinavia, see Chapter 8 (Lukas Raupp), 156–65.

the church, recorded it as being at that time a palm in length and an inch square in section. Ansellus, however, is also recorded sending two other splinters from it to Paris and reliquaries containing others are known from the Holy Sepulchre's own churches in Barletta, Denkendorf and Kaisheim.¹¹ Assuming that the relic given to Sigurd did in fact reach St Olav's tomb in Nidaros (Trondheim), it would presumably have been lost or destroyed at the Reformation, when the shrine of the saint itself was removed to the archbishop's castle of Steinvikholm and eventually broken up by the troops of Christian III of Denmark in June 1537.¹² The main relic itself was lost at the battle of Hattin in July 1187.¹³

A small cluster of Scandinavian pilgrimage texts survive from around the middle of the twelfth century. One of these is incorporated into the chronicle that Albert, former abbot of the Benedictine house of St Mary in Stade near Hamburg, compiled between 1240, when he entered the Franciscan order, and his death around 1262. Albert presents his Holy Land itinerary as part of an imaginary discussion between two young noblemen, Firri and Tirri, held on Christmas Eve and dealing with a variety of mathematical and geographical topics.¹⁴ Although it is set out as a single expedition from Denmark to Jerusalem, it was evidently based on two separate texts. The first is a brief itinerary by sea, with timings between landfalls, which proceeds from Ribe in Jutland to Acre in Palestine and sails by way of Het Zwin [*Cinkfal*] at the mouth of the Meuse in Flanders, Prawle Point [*Prol*] in Devon, St-Mahé [*Sanctus Matthias*] in Brittany, Ferrol [*Far*] in Galicia, Lisbon, the Straits of Gibraltar [*ad strictum mare, scilicet Narewese*], Tarragona, Barcelona Marseilles, Messina in Sicily, and thence to Acre. The second text represents a more detailed description of the Holy Land, beginning from Acre. The two parts are linked by a short passage giving an alternative route from Marseilles to Acre, passing west of Corsica and Sardinia. As these texts were inserted into the chronicle between the entries for 1151 and 1152, Girolamo Golubovich assumed that they should date from

11 Jaroslav Folda, *The Art of the Crusaders in the Holy Land, 1098–1187* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 34–35, 166–69, 290–94; Pringle, *Churches of the Crusader Kingdom*, 3:12–13, 69.

12 Øystein Ekroll, "St. Olavs skrin i Nidaros - myter og fakta omkring Nordens største helgenskrin," SPOR 2 (2000); Øystein Ekroll, "St. Olavs skrin i Nidaros," in *Ecclesia Nidrosiensis 1153–1537. Søkelys på Nidaroskirken og Nidarosprovinsens historie*, ed. Steinar Imsen, Senter for Middelalderstudier, NTNU, Skrifter 15 (Trondheim, 2003).

13 *Chronique d'Ernoul et de Bernard le Trésorier*, ed. Louis de Mas Latrie (Paris: Renouard, 1871), 155–56, 170–71; *Libellus de Expugnatione Terrae Sanctae per Saladinum*, ed. Joseph Stevenson, RS 66 (London, 1875), 225–27.

14 Albert of Stade, *Annales Stadenses auctore Alberto*, ed. Johann Martin Lappenberg, MGH SS, 16:279, 341–4; Girolamo Golubovich ed., *BBB*, 1:181–85; Sabino de Sandoli ed. and trans., *IHC*, 4:1–9; cf. Reinhold Röhrich, *Bibliotheca Geographica Palaestinae* (Berlin: Reuther, 1890), 29–30, no. 72.

then.¹⁵ The argument is not of course conclusive, as Albert was writing a century later, though the content of both texts would be quite consistent with a mid twelfth-century date. Versions of both, however, also appear separately elsewhere. The sea itinerary, for example, also appears in a manuscript in Stockholm, which Riant dated to the late twelfth century,¹⁶ though Jacob Langebek's edition of it improbably places it much later, around 1270¹⁷; and the same itinerary is also found in a marginal note to the mention of Ribe in Adam of Bremen's history of the bishops of Hamburg, written before c.1085.¹⁸ This may well be an early addition to the text and was dated by Röhricht to the eleventh to twelfth centuries.¹⁹ As for the second text, an almost identical version of it, albeit incomplete and with the order changed, was copied by Vincent of Beauvais into his *Speculum Historiale* between c.1230 and 1264.²⁰ There is no obvious source for it, but the sequence of places mentioned and the information given about them suggest that it represents a heavily abbreviated summary of one of the versions of Rorgo Fretellus of Antioch's description of the Holy Land, dating from 1137/1138 onwards.²¹ It must in any case date after Baldwin I's foundation of the castle of Montreal in Transjordan in 1115 and after the fall of Tyre in 1124 and the construction of the chapel of the Saviour outside its walls.²²

A slightly later but more original account of an actual pilgrimage from Iceland to Rome, Jerusalem and back was dictated by a certain Abbot Nikulás in Icelandic in the early 1150s.²³ The text survives in an encyclopaedic miscellany from western Iceland of 1387 and was edited by Kr. Kålund in 1908.²⁴ English translations and

15 BBB, 1:185. However, de Sandoli, in IHC, 4:1 (followed by Denys Pringle, *Pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Holy Land, 1187–1291, Crusade Texts in Translation 23* [Farham: Ashgate, 2012], 396), miscopies these dates as 1251–52.

16 Riant, *Expéditions et pèlerinages*, 1:72.

17 SRD, 5:622, no. 160.

18 Adam of Bremen, *Mag. Adami gesta Hammenbergensis Ecclesias Pontificum 208* (Scholia 69), ed. Johann Martin Lappenberg, MGH SS, 7:368.

19 Röhricht, *Bibliotheca Geographica Palaestinae*, 29–30, no. 72.

20 Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum Historiale* 31.58–65 (Venice: H. Liechtenstein, 1494), fols 423b–424b.

21 In view of its brevity, it is difficult to tell which of the two broadly contemporary versions of Fretellus's description it is derived from: the version for Henri Sdyck (*Rorgo Fretellus de Nazareth et sa Description de la Terre Sainte: Histoire et Édition du Texte*, ed. P.C. Boeren [Amsterdam, 1980]) or that for Count Rodrigo of Toledo (cf. fourteenth-century redaction in *Fretelli archidiaconi Liber Locorum Sanctorum Terre Jerusalem*, PL, 155:1037–54). On the dating, see Rudolf Hiestand, "Un centre intellectuelle en Syrie du Nord? Notes sur la personnalité d'Aimery d'Antioche, Albert de Tarse et Rorgo Fretellus," *Le Moyen-Âge* 100 (1994): 7–36.

22 See Pringle, *Churches of the Crusader Kingdom*, 2:304–14, 4:220–27.

23 For a presentation of the context and reception of this itinerary, see Chapter 12 (Stefka G. Eriksen), 218–43.

24 Copenhagen University, Arnamagnæan Manuscript Collection, AM 194 octavo, fols 11r–16r; Kristian Kålund, ed., *Alfaeði Íslensk: Íslandsk encyclopædisk litteratur 1, Samfund til Udgivelse af Gammel Nordisk Litteratur 37* (Copenhagen: Møllers, 1908), 12–23; Kristian Kålund, "En islandsk Vejviser for Pilgrimme fra 12. Århundrede," *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* 3.3 (1913): 51–105.

discussions of it were published by Benjamin Z. Kedar and C. Westergård-Nielsen in 1982 and by Joyce Hill in 1983.²⁵ A new edition by Rudolf Simek, noting variant readings from other manuscripts, also appeared with a German translation in 1990.²⁶ On the internal evidence of events recounted in the text, the pilgrimage should date later than the burial of Erik the Good in Paphos in 1103, the crusade of Sigurd I in 1110 (though the text wrongly attributes to him and Baldwin I the capture of Jaffa rather than Sidon), the foundation of the Frankish settlement of Magna Mahumeria [*Maka Maria*] around 1124–1128,²⁷ and the discovery of the relics of St John the Baptist in Sebaste in 1145²⁸; but it occurred before the fall of Ascalon to the Franks on 12 August 1153, as Nikulás describes the city as being still in Muslim hands. The pilgrimage would therefore have taken place sometime between 1145 and 1153. This seems to rule out the possibility of identifying the author as Nikulás Saemundarson, abbot of the Benedictine house of Þingeyrar, who travelled overseas between 1153 and 1154 and died in 1158.²⁹ More likely it was Nikulás Bergsson, who became abbot of Þverá (or Munkaþverá) in 1155 and died in 1159 or 1160.³⁰ From Acre, Nikulás lists the coastal cities lying to the south and to the north, without apparently visiting them. However, he himself seems to have travelled inland to Mount Tabor and Nazareth, and thence south to Janīn [*Gilin*] and through the hills of Samaria and Judaea to Sebaste [*Iohannis-kastali*], Nāblus [*Napl*], Jacob's Well, Sinjil [*Casal*, ca-sale S. Egidii], al-Bīra [*Maka Maria*, Magna Mahumeria] and Jerusalem (Fig. 11.2).

There, after describing the Holy Sepulchre, the Hospital of St John, the Tower of David, the *Templum Domini*, the *Templum Salomonis* and Mount Sion, he proceeded to Bethlehem and Bethany (making passing mention of the Dead Sea, the Virgin's tomb in

25 Benjamin Z. Kedar and Christian Westergård-Nielsen, "Icelanders in the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem; A Twelfth-Century Account," *Medieval Scandinavia* 11 (1978–79): 193–212; Joyce Hill, "From Rome to Jerusalem: An Icelandic Itinerary of the Mid-Twelfth Century," *Harvard Theological Review* 76.2 (1983): 175–203; Joyce Hill, "Extract from Nikulás of Þvera," in *Jerusalem Pilgrimage 1099–1185*, ed. John Wilkinson, Joyce Hill and W.F. Ryan, Hackluyt Society, series 2, 167 (London, 1988), 215–19; cf. Riant, *Expéditions et pèlerinages*, 1:80–85. A Latin translation by Erich C. Werlauff (*Symbolae ad Geographiam Medii Aevi ex Monumentis Islandicis* [Copenhagen, 1821], 9–54) is also reprinted with an Italian translation by de Sandoli in *IHC*, 2:207–22.

26 Rudolf Simek, *Altnordische Kosmographie: Studien und Quellen zu Weltbild und Weltbeschreibung in Norwegen und Island vom 12. bis zum 14. Jahrhundert*, *Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* 4 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990), 264–80, 478–91. I am grateful to Lukas Raupp for drawing my attention to this edition.

27 Pringle, *Churches of the Crusader Kingdom*, 1:161–65.

28 Pringle, *Churches of the Crusader Kingdom*, 2:283–86.

29 Kedar and Westergård-Nielsen, "Icelanders in the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem," 195; Hill, "From Rome to Jerusalem," 176.

30 Hill, "From Rome to Jerusalem," 176–77; Wilkinson et al., *Jerusalem Pilgrimage*, 17–18. Riant (*Expéditions et pèlerinages*, 1:80–81) and other earlier writers assumed the author was Nikulás Saemundarson, while Kedar and Westergård-Nielsen ("Icelanders in the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem," 195) suggest that the two abbots may have been the same person.

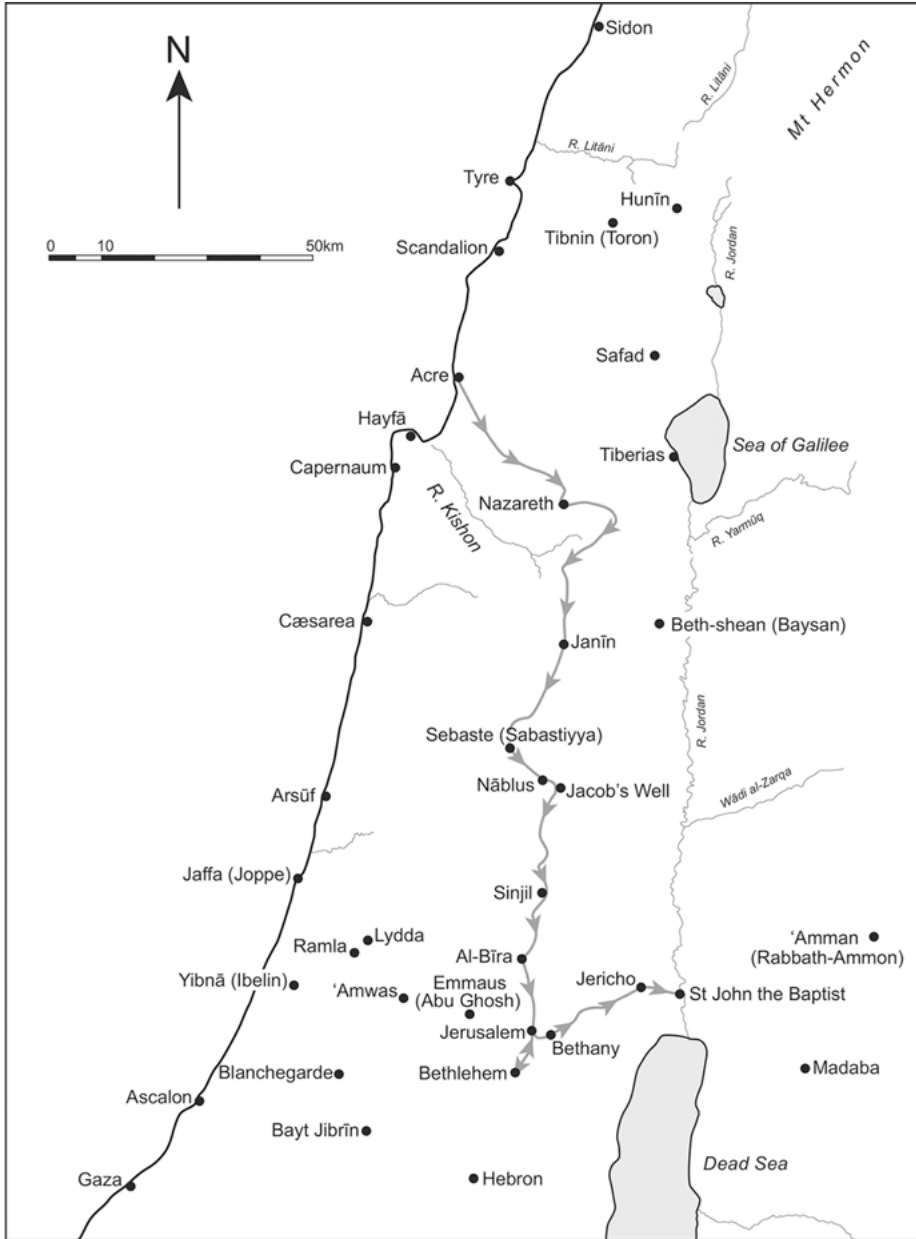


Fig. 11.2: Map of the Holy Land showing Abbot Nikulás's route from Acre to the Jordan, 1145–53. Drawing by Kirsty Harding.

Jehoshaphat and the Mount of Olives), and on to the Mount of Temptation, the castle of Doc [*Abrahams kastali*], Jericho, the Gardens of Abraham and the place of Christ's Baptism in the Jordan. The return journey from the Jordan to Aalborg [Alaborg] in Jutland took Nikulás a total of 105 days, or three and a half months, travelling by way of Bari, Rome, the Alps, Hedeby and Viborg.

It has been pointed out that Abbot Nikulás appears not to have noticed – or to have chosen not to mention – the paintings of St Knud, king of the Danes (r.1080–1086) and St Olav, king of Norway (r. 1015–1030), that decorate two of the nave columns in the church of the Nativity in Bethlehem (Figs 5.1 and 5.2).³¹ However, the consensus among art historians is that these columns paintings, of which a total of 29 depicting a variety of saints survive, were executed between the 1130s and 1160s as votive offerings, paid for by visiting pilgrims. Indeed, the painting of St Olav shows a female donor kneeling at his feet. That the donors were themselves in these two cases Scandinavian is suggested both by the subjects of the paintings and by the paintings' style, which although predominantly Byzantine also betrays western influences, such as the depiction of the cloaks or chlamys with white fur linings worn by the kings and donor, the cylindrical crowns decorated with inset stones, and the shape of the shields, which are typically Norman of the mid twelfth century.³² A date in the 1150s, which is also suggested by the location of the paintings in the general scheme,³³ would also place them effectively after Abbot Nikulás's visit but at the time of other northern pilgrimages and crusades, including that of Earl Rognvald of Orkney (St Ronald) in 1152–3, whose followers may have played a part in Baldwin III's eventual capture of Ascalon in August 1153.³⁴

The same manuscript also contains another text, possibly by the same author, which gives a more detailed description of Jerusalem.³⁵ In this case a date of

³¹ Kedar and Westergård-Nielsen, "Icelanders in the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem," 199.

³² Gustav Kühnel, Wall Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, *Frankfurter Forschungen zur Kunst* 14 (Berlin: Mann, 1988), 112–25, 45, pls. XXXII–XXXV. For further discussion of these paintings, see Bellarmino Bagatti, *Gli Antichi Edifici Sacri di Betlemme*, Pubblicazione dello Studium Biblicum Franciscanum 9 (Jerusalem: Tipografia dei PP. Francescani, 1952), 99, 104, fig. 26; T.S.R. Boase, "Ecclesiastical Art in the Crusader States," in *The Art and Architecture of the Crusader States*, ed. Harry W. Hazard, A History of the Crusades 4 (Madison WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977), 121–22; Folda, *The Art of the Crusaders in the Holy Land*, 96, 163, 285, 315–17, 564 nn.118–25, 577 n.145, pls 8B.17–18; Louis-Hugues Vincent and Félix-Marie Abel, *Bethléem: Le sanctuaire de la Nativité* (Paris: Galbalda, 1914), 171–72, 175–76; and Chapter 5 (Øystein Ekroll) in this volume, 86–93.

³³ Kühnel, *Wall Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*, 145.

³⁴ William of Tyre, *Chronicon* 17.24, 793–4; Riant, *Expéditions et pèlerinages*, 1:235–37, 244–61. For a thorough discussion of Rognvald's crusade, see Chapter 6 (Pål Berg Svenungsen), 95–131.

³⁵ Kålund ed., *Alfaeði Íslensk*, 26–31; Kedar and Westergård-Nielsen, "Icelanders in the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem," 206–09; Joyce Hill trans., "Icelandic Guide," in *Jerusalem Pilgrimage 1099–1185*, ed. John Wilkinson, Joyce Hill and W.F. Ryan, *Hackluyt Society*, series 2, 167 (London, 1988), 220–22; ed. and German trans. Simek, *Altnordische Kosmographie*, 491–500.



Fig. 11.3: Jerusalem, church of St Mary in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Monumental stair to the crypt, with the tomb of Queen Morphia (d. 1126/7) on the left and that of Queen Melisende (b. 1161) on the right. Photo by the author.

composition around 1150 is also indicated by the mention of the church of St Chariton, which is first attested in 1131/1135, the abbey for Benedictine nuns in Bethany, which was established between 1138 and 1142, and the extension of the church of the Holy Sepulchre, including its new choir and ambulatory, which had effectively brought all its chapels and holy sites below one roof by the time of its formal reconsecration on 15 July 1149, though some building work was probably still in progress at that time.³⁶ This text is also significant in being apparently the earliest to mention the wrought-iron screen with which the Franks enclosed the rock inside the Dome of the Rock, as well as the monumental stair leading down to the tomb of the Virgin Mary in the valley of Jehoshaphat (Fig. 11.3), though the latter would have existed in or soon after 1126–1127, when Queen Morphia was interred beside it.³⁷

Around the same time that Abbot Nikulás was visiting Palestine, the brothers Svend, bishop of Viborg, and Eskil, former commander of the fleet of Erik II the

³⁶ Pringle, *Churches of the Crusader Kingdom*, 1:122–24, 3:19–30, 46–58, 65–8, 158–60; Denys Pringle, “The Crusader Church of the Holy Sepulchre,” in *Tomb and Temple: Reimagining the Sacred Buildings of Jerusalem*, ed. Robin Griffith-Jones and Eric Fernie (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2018), 76–94.

³⁷ Pringle, *Churches of the Crusader Kingdom*, 3:298–300, 411, figs 49, 80, pls CLVI–CLXI, CCI–CCII.

Unforgettable of Denmark (r. 1134–1137), undertook their celebrated pilgrimage together to Jerusalem. This story of this is recounted in a history of the origins of the Cistercian Order written by Conrad of Eberbach (c.1140–1226).³⁸ It is a moral tale, portraying how the saintly Svend attempted to channel the violent bellicosity of his sibling into a more spiritual path, first by encouraging him, without success, to join the Second Crusade in 1147 and then by persuading him to accompany him on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1150. The two reached Jerusalem sometime in 1152 and after visiting together the Holy Sepulchre and venerating there the Holy Cross

they came to a place not far from Jerusalem, which is called by local people the *Paternoster*, because in that place Our Lord Jesus Christ is said to have given the disciples the form for praying and to have composed the same prayer on that spot. There was in that place a small poorly built church. When the two pilgrims learnt that this was the place from which the fount of prayer, springing into eternal life, first broke forth from the mouth of the Son of God . . . entering into the chapel and drawing from the fountain of the Saviour the spirit of piety and trust, they dug from the bottom of their pure hearts a prayer to the Lord, imploring Him to forgive them their sins and to free them from all evil.

Their prayer was subsequently answered, for after bathing in the River Jordan and praying for forgiveness, Eskil, the former sinner, realizing that his end was near and having confessed his sins and received the sacraments, yielded up his soul. After witnessing his brother's conversion and reconciliation with God, Bishop Svend was seized with a desire to follow him; but before doing so

he instructed those standing by to bear his body at the appropriate time along with the body of his brother back to the church already mentioned that is called the *Paternoster*, which through the Lord's inspiration they had chosen with sincere feelings of piety, and to see to their burial there.

With that he also expired and the two brothers thus ended their pilgrimage on the same day in the same place and were buried together. Afterwards, writes Conrad of Eberbach,

the little church, which before had been small and ruinous, was razed to the ground and, with the alms that they had generously set aside for the purpose, it was rebuilt in a larger and more elegant form. It is there that their bodies now lie, honourably interred.³⁹

38 Conrad of Eberbach, *Exordium Magnum Ordinis Cisterciensis* 3.25–26, ed. Bertrand Tissier, *Bibliotheca Patrum Cisterciensium* 1 (Bonefontaine 1660), 13–246, at 122–25; Martin C. Gertz ed., *Scriptores Minores Historiae Danicae Medii Aevi* 2 (Copenhagen: Gad, 1922), 426–42; cf. Angel Manrique, *Cisterciensium seu verius ecclesiasticorum Annalium a condito Cistercio (Annales Cistercienses)*, 4 vols (Leiden 1642–59), 2:152–53; Riant, *Expéditions et pèlerinages*, 1:226–29. See also Jens Vellev, “Bisp Svend af Thorgunna-sløgten og hans rejse til Det Hellige Land,” *MIV: Museerne i Viborg amt* 11 (Højbjerg: Hikuin for Viborg Stiftsmuseum, 1981), 70–81.

39 Author's translations from Conrad of Eberbach, *Exordium Magnum*, ed. Gertz, 438–41; cf. Riant, *Expéditions et pèlerinages*, 1:227–29.

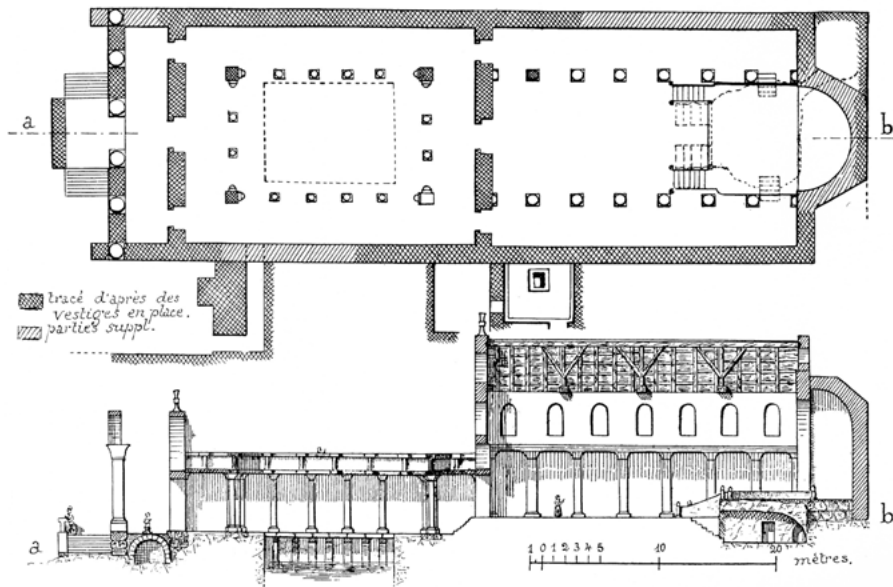


Fig. 11.4: Jerusalem, Mount of Olives. Constantinian church of the Eleona (Pater Noster), plan and section. From L.-H. Vincent and F.-M. Abel, *Jérusalem nouvelle*, Paris 1914–1926, fig. 154.

The church that the brothers found and in which they were eventually buried after their deaths on 30 March 1152 occupied the site of an earlier one, built sometime before AD 333 by the emperor Constantine and St Helena, his mother (Fig. 11.4). This stood on the Mount of Olives above a cave, which was associated with the place where Christ was held to have taught his disciples the “mysteries” concerning the destruction of the Temple, the second coming and the end of days (Matt 24:3). In the later fourth century it was known as the Eleona, from ‘ο ’Ελαιών, meaning “the Olives,” and in the sixth century as the *Matzi*, or *Matheteion*, meaning “of the disciples.” By the end of the fourth century, another church, associated with the place of Christ’s Ascension, was built a short distance north of it and in the 430s St Melania the Younger built monasteries for monks and nuns to serve both churches. The Eleona was destroyed by the Persians in 614 and in the early tenth century Sa’id ibn al-Baṭrīq (Eutychius), patriarch of Alexandria, wrote that at that time it was still a pile of rubble.⁴⁰ However, it seems that the church – or at any rate the cave – may have been restored in some form by Abbot Modestos, who rebuilt a

⁴⁰ Eutychius (S’aid ibn Biṭrīq), *Annales* 16.26, PG, 111:889–1156, at 1083; Bartolomeo Pirone trans., *Gli Annali*, *Studia Orientalia Christiana*, Monographiae 1 (Cairo: Franciscan Centre of Christian Oriental Studies, 1987), 306–7.

number of Jerusalem churches immediately after the Persian occupation,⁴¹ and a Carolingian document listing the churches of Jerusalem and the monks and priests serving them in the early tenth century records it as having three monks and a priest.⁴² Accounts from the first decade of the Frankish kingdom, including those of Bartolf of Nangis (1099), Saewulf (1102–1103) and the Russian Abbot Daniel (1106–1108), suggest that the chapel, which was now specifically associated with Christ's teaching of the Lord's Prayer to his disciples, occupied no more than the cave or crypt, while Constantine's building was still in ruins. The Romanesque church, as rebuilt following Svend and Eskil's patronage of it, was first noted by Muḥammad al-Idrīsī in 1154 and pilgrims in the 1170s mention a stone below the altar on which the Lord's Prayer was written and a crypt thirty steps below the nave. Today all that is left are some remains of the crypt (Fig. 11.5), which came to light in 1870–1872 during the construction of a convent for French Carmelite sisters from Carpentras. At the time of its discovery, traces of frescoes, including fragmentary depictions of heads and wings of angels, were still discernible on the walls, but the excavation was backfilled and was reopened only in 1927–1928, as part of an abortive scheme to rebuild Constantine's church. The cave lay directly below the apse of Constantine's church, but in its present form it is mostly medieval apart from the apse, with stairs to the north and south to allow pilgrims to pass through it in the same way as in the cave of the Nativity in Bethlehem. Of the medieval upper church, however, nothing now survives.⁴³

Scandinavian pilgrims and crusaders continued to visit the Holy Land in the later twelfth century and early thirteenth, notably at the time of the Third and Fifth Crusades and during the period of Frederick II's visit in 1228–1229, when Danish and Frisian crusaders helped to refortify Sidon and Caesarea.⁴⁴ The next

41 Gérard Garitte, ed., *Le Calendrier palestino-géorgien du Sinaiticus 34 (Xe siècle)* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1958), 110–11; Michel Tarnischvili, ed., *Le Grand Lectionnaire de l'église de Jérusalem (V^e–VIII^e siècle)*, 2 vols., *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 189, 205 (*Scriptores Iberici* 10, 14) (Louvain, 1959–60), 2.56 §1414; cf. John Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades* (Warminster: Aris & Philips, 1977), 8–9.

42 *Commemoratorium de Casis Dei vel Monasteriis*, ed. Titus Tobler and Augustus Molinier, *Itinera Hierosolimitana et Descriptiones Terrae Sanctae* 1, *Publications de la Société de l'Orient latin, série géographique* (Geneva, 1879), 302; Michael McCormick, *Charlemagne's Survey of the Holy Land* (Washington DC: *Dumbarton Oaks*, 2011), 206–7.

43 On the church, see Louis-Hugues Vincent and Félix-Marie Abel, *Jérusalem nouvelle*, 4 fascs with album, *Jérusalem: Recherches de topographie, d'archéologie et d'histoire* 2 (Paris: Gabalda, 1914–26), 337–60, 383–87, 396–97, 401–4, 407, 410–12, 968, figs 148–54, pls XXXIV–XXXIX; Pringle, *Churches of the Crusader Kingdom*, 3:117–24, fig. 19, pl. lv; Klaus Bieberstein and Hanswulf Bloedhorn, *Jerusalem: Grundzüge der Baugeschichte vom Chalkolithikum bis zur Frühzeit der osmanischen Herrschaft*, 3 vols, *Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients, Reihe B*, 100 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1994), 3:286–92.

44 Riant, *Expéditions et pèlerinages*, 1:335–38.

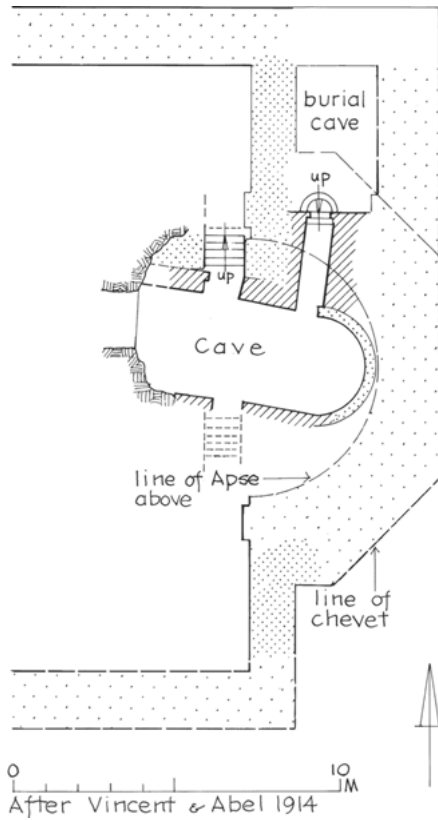


Fig. 11.5: Jerusalem, Mount of Olives. Church of the Eleona (Pater Noster), plan of the medieval crypt. Drawing by Peter E. Leach, after Vincent and Abel, *Jérusalem nouvelle*, Paris 1914–1926.

significant text describing a journey to the East, however, is that of the Franciscan Friar Maurice in 1271–1273. Maurice was a Franciscan from Bergen who acted as chaplain to the Norwegian baron Andres Nikulasson on his Crusade to the East, departing from Selje, north of Bergen, on 17 January 1271. Andres himself probably died on the return journey. Maurice’s account survives in a manuscript, now in the Norwegian state archives in Oslo, which was first published by Gustav Storm in 1880.⁴⁵ Unfortunately much of the text is missing and all that we have are two fragments. The first describes the sea passage from Cape St Vincent, passing recently captured Cadiz to the Straits and proceeding thence to Cartagena, Ibiza, Marseilles and St Peter’s island off the south-west coast of Sardinia (Fig. 11.6).

⁴⁵ Oslo, Norwegian State Archive (NRA), Ms. 29 (c.1300), fols 139–144; Gustav Storm ed., *Monumenta Historica Norvegiae: Latinske Kildeskrifter til Norges Historie i Middelalderen* (Kristiania: A. W. Brøgger, 1880), 165–9; BBB, 2:413–15; IHC, 4:88–93; Pringle, *Pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Holy Land*, 46, 237–40; Riant, *Expéditions et pèlerinages*, 1:72, 357–58; Röhrich, *Bibliotheca Geographica Palaestinae*, 55, no. 139.

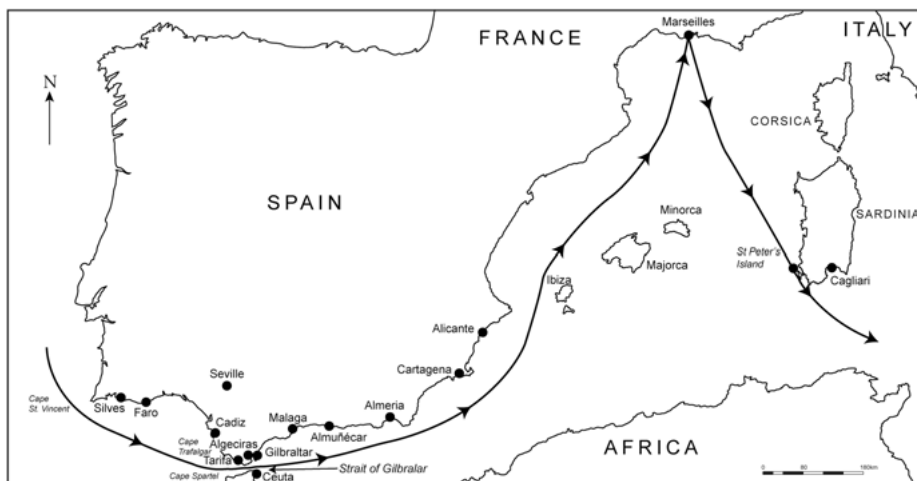


Fig. 11.6: Map showing the route of Friar Maurice's voyage through the western Mediterranean in 1271. Drawing by Ian Dennis.

The second fragment begins with mention of the Syrian castles of Jabala and Crac des Chevaliers, which had fallen to Sultan Baybars in 1268 and 1271 respectively, and goes on to describe the legends associating the Virgin Mary and St Peter with the foundation of the cathedral church and, more surprisingly, the castle chapel of Țartūs. From what Maurice writes, it appears that the Templars, to whom the castle belonged (though he does not mention this), were claiming at that time that their chapel had initially been built by St Mary herself; but, knowing that it would later be enclosed within a castle, she thoughtfully exchanged it with St Peter for the one that he had built in what later became the cathedral church, so as to make it easier for future pilgrims to visit her shrine (Figs 11.1 and 11.7). He also repeats another legend, which is also recorded in early Christian sources, concerning the supposed visit to the nearby island of Aradus (al-Ruwād) by St Peter and St Clement, the fourth bishop of Rome after Peter. Maurice concludes his book at this point, explaining that as no Christian territory lay between Marqab, a mere six leagues away, and Armenia, he and his companions returned to Acre by land the same way that they had come. Somewhat exasperatingly, the description of that part of the itinerary as well as those of Acre and Palestine itself, must therefore have been in the section of text that is now lost.

By the 1260s, after the fall of Jerusalem in 1244 and the start of the Mamluke campaigns that eventually resulted in the Muslim reconquest of the whole of Palestine and Syria, the ability of Western pilgrims to travel freely around the Holy Land was considerably curtailed. In order to compensate for this, by the 1260s there developed within the city of Acre itself a circuit of Latin churches offering indulgences to visitors. These are listed, along with the tariff of indulgences, in a guide



Fig. 11.7: Țartūs (Tortosa), Latin cathedral. From the SW. Photo by the author, 1984.

entitled *Pelrinages et Pardouns de Acre* (c.1258–1263).⁴⁶ Many of the sites listed in this document also occur among the lists of religious establishments to which bequests were made in contemporary wills, including those of visiting pilgrims and crusaders. Three in particular, those of Saliba, a *confrère* of the Hospital (1264), Odo, count of Nevers (1266) and Hugh de Neville (1267), while not identical, have a sufficiently high degree of overlap amongst their beneficiaries to suggest that lists of Latin religious houses in Acre suitable for receiving bequests may have been available to serve as guides for those drafting wills.⁴⁷

One such person was Henrik, bishop of Linköping in Sweden (1258–1283), who in 1282, having occupied his see for some twenty-five years, made a vow to go to

⁴⁶ Henri Michelant and Gaston Raynaud, *Itinéraires à Jérusalem et Descriptions de la Terre Sainte rédigées en français aux XIe, XIIe et XIIIe siècles*, Publications de la Société de l'Orient Latin, série géographique 3 (Geneva, 1882), XXX-XXXI, 227–26; Fabio Romanini and Beatrice Saletti, *I Pelrinages communes, i Pardouns de Acre e la Crisi del Regno crociato: Storia e testi / The Pelrinages communes, the Pardouns de Acre and the Crisis in the Crusader Kingdom: History and texts, Storie e Linguaggi* (Padua: libreriauniversitaria.it, 2012); Pringle, *Pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Holy Land*, 15–17, 44–46, 229–36, table 2, fig. 7; cf. Pringle, *Churches of the Crusader Kingdom*, 4:21, table 1; David Jacoby, “Pilgrimage in Crusader Acre: The Pardouns dAcre,” in *De Sion exhibit lex et verbum domini de Hierusalem: Essays on Medieval Law, Liturgy and Literature in Honour of Amnon Lindner*, ed. Y. Hen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 105–17.

⁴⁷ Pringle, *Churches of the Crusader Kingdom*, 4:23, table 2.

Jerusalem.⁴⁸ His example was followed by Brynjolf Algotsson (d. 1317), bishop of Skara, the entire chapter of Linköping and others, including knights. The party set out through France, but in Marseilles Henrik fell ill and made his will in the infirmary of the Dominicans on 11 April 1283.⁴⁹ After making various bequests to his household staff, the bishop set out in this document a list of gifts to a number of Latin houses and institutions in Acre, which he had still to reach (see Appendix below). They included 20 *livres* (or pounds) of Marseilles to the Patriarch and another 5 *livres* for ‘the redemption of the Lord’s Cross,’ 10 *livres* each to the Dominicans, Franciscans, Hospitallers, Templars and Teutonic Knights, 20 *livres* to the Brothers of the Holy Trinity to be divided between ransoming captives and feeding those still in prison, and 5 *livres* each to the Benedictine abbesses of St Mary of Tyre (formerly St Mary the Great) and St Lazarus of Bethany. Three other houses that received bequests, including the “monasteries of the sisters [*dominarum*] . . . in the same place,” are difficult to interpret, but the list ends with the stipulation that what remained of the total of 400 *livres* was to be divided between the “widows, wards, orphans and beggars.” A similar provision is found in the wills of the count of Nevers and Hugh de Neville.

It seems that the bishop recovered sufficiently from whatever ailment had beset him in Marseilles to continue his journey, for on 28 June 1283 he issued a charter in Acre setting out the last testament of Finnvid, rector of the church of Nässjöhult [*dominus Finnvidus Rector ecclesie de Nessioholt*], who had recently died.⁵⁰ On 27 August 1283, however, he made a supplementary will on his own account in the house of the Holy Trinity in which he was then lodging in Acre, confirming the one made previously in Marseilles and including some additional provisions, among them the stipulation that seven gold *solidi* (or bezants) should be placed on his bier after his death and given to the Friars Minor, with whom he has chosen to be buried.⁵¹

Eight years after Bishop Henrik’s death, on 28 May 1291, Acre fell to the Mamlukes and the churches to which he and others had made donations were destroyed – though in some cases the institutions survived in Cyprus or the West. None the less, pilgrims from northern Europe continued to visit the Holy Places, including St Birgitta of Sweden in 1372,⁵² and the Greenlander Björn Einarsson *jórsalafari* between 1406 and

48 Hans Eberhard Mayer, “Ein Bischof geht einkaufen: Heinrich von Linköping im Heiligen Land,” *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 124.1 (2008): 51–60.

49 Riksarkivet, no 1237; DS, 1:620–22, no. 761; cf. Riant, *Expéditions et pèlerinages*, 358, 369–70.

50 Riksarkivet, no. 1246; DS, 1:629, no. 769.

51 Riksarkivet, no. 1248; DS, 1:633–34, no. 771.

52 Sabino de Sandoli, ed., *Viaggio di Santa Brigida di Svezia da Roma a Gerusalemme 1372*, *Quaderni de “La Terra Santa”* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1991). St Birgitta’s Holy Land experience is the topic of Chapter 13 (Maria H. Oen), 245–67. Another brief description of Jerusalem is contained in the fourteenth-century Kirialax Saga: see Kedar and Westergård-Nielsen, “Icelanders in the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem,” 197, 209–11 and Chapter 12 (Stefka G. Eriksen) in the present volume, 235–9.

1415.⁵³ The Arnamagnæan Manuscript Collection of Copenhagen University also contains no less than three idealized circular plans of Jerusalem drawn in Iceland in the fourteenth century from twelfth to thirteenth century exemplars.⁵⁴ These and other sources dating after 1291, however, are beyond the scope of the present discussion.⁵⁵

⁵³ Simek 1990, *Altnordische Kosmographie*, 295–7.

⁵⁴ AM 544, 4to, fol. 19v. (c.1305–7); 732b, 4to, fol. 8v. (first half 14c.); 736 I, 4to, fol. 2r. (early 14c.); Simek, *Altnordische Kosmographie*, 297–315 (esp. 304–05), 513–17, figs 44–6.

⁵⁵ These plans, however, are examined in Chapter 20 (Kristin B. Aavitsland), 424–53.

Appendix: Extract from the will of Henrik, bishop of Linköping, made in Marseilles, 11 April 1283 (Stockholm, Riksarkivet, no 1237; DS 1: 620–22, no. 761)

The document is not easy to read, having been badly damaged in places, apparently by water, and the right-hand edge is missing altogether. The following extract is taken from the published version, amended in the light of what it was possible to see from the on-line scan available from the Riksarkivet.

| | |
|--|--|
| <i>Item domino patriarche Iherolimitano viginti. lb. mr.</i> | To the Lord Patriarch of Jerusalem, ⁵⁶ £20 <i>marseillais</i> . |
| <i>Item eidem domino [.] Quinque. lb. mr. pro redempcione crucis [domini].</i> | To the same Lord [Patriarch], £5 <i>marseillais</i> for the redemption of the Cross [of the Lord]. ⁵⁷ |
| <i>Item fratribus predicatoribus In Acon. decem. lb. mr.</i> | To the Preaching Friars in Acre, ⁵⁸ £10 <i>marseillais</i> . |
| <i>Item fratribus minoribus In Acon decem. lb. mr.</i> | To the Friars Minor in Acre, ⁵⁹ £10 <i>marseillais</i> . |
| <i>Item hospitalariis decem. lb. mr.</i> | To the Hospitallers, ⁶⁰ £10 <i>marseillais</i> . |
| <i>[Item t]emp[lariis decem] lb. mr.⁶¹</i> | [To the T]emp[lars], ⁶² £[10] <i>marseillais</i> . |
| <i>Item fratribus qui sunt de domo theotonica decem. lb. mr.</i> | To the brothers who belong to the German House, ⁶³ £10 <i>marseillais</i> . |
| <i>Item fratribus [sancti Trinitatis, decem. lb. mr. pro] redimendis captivis.</i> | To the Brothers [of the Holy Trinity, ⁶⁴ £10 <i>marseillais</i> for] ransoming captives. |
| <i>Item eidem decem. lb. mr. pro pascendis captivis Incarceratis.</i> | To the same, £10 <i>marseillais</i> for feeding imprisoned captives. |

56 The Latin patriarch of Jerusalem at this date was Elias of Périgueux, who would also have been bishop of Acre, with effectively two official residences in the city (Pringle, *Churches of the Crusader Kingdom*, 4:38–41, 54).

57 The principal relic of the Holy Cross had been lost to Saladin at the battle of Ḥaṭṭīn in 1187 and was never recovered. The Holy Cross was also the dedication of the cathedral church of Acre, of which the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem was also bishop (Pringle, *Churches of the Crusader Kingdom*, 4:35–40).

58 On the Dominican house, see Pringle, *Churches of the Crusader Kingdom*, 4:46–48.

59 On the Franciscan house, see Pringle, *Churches of the Crusader Kingdom*, 4:48–50.

60 On the church and hospital of St John the Baptist, see Pringle, *Churches of the Crusader Kingdom*, 4: 82–114.

61 mr.] marc. DS.

62 On the house of the Temple, see Pringle 1993–2009, *Churches of the Crusader Kingdom*, 4:166–72.

63 On the house of St Mary of the Germans, see Pringle, *Churches of the Crusader Kingdom*, 131–36.

64 On the house of the Holy Trinity and Captives, see Pringle, *Churches of the Crusader Kingdom*, 4:56–57.

(continued)

| | |
|---|---|
| <i>Item domino patriarche Iherolimitano viginti. lb. mr.</i> | To the Lord Patriarch of Jerusalem, ⁵⁶ £20 <i>marseillais</i> . |
| <i>Item Monasteriis dominarum ibidem [.] lb. mr.</i> | To the monasteries of (the) sisters ⁶⁵ [.] in the same place, £[. . .] <i>marseillais</i> . |
| <i>[Item . . .]</i> | |
| <i>Item Abbatisse beate Marie de Ferro,⁶⁶ quinque. lb. mr.</i> | To the abbess of St Mary of Tyre, ⁶⁷ £5 <i>marseillais</i> . |
| <i>Item abbatisse S(anci) Lazari de Bethania] lb. mr.</i> | To the abbess of St [Lazarus of Bethany ⁶⁸], £[5] <i>marseillais</i> . |
| <i>Item [.] quindecim lb. mr. [.] residuum autem de Quadringentis lb. mr. executores nostri distribuunt [. . .] viduis pupillis orphanis [. .] mendicantibus.</i> | To [. . .], £15 <i>marseillais</i> . [.] moreover, the residue of the £400 <i>marseillais</i> our executors are to distribute [amongst] the widows, wards, orphans [and] beggars. |

65 It is unclear which house of dominae is referred to here, as the term could be applied both to nuns and to regular or secular canonesses. The missing word might have given the answer, though it seems as likely to have been a participle qualified by *ibidem*, such as *constitutis* or *existentibus* if relating to *monasteriis*, or *servientium* if relating to *dominarum*.

66 *Ferro*] *Skro* DS.

67 This is probably the abbey of St Mary of Tyre, representing the exiled abbey of St Mary the Great, formerly in Jerusalem. The designation *de Ferro* may be the result either of simply miscopying *de Tyro/Tirro* or, more possibly (given the similarity of F to a capital long S), miscopying and latinizing the French form of the name, *Nostre Dame de Sur*. On the abbey in Acre, see Pringle, *Churches of the Crusader Kingdom*, 4:22–23, 142–44.

68 St Lazarus was the only known Latin church with a male patron in Acre to have been presided over by an abbess. On the abbey of St Lazarus of Bethany in Acre, see Pringle, *Churches of the Crusader Kingdom*, 4:120–21.



Fig. 12.1: The opening of *Eiríks saga víðförla*, late fourteenth century. Flateyrbok, GKS 1005, fol. 4v. Reykjavík, Safn Arna Magnússonar.

Stefka G. Eriksen

Chapter 12

Physical and Spiritual Travel across the Christian Storyworld: *Leiðarvísir*, an Old Norse Itinerary to Jerusalem

One of the most detailed descriptions of Jerusalem in a Scandinavian source from the Middle Ages is the text *Leiðarvísir*. This is the oldest Scandinavian pilgrimage itinerary, a travel guide book that describes the route from Iceland, to Norway, further to Rome, and all the way to Jerusalem. It was written by Abbot Nikulás Bergsson, the first appointed abbot at the monastery Munkaþverá in the north of Iceland. Around 1150 he himself travelled to Jerusalem and described his travels in *Leiðarvísir*, which was written around 1155, only a few years before his death in 1159 or 1160.

The oldest preserved version of the text appears in the Icelandic manuscript AM 194 8vo, from 1387. *Leiðarvísir* is preserved in several other medieval fragments, which means that the text was copied and read in various medieval contexts, possibly due to its significance and relevance.¹ In the following, I will present *Leiðarvísir* in its 1150- and 1387-contexts, give a brief account of the topics discussed in recent scholarship on the text, and thereafter investigate whether the travel described in *Leiðarvísir* could have been understood allegorically by reading other contemporary stories thematizing physical and spiritual travels.

Jerusalem, World History, and Norse Legends and Mythology

It is said that it takes seven days to sail around Iceland, with favorable winds, which change as it is necessary, as one cannot use the same wind all the way. It is supposed to be the same distance between Iceland and Norway.²

¹ In 1821, the Old Norse texts got a new revival as they were edited and translated into Latin by Professor Erich Christian Werlauff in Copenhagen, as *Symbolae ad Geographium Medii Aevi ex Monumentis Islandicis*. This elucidates that this medieval pilgrimage and travel narrative to Jerusalem remained significant for various audiences for many centuries after its original composition. Erich C. Werlauff, *Symbolae ad Geographiam Medii Aevi ex Monumentis Islandicis* (Copenhagen, 1821).

² “Sva er [sa]gt, at umhverfis Island se víi [dægra] sigling ath [ra]udum byr, ok skiptiz sva sem [þarf, þviat eigi] ma eitt ve[dr] [h]jafa. Sva ok meðal Island[s] [ok] No[regs] er kallat iamlangt”

So begins the description of the pilgrim route from Iceland via Rome to Jerusalem in *Leiðarvísir*.³ The text includes descriptions of various routes, places to stop and rest, and the time it takes to get from one place to another. The text also includes information about the most important churches and holy places for a pilgrim. Of greatest importance here is the description of Jerusalem. Like the description of the other cities, it is not very detailed, and I quote *in extenso*:

It is the most splendid of all cities. It is sung about all over the Christian kingdom, because there one can still see evidence of Christ's suffering. There is the church where you find the Lord's grave, and the site where the Lord's cross stood. There one can see Christ's blood on the stone as if it was newly bled. And that is how it will be until Judgement day. There comes light in on Easter night from the heaven above. The church is called the Holy Sepulchre church and there is an opening in the roof above the grave. This is the center of the universe and the sun shines straight down from heaven on the day of Johannes mass. Here is the hostel of John the Baptist, which is the most marvelous in the whole world. Here also is David's tower. In Jerusalem you find *templum domini* and Salomon's temple.⁴

The text continues with a mention of Mount Sion and its significance, namely that the Holy Spirit came over the apostles there and that it is the site where Christ had his last supper on Maundy Thursday.⁵ Bethlehem and Bethany Castle [*Bethania kastala*] are mentioned thereafter.

In addition to such specific information about Jerusalem, the text includes similar types of details about many sites on the route from Iceland to the Holy City. The descriptions of these places are set in a variety of cultural-historical narratives, which are illustrative of the competence of the text's author and of later scribes, as well as of the ambitions these writers had for contextualizing the trip to Jerusalem from Iceland within world history. Nikulás refers, for example, to the history of the Romans, which is known from other Old Norse translations such as *Rómverja saga*, *Trojumannasaga* and *Breta sögur*. Simultaneously, his travel is related to the Norse

Alfraeði Ízlensk: Íslandsk encyclopædisk litteratur, 4 vols, ed. Kristian Kålund, I. Cod. Mbr. AM. 194, 8vo, Copenhagen: S.L. Møllers bogtrykkeri, 1908–1918. The translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

³ Tommaso Marani, “*Leiðarvísir*. Its Genre and Sources, with Particular Reference to the Description of Rome” (Doctoral thesis, University of Durham, 2012,) chapter 2 discusses whether this is an actual account or a guide, see below. For the route and the specific places in the Holy Land listed in the text, see Chapter 11 (Denys Pringle) in this book, 204–6, including Fig. 11.2.

⁴ “. . . hon er agiëzt borga allra i heimi, of hana er hvervetna sungit um alla kristni, þviat þar ser enn stormerki pislar Cristz. Þar er kirkia su, er gröf drottins er i, ok stadr sa, er cross drottins stod, þar ser glögt blod Christz á steini, sem ny-blëtt sé, ok sva mun æ vera til doms-dags, þar na menn liosi a pascha aptan or himni ofan, hon heitir Pulkro kirkia, hon er opin ofan yfir grofinni. Þar er midr heimr, þar skinn sol iamt or himni ofan of Iohannis messo. Þar er spitali Iohannis baptista, sa er rikaztr i öllum heimi. Þa er Davids tiorn. I Hierusalem er templum domini ok Salomons musterí.” *Alfraeði Ízlensk*, 21–2.

⁵ The 1387 manuscript has the form *synai*, which is clearly a misunderstanding.

socio-cultural sphere, through references to various Danish and Norwegian kings, and legendary and mythological stories preserved in texts such as the *Poetic Edda*, *Snorra Edda*, and *Völsunga saga*.⁶ The combination and unification of these two storyworlds, in combination with an individual's pilgrimage to Jerusalem, may be seen as the quintessence of Icelanders' spiritual and cultural experience, on social and personal levels, after the internalization of Christianity.⁷ Norse-Icelandic history had to be integrated within the rest of world history, and individual Icelanders could experience this integration through an individual physical and spiritual journey from Iceland to Jerusalem.

Establishing the Link Between Iceland and Jerusalem: The Benedictines of Twelfth-Century Iceland

We do not have the original version* of *Leiðarvísir*. The epilogue tells us, however, that the text was written from the dictation of Abbot Nikulás, identified as Nikulás Bergsson (d. 1159) from the Benedictine monastery Munkaþverá, established in 1155 in the north of Iceland.⁸ Nikulás seems to have been an established writer, as he is also known to have composed a *drápa* about the apostle Johannes (only partially preserved)⁹ and a *drápa* on Christ, combining scenes from the Old and New Testaments.¹⁰ Icelandic

6 See for example Lars Lönnroth, *Two-Norse-Icelandic Studies: Sponsors, Writers and Readers of Early Norse Literature and A Road Paved with Legends* (Gothenburg: Litteraturvetenskapliga institutionen, 1990); F.P. Magoun, "Nikulas Bergsson of Munkaþverá and Germanic Heroic Legend," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 42 (1943). For a discussion of the motif of the legendary hero Sigurðr, see Jesse Byock, "Sigurðr Fáfnisbani: An Eddic Hero on Church Portals," in *Poetry in the Scandinavian Middle Ages: The International Saga Conference, Spoleto, 4–10 September 1988* (Spoleto: Presso la sede del Centro Studi, 1988). Other heroes mentioned in *Leiðarvísir* include Gunnarr, Ragnarr Loðbrók and Piðrek.

7 Cf. Kristin B. Aavitsland's introduction to this book, 20–1.

8 There is an extensive discussion of the identity of Nikulás, see Marani 2012, "Leiðarvísir:" 12–16 as well as Chapter 11 (Denys Pringle), 204. Further, the exact surname is uncertain and appears as either Bergsson or Bergþórsson in various sources, *Alfraeði Ízlensk*, xix. For a discussion of the historicity of the attribution to Nikulás, see Karl G. Johansson, "Om nordisk och lärt hos de tidiga benediktinarna på Island," in *Tidlige klostre i Norden for 1200. Et symposium*, ed. Lars Bisgaard and Tore Nyberg (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2006).

9 The first three stanzas of the *drápa* are preserved in *Litla-Jóns saga, Postola sögur. Legendariske fortællinger om apostlernes liv, deres kamp for kristendommens udbredelse, samt deres martyrdöd*, ed. C.R. Unger, Christiania: B.M. Bentzen, 1874.

10 This reference appears in *The Third Grammatical Treatise* by Ólafur Þórðarson hvítaskáld, see Björn Magnússon Olsen, *Den tredje og fjærde gramatiske-afhandling i Snorres Edda tilligemed de grammatiske Afhandlingers prolog og to Andre Tillæg, by Óláfr Þórðarson hvítaskáld* (Montana: Kessinger, 2010).

annals mention that Nikulás returned from a journey abroad in 1154, suggesting that he may have written the itinerary shortly after that and before his death in 1159.¹¹ The suggested dating of c.1155 is confirmed by many cultural references in the text. For example, Nikulás seems to have arrived at Jerusalem before the capture of Ascalon in 1153, but after the dedication of the church of the Holy Sepulchre in July 1149.¹² When he comes to Cologne, he mentions nothing specific except for the archbishop's throne in the Church of St. Peter, thus indicating that he had visited the site before 1164 when the relics of the Magi were translated to Cologne from Milan by Rainald of Dassel, an event that made Cologne a major pilgrimage site.¹³ Accordingly, this confirms that at least parts of *Leiðarvísir* date back to c.1155.¹⁴

Abbot Nikulás was the first abbot and a major figure during the establishment of the Benedictine order in Iceland, which was the first order to found monasteries on Iceland. The first monastery was established in 1133 in Þingeyrar in the north of Iceland, Hólar bishopric, with Munkaþverá established a little later in 1155. By the end of the Middle Ages there were nine active Benedictine monasteries in the country.¹⁵

These two Benedictine institutions in the north of Iceland were major scribal and cultural centres. We know of a series of scribes and translators who worked there: in the twelfth century Oddr Snorrason, Gunnlaug Leifsson, and Karl Jónson wrote Latin historiographies of the Norwegian kings, many of which were translated into Old Norse. Gunnlaugr is also known as a translator of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Prophetia Merlini*, as *Melínussþá*.¹⁶ These works again confirm that texts about Roman and world history, as well as Norse history, were part of the cultural and textual capital available at these scribal centres. *Leiðarvísir* may thus be seen as a good representative of the cultural and intellectual environment during the twelfth century. Later, during the 1300s, we know of Bergr Sökkason and Arngrímr Brandsson who wrote saints' lives in the same tradition as Anglo-Saxon Benedictines.¹⁷

¹¹ *Alfraeði Ízlensk*, xix.

¹² Joyce Hill, "From Rome to Jerusalem: An Icelandic Itinerary of the Mid-Twelfth Century," *Harvard Theological Review* 76, no. 2 (1983): 176–77. For the dating of Nikulás' pilgrimage, see also Denys Pringle's chapter in this volume, p. 204.

¹³ D.J. Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome in the Middle Ages. Continuity and Change* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1998), 54. See also Marani, "Leiðarvísir," where he discusses possible twelfth-century textual sources for the author of *Leiðarvísir*.

¹⁴ Parts of the text elucidate that the version in AM 194 is, however, a result of a compilation process, including information added after the original twelfth-century context, see *Alfraeði Ízlensk*, xx.

¹⁵ For an overview of all monasteries, see Johansson, "Om nordisk och lärt hos de tidiga benediktinarna på Island," 159.

¹⁶ Johansson, "Om nordisk och lärt hos de tidiga benediktinarna på Island," 162.

¹⁷ See Karl G. Johansson, "Texter i rörelse. Översättning, original textproduktion och trading på norra Island 1150–1400," in *Übersetzen im skandinavischen Mittelalter*, ed. Vera Johanterwage and Stefanie Würth, *Studia Mediaevalia Septentrionalia* (Vienna: Fassbaender, 2007). On the establishment of the Benedictines in Iceland, see M. M. Larússon, "Kloster," in *KLNM* and Tore Nyberg, "De

The two Benedictine monasteries had a central role not only in text production, but also in forming Icelandic society in general. A manifestation of this role is the link between the Benedictine monasteries and the aristocratic elite in the north of Iceland, including families as the Sturlungar. The two monasteries, Munkaþverá and Þingeyrar, had schools where members of such families received their education, and some of them even became monks there. Although some known Icelandic writers, such as Snorri Sturluson (1179–1241), were not educated in monasteries, their teachers were probably directly influenced by these contexts. The development of historical writing on Iceland, represented by texts such as Snorri's *Heimskringla* and *Egils saga*, may thus be seen as related to the establishment of the Benedictines in Iceland.¹⁸

Leiðarvísir is not the only Old Norse text that mentions travels to Jerusalem. Snorri's *Heimskringla* describes the earliest known journey to Jerusalem from this region, by Thorir Hundr (born c.990).¹⁹ He had led the uprising against King Olav Haraldsson at Stiklestad and had contributed to the king's death in 1030. After the battle, Thorir left Norway and Snorri briefly relates that he went to Jorsal, but did not return. Thorir's story is also told in the skaldic poem *Erfdrápa* by Sigvat skald. In the saga about the sons of Magnus Olavsson, also known as Magnús *berfættir* (Magnus Barefoot, r. 1093–1103), Snorri tells of another Norse traveler to Jerusalem – Sigurðr Jórsalafari, also known as Sigurd the Crusader, king of Norway between 1103–1130. Sigurd led and participated in the Norwegian crusade 1107–1110 and is also mentioned by Nikulás.²⁰

Nikulás' original version of *Leiðarvísir* can thus be seen as part of the established literary and political culture in the north of Iceland. With its content connecting Norse cultural references to sites and symbols central to the whole of medieval Christendom, such as the holy city of Jerusalem, *Leiðarvísir* demonstrates that already in the mid-twelfth century the Benedictines and northern Icelanders saw themselves as part of the Christian universe that revolved around its earthly and heavenly centre Jerusalem.

benediktinske klostergrundlæggelser i Norden,” in *Tidlige Klostre i Norden før 1200. Et symposium*, ed. Lars Bisgaard (Odense: Syddansk Universitets forlag, 2006).

18 Theodore Andersson, “Snorri Sturluson and the saga school at Munkaþverá,” in *Snorri Sturluson. Kolloquium anlässlich der 750. Widerkehr seines Todestages*, ed. Alois Wolf (Tübingen: G. Narr, 1993).

19 For Thorir Hundr and his alleged Jerusalem journey, see Chapter 14 (Øystein Ekroll), 275, and Chapter 22 (Margrethe C. Stang), 495–8.

20 Sigurd's crusade is discussed in Chapter 6 (Pål Berg Svenungsen), 114–30, Chapter 8 (Lukas Raupp), 156–65, and Chapter 11 (Denys Pringle), 201–4.

Iceland as Part of Latin Christendom During the Fourteenth Century

The main manuscript of the text – AM 194 8vo from 1387 – is more than two hundred years younger than the presumed original composition. AM 194 is an encyclopaedic manuscript including a great variety of what would have been regarded as scientific texts at that time: treatises on calendars, computistics, medicine, geography, geology, and history.²¹ Further, the manuscript includes information about its scribes, location, and dating, which allows for an accurate contextualization. On fol. 33v, there is a note written in a coded language which, when transcribed, says that a priest named Olav [Olafur], son of Ormr, wrote the book in 1387 on the peninsula of Snæfellsnes in the west of Iceland, at the farm of Geirrauðareyrr close to the Augustinian Helgafell monastery.²² A second scribe, Bryniolfr Steinráðarson, began his work on the next folio, 34r. Kålund suggests that the second scribe may have been a priest as well.²³

As mentioned above, this is an encyclopaedic manuscript covering various sciences.²⁴ It includes a section about the rivers in Paradise (which also appears in *Veraldar saga* in AM 764 4to, and in Hauksbók), and a text about the division of the Earth amongst Noah's sons (also found in Hauksbók and Rímbegla). After *Leiðarvísir*, there follows a description of Rome and other Italian, French and Spanish towns, and a detailed description of relics in Constantinople (which also appears in Hauksbók), as well as Jerusalem and Palestine. The Jerusalem description is more detailed than that in *Leiðarvísir* (see below) and is very similar to the one in AM 736 I and in the Icelandic romance *Kirialax saga*.²⁵ All these texts are collectively called *Landfræði* by Kålund, and are followed by, among others, a list of the five church-centres and biblical world history, as well as notes on the human body, medicine, precious stones, and principles for weather forecasting.²⁶

The description of Jerusalem following *Leiðarvísir* is more detailed, giving the direction of the sites in relationship to each another, and even the number of steps between some of them. It mentions that Church of the Holy Sepulchre is on Golgata, *Calvarie loco*, and that its entrance is on the south side. When you enter, on the right

²¹ The whole manuscript, AM 194 8vo, is ed. Kålund in 1908, as part I of the two-volume *Alfræði Íslensk. Íslensk Encyclopædisk Litteratur* 1908–1918.

²² *Alfræði Íslensk*, 54. For the monastery and its site, see Chapter 21 (Mikael Males), 468–75, including Fig. 21.2.

²³ *Alfræði Íslensk*, 62.

²⁴ The manuscript belongs to a cluster of encyclopedic texts. Some of them, Hauksbók and AM 736 I, contain schematic city plans of Jerusalem. These are the topic of Chapter 20 (Kristin B. Aavitsland), 424–53.

²⁵ The main manuscript of the saga is AM 589 a 4to (c.1450–1500), ONP 1989:312. *Alfræði Íslensk*, xxi.

²⁶ For a detailed description, see *Alfræði Íslensk*, xix–xxxii.

hand-side is the chapel where the blood ran down from the Lord's cross and where you can still see the blood. There is also a detailed description of the rock on which the cross was placed:

On the east side of the side chapel there is a rock, and to the north of the rock, there is a staircase with nineteen steps to the rock. This is just an arm-length from where the Lord's cross stood, when he suffered. There is a cliff in the rock and the blood ran into the cliff from above. To the south, there is an arm-length to the cliff in the rock which was made when the Lord threw off the cross, on which he was later crucified.²⁷

The description continues:

To the west of the church door, there is another chapel with St Anastasia's hand and body. In the middle is the church of the Holy Sepulchre. This passage also mentions that the roof above this church is open, with the clarification that light [*lios*]²⁸ enters on Easter Eve only if the city is under Christian rule.

After a description of the side chapels in all directions, the text mentions *Templum Domini*, the Mount of Olives and St Michael's church to the east of Jerusalem, where one finds the footprint of Jesus when he ascended to Heaven; the valley of Jehoshaphat with St Mary's church and the house where Jesus was taken by the Jews; and finally, Bethany south of the Mount of Olives, including the church with the grave of St Lazarus. Kålund suggests that this description could be part of an itinerary, similar to *Leiðarvísir*, or from an oral retelling of a pilgrimage.²⁹

Whether a factual itinerary or not, such information is indicative of the knowledge available to the two scribes working in the context where the manuscript was written, near the Augustinian Helgafell monastery.³⁰ The monastery was a major centre of writing and learning, and the manuscripts and texts written there may be seen as a context for the production of AM 194 8vo, and thus of *Leiðarvísir*. By 1397, the Helgafell monastery was known to own almost one hundred Latin books and 35 books in Old Norse.³¹

27 "Austr af stukunni er berg, ok nordan vid bergith er vindr upp ath ganga xix pallar á bergit. Þa er fadms austr fra þar er stóð cross drotins, þa er hann var pindr, þar er rauf aa bergino, ok kom þar ofan blodit i stukuna. Sudr fra þi er fadms til bergrifo þeirar, er sprack bergit fyrir, er drottin skaut af ser cross-trenu þvi [er] hann var krossfestr [á] sidan." *Alfraeði Ízlensk*, 27. The same kind of text compilations are found in the manuscripts under discussion in Chapter 20 (Kristin B. Aavitsland).

28 This may be a reference to the Eastern rite of the Holy Fire.

29 *Alfraeði Ízlensk*, xxvi.

30 The Augustinians established their first monasteries in the area of Skáholt bishopric, at Þykkvabær in 1168 and Flatey at Breiðafjörður in 1172, see Johansson, "Om nordisk och lärt hos de tidiga benediktinarna på Island," 159.

31 DI: IV,170–171; Lena Liepe, *Studies in Icelandic Fourteenth Century Book Painting* (Reykholt: Snorrastofa, 2009), 118.

Many manuscripts were produced there during the second half of the fourteenth century and are thus contemporary to AM 194 8to.³²

Nikulás Bergsson, author of *Leiðarvísir*, is mentioned explicitly in texts from two of these manuscripts, *Flateyjarbók*, GkS 1005 fol. (1387–1394) and Holm Perg 5 fol. (c.1350–1365). Some of the annals in *Flateyjarbók* refer to Nikulás' death in 1159,³³ while *Guðmundar saga* in Holm Perg 5 fol. discusses the dates of his birth and death.³⁴ Nikulás is thus a known figure in various thematic contexts in fourteenth-century manuscripts. In the case of Holm Perg 5 fol., the context is the bishops' sagas. *Flateyjarbók*, the largest extant medieval Icelandic manuscript (225 leaves) and remarkable for its rich illuminations, contains a collection of various narratives (see Fig. 12.1.). Not only has it sagas of Norwegian kings, starting with the first Christian kings Olav Tryggvason (963–1000) and St Olav Haraldsson (995–1030), but it also contains the only copy of the eddic poems *Hyndluljóð*, a unique set of annals, and many short stories, known as *þátrr*. In addition, it contains *Grænlandinga saga*, *Orkneyinga saga*, *Færeyinga Saga*, and *Eiríks saga víðförla*, which are pertinent to the topics of travel, physical expansion and spiritual development. These topics are a major concern in Nikulás' text.³⁵

Fragments of *Leiðarvísir* also appear in two other manuscripts. The first is AM 47 fol., also called *Eirspennill*, from the first part of the fourteenth century. It contains a compilation of kings' sagas, such as *Sverris saga* and *Hákonar saga*, and seems to have been owned by the archbishop of Nidaros, Trond Gerdasson (d. 1381).³⁶ The second fragment of *Leiðarvísir* appears in the Icelandic manuscript AM 736 II 4to, dated to c.1400 and containing content similar to AM 194 8vo.³⁷

³² For a list of manuscripts belonging to the so-called Helgafell group, see Liepe, *Studies in Icelandic Fourteenth Century Book Painting*, 24–25. See also Ólafur Halldórsson, *Helgafellsbækur fornar*, Studia Islandica (Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóds, 1966).

³³ *Flateyjarbok: En samling af norske Konge-Sagaer med indskudte mindre Fortællinger om Begivenheder i og udenfor Norge samt Annaler*, 3 vols, ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon and C.R. Unger, Christiania: Mallings, 1860–1868.

³⁴ *Biskupa sögur*, Kaupmannahöfn Möller: Íslenzka bókmentafélag, 1858–1878.

³⁵ *Flateyjarbók (Codex Flateyensis): MS. No. 1005 fol. in the old royal collection in The Royal Library of Copenhagen*, ed. Finnur Jónsson, Copenhagen: Levin & Munksgaard, 1930; Elizabeth Ashman Rowe, *Cultural Paternity in the Flateyjarbók “Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar”* (Berlin: Alvisssmal, 1998); Elizabeth Ashman Rowe, *The Development of Flateyjarbók; Iceland and the Norwegian dynastic crisis of 1389* (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2005); Liepe, *Studies in Icelandic Fourteenth Century Book Painting*, 123–4 discusses and syncretizes the hypothesis that the provenance of the *Flateyjarbók*-manuscript was in the north of Iceland, and the affiliation of the manuscript with the Helgafell-group, through its second scribe Magnus Þórhallsson.

³⁶ *Katalog over Den arnamagnæanske håndskriftsamling udgivet af Kommissionen for det arnamagnæanske legat*, 2 vols, Copenhagen 1889–1894.

³⁷ AM 736 is described as having five parts, the second one being of interest to us. For a description of the content of all five parts, see *Katalog over Den arnamagnæanske håndskriftsamling*, II, 164–6.

While the original version* of *Leiðarvísir* was written in a Benedictine context, which was central for the formation of cultural and political power in the north of Iceland, the oldest preserved version belongs to a long-established and highly productive cultural and intellectual context. We do not know what other texts existed in the original manuscript*, but AM 194 8vo contains texts that complement and add thematically to the description of places given in *Leiðarvísir*, including that of Jerusalem. During Nikulás' lifetime in the twelfth century, Norse culture sought to establish its position in juxtaposition to and within Latin Christian culture. At the end of the fourteenth century, this position was firmly established and internalized within Norse mentality, as testified by the rich amount of encyclopaedic manuscripts and texts, including *Leiðarvísir*.

State of the Art in Research on *Leiðarvísir*

Some of the earliest research done on *Leiðarvísir*, such as the articles by F.P. Magoun (1940, 1944), discusses various details of the itinerary to Rome and Nikulás' stay in Rome.³⁸ The remainder of the itinerary, from Rome to the Holy Land, is discussed by Joyce Hill (1983). These studies include detailed surveys of the place-names and sites referred to in the text and their historical, cultural and religious significations. *Leiðarvísir* is also regarded as a main source in an extensive study of medieval pilgrimages to Rome by Debra J. Birch (1998). She discusses the main aims of a pilgrimage ("white martyrdom").³⁹ Furthermore, she describes the "travel industry" and the economic realities⁴⁰ that developed in relation to pilgrimages, based on various itineraries mentioning alternative routes, places to stay, sites to visit, safety and security on the road, taxes, necessary documents and equipment.⁴¹ She points out that Nikulás' itinerary distinguishes itself from many of the others with regard to various aspects, such as his description of the relics in the Lateran, alongside his interest in various pagan sites, such as the fortification of the *Crescentii* (today known as Castel Sant'Angelo), the Porta Latina, and the baths of Caracalla.⁴² He is also one of the few who mentions a market at St Peter's, even though the meaning of the word he uses, *kauphús*, may be debated.

Recent additions to the scholarship include a comparison of the text to other geographical and cosmological texts by Rudolf Simek (1990, 1996); a discussion of

38 For a more detailed historiographical account, see Marani 2012, "*Leiðarvísir*:" 3–4.

39 Birch 1998, *Pilgrimage to Rome in the Middle Ages*: 3.

40 See also E. Cohen, "Road and Pilgrimage. A Study of Economic Interaction," *Studi medievali* 3rd Ser. 21 (1980).

41 For a discussion of the pilgrimage token on the pilgrimage to Compostella, see Lars Anderson, "Pilgrimsmärken från Vägarna mot Compost," in *Pilgrimsvägar och vallfartskonst*, ed. Margareta Kempff Östlind (Stockholm: Sällsk. Runica et mediævalia, 2002).

42 Birch 1998, *Pilgrimage to Rome in the Middle Ages*: 116.

the influence of Germanic heroic legend on the text by Fabrizio Raschellà (1995); and most recently, the scholarship of Tommaso Marani.⁴³ Some of his articles, as well as his PhD thesis, discuss the genre of the text, the description of Rome in comparison to other medieval descriptions of it, and the process of composition of the text that we have in the main manuscript AM 194 from 1387.

Marani's analysis suggests that the extant text is a complex composition based on written sources, a narrative with a beginning and an end [*Explicit*]. He compares the text to Latin texts such as *Mirabilia Urbis Romae*, which is a description of geographical sites and the important functions of Rome, written before 1143, and to *Indulgentia ecclesiarum Urbis Romae* and *Stationes ecclesiarum*, which were very popular in the 1100s. Marani argues that Nikulás' text is based on both personal experiences and other written sources, and therefore should be seen more as a guide and not a travel account. Like other medieval guides, it could provide information for those planning to go to the Holy Land, but it could also serve as a spiritual guide for those who could not engage in an actual pilgrimage.⁴⁴ Such "virtual" pilgrimages were a common practice in the Middle Ages. They could be based on either textual accounts, verbally mapping out the travel to Jerusalem or the city itself, or art representations, which visualized Jesus' passion history, situated in the cityscape of Jerusalem.⁴⁵

However, Marani stops here. Neither he nor anyone else have investigated the value of the text as a spiritual cognitive guide for its readers within the cultural context of its manuscripts. *Leiðarvísir* is a fact-orientated text, and by itself does not invite an allegorical and ethical reading of the journey. Such readings are, however, highly appropriate when approaching some of the other texts, appearing either in the *Leiðarvísir*-manuscripts or in the manuscripts produced in the same contexts.⁴⁶ In the

⁴³ Fabrizio D. Raschellà, "Devozione cristiana e leggenda germánica nell' 'itinerarium' dell'abate Nicola di Munkaþverá," in *L'immaginario nelle letterature germaniche del Medioevo*, ed. Adele Cipolla (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1995); Tommaso Marani, "The Roman Itinerary of Nikulás of Munkaþverá: Between Reality and Imagination," in *The Fantastic in Old Norse/Icelandic Literature, Sagas and the British Isles, Preprints of the 13th International Saga Conference*, ed. David Ashurst (Durham: Durham Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006); Tommaso Marani, "Contextualizing *Leiðarvísir*: Sant'Agnes, the Catacombs, the Pantheon and the Tiber," *Saga-Book: Viking Society for Northern Research* 33 (2009); Marani 2012, "*Leiðarvísir*"; Tommaso Marani, "The Relics of the Lateran according to *Leiðarvísir*, the *Descriptio Lateranensis ecclesiae* and the Inscription outside the *Sancta Sanctorum*," *Medium Ævum* 81, no. 2 (2012).

⁴⁴ Marani, "*Leiðarvísir*," 99, 110.

⁴⁵ See for example Kathryn M. Rudy, *Virtual Pilgrimages in the Convent: Imagining Jerusalem in the Late Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011).

⁴⁶ For an example of such an approach towards another of Nikulás' text, his *drápa* on Christ in *The Third Grammatical Treatise*, see Janus Møller Jensen, "Vejen til Jerusalem: Danmark og pilgrimsvejen til det Hellige Land i det 12. århundre. En islandske vejviser," in *Ett annat 1100-tal. Individ, kollektiv och kulturella monster i medeltidens Danmark*, ed. Peter Carelli, et al. (Stockholm: Makadam förlag, 2004), who discusses the figurative use of biblical episodes.

Icelandic intellectual contexts that produced *Leiðarvísir* at the end the fourteenth century, there seems to be a tendency to encourage ethical-allegorical dialogic readings of texts about travel, hence linking physical and spiritual dimensions of moving in the Christian storyworld.⁴⁷

On Travelling Souls

Many of the texts that appear in immediate proximity to *Leiðarvísir* – either in the same manuscript or the same cultural context – relate of travels, if not to Jerusalem, to places either characterized explicitly or interpreted allegorically as Paradise. In the following, I will discuss a few examples of how such travels are described, by focusing on the physical and spiritual aspects of the travel as a process, and on the description of the travel destinations themselves. This is not an exhaustive study of the motif of travel, but the aim is to illustrate the horizon of understanding in which *Leiðarvísir* may have been read and comprehended.

The examples below are from (1) *Veraldar saga* and the passage about Paradise and Moses at the beginning of the same manuscript as *Leiðarvísir*. Their content takes us associatively to (2) *Eiríks saga víðförla*, a legendary saga which appears in the *Flateyjarbók* manuscript, among others, probably written in the same context as AM 194 8vo, namely the Helgafell monastery. This saga tells of a journey to the earthly Paradise, a topic also treated in (3) *Kirialax saga*, a bookish Icelandic romance of encyclopaedic nature, that dwells on worldly travels and spiritual realities, among other topics. Finally, we return to the *Flateyjarbók* manuscript, which also includes (4) one of *The Vinland sagas*, that is *The Saga of the Greenlanders*, where the discovered islands may be allegorically interpreted as a thematization of Paradise. The second of the two *Vinlands sagas*, the *Saga of Erik the Red* is preserved in *Hauksbók*, among other manuscripts. This manuscript includes other texts about the link between physical and cognitive travel, as well as a visual representation of Jerusalem.⁴⁸ Our excursus will stop with these texts, even though the topic of spiritual and physical travel can certainly be traced and discussed on the basis of many other texts.

⁴⁷ Most of the scholarship on *Leiðarvísir* discusses the text within its twelfth-century Benedictine context, even when the analyses are based on Kålund's edition which is based on the fourteenth-century manuscript AM 194. The work by Tommaso Marani is an exception, as he argues that the text as we have it in manuscript AM 194 cannot have been written exclusively in the twelfth century and that parts of it are later additions testifying to a complex compilation process. Sometimes, even Werlauff's edition from 1821 is used as a primary text when discussing the twelfth-century context, see Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome in the Middle Ages*.

⁴⁸ For the representation of Jerusalem in *Hauksbók* and other comparable Icelandic manuscripts, see Chapter 20 (Kristin Aavitsland), 424–53, including Figs 20.1–3.

The links between *Leiðarvísir* and the contextualizing texts and manuscripts are summarized in the table below:

| | AM 194 8vo: <i>Leiðarvísir Veraldar saga Landfræði</i> | Flateyjarbók: <i>Eiríks saga viðförla The Saga of the Greenlanders</i> | AM 589 a 4to: <i>Kirialax saga</i> (Jerusalem and Paradise, Phoenix) | Hauksbók: <i>The Saga of Erik the Red</i> |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| AM 194 8vo <i>Leiðarvísir Veraldar saga Landfræði</i> (Phoenix) | | Written in the same context; common elements between <i>Veraldar saga</i> and the description of Paradise and Moses | Originally the saga may be connected to Bergr Sökkason and his disciplines, where <i>Leiðarvísir</i> originated. Description of Jerusalem and Paradise | Encyclopaedic manuscripts Map of Jerusalem |
| Flateyjarbók <i>Eiríks saga viðförla The Saga of the Greenlanders</i> | | | Description of Paradise in India and beyond | <i>Vinlands sagas</i> Physical and cognitive travels |
| AM 589 a 4to <i>Kirialax saga</i> | | | | Jerusalem map and Paradise |

***Veraldar Saga* and the Rest of AM 194 8vo**

Veraldar saga is a translation of Latin texts connecting world history to Icelandic history by mentioning Gizzur Hallssønn at the end, whose family also is mentioned in *Njáls saga*.⁴⁹ He is considered to be the compiler of *Rómverja saga* and the author of the *First Grammatical Treatise*.⁵⁰ Gizzur may also have been a contributor to the writing of *Veraldar saga*, and is known to have written another description of a journey to southern Europe in 1149–1152, called *Flos Peregrinationis* (The Blossom of Pilgrimage), now lost.

⁴⁹ The saga is preserved in many manuscript fragments, from between c.1200 to 1600–1770, see ONP 1989:407.

⁵⁰ *Veraldar saga*, translated by Rune Kyrkjebø, *Norrøn Verdenshistorie og geografi*, Oslo: Aschehoug, 2012, 19–60.

Veraldar saga tells us of Moses' travel in the desert during the third age of humankind. Paraphrasing Exod 13:21, the text relates how Moses' journey was guided by a pillar, which stretched from heaven to earth, having the colour of clouds during the day and the colour of fire at night. The pillar was Moses' guide for forty years on the Israelites' journey from Egypt to Jordan.⁵¹ Later, the text gives allegorical explanations for this and other episodes: the desert symbolizes the difficulties and challenges of the worldly life that people have to live and suffer before they can enter and take their place in Paradise. The pillar that guided Moses on this journey symbolizes Jesus Christ, showing his children the way to Paradise. The pillar's colour at night shows that he is terrifying to evil men, but is as mild as the shining skies to his friends.⁵²

The wider textual context of *Leiðarvisir* in AM 194 8vo, called *Landfræði* by Kålund, starts with Moses' and John's description of the celestial Paradise: it hovers in the air, between the earth and Heaven; there are no mountains or valleys, no cold or ice, there is nothing lacking, and the land is fertile and rich. There lies the well of life [*lifs brunns*]. There is a forest in Paradise which everyone admires, called *Radion saltus* (shining forest) and it never dies. There are all kinds of trees and fruit-trees there, including the one that contained all wisdom of good and evil which was forbidden to Adam and Eve. Even though the journey to this place is not described here, it is explicitly mentioned that the souls of all good people shall travel to Paradise. Here we also find the Phoenix, which is the lord of all birds. It bathes in the well of life and is marvellous, shining, and exceptional in all kinds of ways. John further tells: after the Phoenix had lived 1000 years, it gathered a multitude of birds and with their help collected many twigs in a big pile. With the help of God, the pile took fire because of the strong sun. The Phoenix fell into the middle of the fire and was burned entirely to ashes. After three days, it was resurrected from death and became young again for a second time. It then went to the well of Life and bathed again. And so the cycle of the Phoenix continues every one thousand years. It is also mentioned that Paradise lies in the eastern part of the world, and that is where one finds the Tree of Life.⁵³ The Phoenix is indeed a well-known trope in many cultures. In the Christian tradition it has a range of symbolic meanings: heavenly Paradise, Christ, Mary, virginity, and other aspects of Christian life.⁵⁴

This description of Paradise and Moses' journey through the desert with the guidance of God are the allegorical renderings and the ultimate goal for a physical pilgrimage to the worldly Jerusalem, as described in *Leiðarvisir*. The fact that

⁵¹ *Veraldar saga*, 33.

⁵² *Veraldar saga*, 36.

⁵³ *Landfræði*, translated by Bjørg Dale Spørck, *Norrøn Verdenshistorie og geografi*, Oslo: Aschehoug, 2012, 69–82.

⁵⁴ R. van der Broek, *The Myth of the Phoenix According to Classical and Early Christian Tradition* (Boston: Brill, 1972), 9. The Phoenix is mentioned in works by Pope Clement I, Isidore of Seville, and in literature by Dante and Shakespeare, among others.

these texts appear in the same manuscript strengthens the hypothesis that such a dialogic reading of the physical and spiritual journeys was plausible, perhaps even intended.

Eiríks Saga Viðförla

The description of Paradise in *Landfræði* brings to mind another description of Paradise, that in the legendary saga *Eiríks saga Viðförla*. This saga is preserved in, among other manuscripts, the *Flateyjarbók* manuscript, GKS 1005 fol, c.1387–1395.⁵⁵ The manuscript was probably written in the same context as the *Leiðarvísir*-manuscript AM 194 8vo – the Helgafells monastery – and moreover some of the annals in *Flateyjarbók* mention abbot Nikulás. This is the saga about Eiríkr, the son of the first king to rule over Trondheim, who makes a vow one Yule Eve: “at fara um allan heim at leita, ef hann fyndi stað þann, er heiðnir menn kalla Ódáinsakr, en kristnir menn jörð lifandi manna eða Paradísúm” [to travel the whole world in search of the place which heathen men call The Deathless Acre and Christians the Land of Living Folk, or Paradise].⁵⁶ On his way to this site, Eiríkr spends some time with the Greek king in Miklagard (Constantinople), where he learns about the Christian God, the Trinity, and Heaven and Hell. Hell is placed under Earth; the sky is above Earth; the Firmament Heaven [*festingarhiminn*], which contains the stars, is above the sky; waters, in the form of clouds, are above the Firmament Heaven; the spiritual Heaven, where the angels live, is above the waters; the Heaven of intellect, which is the heaven of God himself, is above the spiritual Heaven. The vertical positioning of the various Heavens recalls the placement of Paradise on a vertical, albeit less detailed, axis in *Landfræði*, between earth and Heaven. Eiríkr also learns that India-land marks the end of the earth and that the country east of furthest India is what the Christians call Paradise. This was also mentioned in *Landfræði*. A wall of fire before it reaches right up to Heaven. Eiríkr and his men stay with the king for three years and are baptized before they set off on their journey.

When the troop comes to India, they discover a land full of contradictions, including regions drowned in darkness but with the stars shining bright above all the time, rich regions covered with gold and treasures, thick woods and other wonders.

⁵⁵ See ONP: 1989: 241. For a discussion of the variation between the various versions of the saga, see Elise Kleivane, “Reproduksjon av norrøne tekstar i seinmellomalderen. Variasjon i *Eiríks saga viðförla*” (Doctoral Thesis, University of Oslo, 2010).

⁵⁶ For the Old Norse text with English translation, see *The Tale of Eirik the Traveller*, translated by Peter Tunstall 2005, *The Complete Fornaldarsögur Norðulanda in English Translation*, <http://www.germanicmythology.com/FORNALDARSAGAS/EireksSagaVidforlaTunstall.html>.

When it starts to get brighter, they come to a river spanned by a bridge. On the opposite bank they see “land fagrt með miklum blóma ok gnótt hunangs ok kenndu þaðan sætan ilm. Þangan var bjart at líta” [a beautiful country with tall flowers and plenty of honey, and from it they smelt a sweet scent. The direction was bright to look at].⁵⁷ Eiríkr then realizes that this is the river Phison, which runs from Paradise. A terrible dragon lies in front of the bridge and guards it. Eiríkr and some of his men go purposefully inside the mouth of the dragon and when they emerge on the other side, wading through smoke, they find a beautiful land with flowers, honey and sweet scents. Then they see a column [*stöpull*] hanging in the air without any support, which turns out to be a tower hanging in the sky with a ladder on it. In the tower, they find a richly decorated room with satins and velvet, a table with a silver dish containing white sweet-scented bread, a jug set with gold and gemstones, and a goblet full of wine, as well as beds covered with golden and velvet cloths. Eiríkr thinks this is Paradise.⁵⁸ He then falls asleep and an angel comes to him in his sleep, the one who guards the gates of Paradise. He tells him that this place is like “eyðimörk til at jafna við Paradisum” [wilderness compared to Paradise], but that Paradise is close by and that it is the origin of the river. No living man comes to Paradise, where only the righteous souls live, while this place is called the Land of Living Folk. The angel then explains that the tower is held by God’s strength alone and is a sign that God undoubtedly made the world from nothing. Eiríkr then goes back to the North and tells of his adventures, wisdom and learning. When he dies, his friends know that he is taken by the spirit of God.

The narrative of Eiríkr’s trip can be read in various ways. It is a story about a physical journey, but it also includes cognitive experiences, such as Eiríkr’s dream in the tower. The physical journey is, however, full of symbolism and metaphors that open up allegorical interpretation: the trip takes him from darkness to light, and to beauty and sweetness,⁵⁹ which are all signs of God’s presence and omnipotence. The bridge connecting the two worlds is certainly a common symbol of transfer from this world to the other, and such bridges are often guarded by treacherous

⁵⁷ *The Tale of Eirík the Traveller*, ch. 3.

⁵⁸ This recalls an episode in *Elís saga ok Rosamundu*, where a Christian crusader is hurt and seeks help in a tower and a room of a similar kind. There, he is healed by a Saracen princess; in the French version of the *chanson*, she treats him with an ointment made of herbs that have grown at the foot of the Cross, which is the ultimate symbol of regeneration; in the Norse version, the passage is translated with modifications. When healed, the hero exclaims: “this is Paradise.” For a discussion of the connotations of the change of the symbolism, see Stefka G. Eriksen, “Translating Christian Symbolism into Old Norse Mythology in Thirteenth-century Norway,” in *Medieval Translator: Translation and Authority – Authorities in Translation*, ed. Pieter de Leemans and Michele Goyens (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016).

⁵⁹ On the sweetness of God, see Rachel Fulton, “‘Taste and see that the Lord is sweet’ (Ps 33:9): The Flavor of God in the Monastic West,” *The Journal of Religion* 86, no. 2 (2006).

creatures, or test the trespasser's courage and mental strength in other ways.⁶⁰ God's heaven is presented as a physical, spiritual and intellectual universe, suggesting that meeting God demands the involvement of all three of these faculties. Eiríkr's journey involves the three faculties too: he travels physically, and he learns much on his way, including both spiritual and cognitive truths about the sweetness of God. The earthly Paradise is connected to Heaven by a wall of fire, and the column is a sign and proof of God's existence, which is never to be doubted. The column in Paradise in *Eiríks saga* recalls the pillar in *Veraldar saga* (and in Exodus), that functioned as a reminder of God and His guidance.

If seen as an architectural element, the column may function as a metaphor for the main pillars of the Christian faith. In the stave church homily in *The Old Norse Homily Book* which is a dedication of a church in terms of Solomon's dedication of the first temple in Jerusalem, columns as such are not specifically mentioned, but the foundation timbers are said to symbolize God's Apostles, as they are the main pillars of the whole of Christendom.⁶¹ In Honorius Augustodunensis' *De gemma animae*, which *The Old Norse Homily Book* strongly alludes to, the columns in a church are said to symbolize the bishops, "who maintain the machinery of church life at a level of high rectitude. The beams that hold the house together are the princes of the world who defend the church in an unbroken state."⁶² What is noteworthy in this allegorical explanation is that while earlier sacred architecture was related to various grades in the ecclesiastical system, Honorius is the first to include the laity in his explanation, which connects the material and spiritual meaning of the buildings even further.

In the thirteenth century, with the increased significance of the vernaculars, the architectural allegorical readings also became gradually translated from religious to secular and rural buildings, such as farmhouses and castles, kitchens and barns.⁶³ The besieged castle is a much-used literary trope for the soul threatened by sin and the devil. The castle of religious virtue, for example the castle of courtly love or the castle of virginity, symbolized the personification of female resistance. Another trope of virginity is the tower, which appears in our text. In various texts, the Virgin Mary is "represented as a fortification" and is sometimes also "invoked as a doorway to eternal life, a temple of mercy for sinners, a strong tower of refuge."⁶⁴ It thus becomes an allegory of the incarnation, the miracle of Christ's entrance into Mary's virginal body.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ See Kleivane, "Reproduksjon av norrøne tekstar i seinmellomalderen," 64–9.

⁶¹ *Gammelnorsk homiliebok*, translated by Astrid Salvesen, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1971.

⁶² Cited from and translated by Christiania Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind. A Study of Medieval Architectural Allegory* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), 49–60 n. 24.

⁶³ Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind*, 88.

⁶⁴ Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind*, 92.

⁶⁵ Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind*, 93.

The last architectural element in the saga that deserves comment is the ladder leading to the tower, which seems to be hanging in the open air. The ladder trope, the prototype of which is Jacob's vision of the celestial ladder in Genesis 28, is used both textually and visually to signify the inner development from vice to virtue and holiness. An example of the allegorical significance of ladders may be found in Hugh of St Victor's *De arca Noa mystica* (*On the mystical interpretation of the arc of Noah*). The ascent into the ship occurs along various ladders: one leads from fear, then to sorrow, then to love; another from knowledge, to meditation, to contemplation; yet another from temperance, to prudence, to fortitude. There are twelve ladders, four around each column on the three decks. Hugh further elaborates the meaning of the separate steps and ladders,⁶⁶ but here it suffices to emphasize the strong allegorical symbolism of the ladder. We see that the column, the tower, and the ladder are infused with stark symbolism of physical travel, symbolizing the earthly life of Christ himself, as well as the spiritual ascension of each and every traveller.

Kirialax Saga

As already mentioned, the descriptions of Jerusalem in AM 194 8vo recall other descriptions of the city, as for example in *Kirialax saga*. This saga dwells on the topics of travel and paradise-like lands and their creatures (the Phoenix, for example), and is therefore another suitable example in our excursus on travelling souls. This is an indigenous Icelandic romance, combining elements of translated crusade stories with encyclopaedic knowledge about world history, and some references to Nordic history, as well as other worldly spaces.⁶⁷ The saga's first part is rich in

⁶⁶ See Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, second ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 236–7.

⁶⁷ *Kirialax saga* is preserved in three fifteenth-century manuscripts: AM 589a 4to a, from the second part of the fifteenth century; AM 489 4to, from the fifteenth century; AM 567 4to, the first half of the fifteenth century; in addition to later paper manuscripts, see *Kirialax saga*, ed. Kristian Kálund, Copenhagen: S.L. Møllers Bogtrykkeri, 1917; ONP 1989: 312. It has been argued that the saga was written in the fourteenth century and its composition is associated with either Bishop Jón Halldórsson of Skálholt, or Berg Sökkason and his disciples, among others, see Alenka Divjak, *Studies in the Traditions of Kirialax Saga* (Ljubljana: Institut Nove revije, zavod za humanistisko, 2009), 15. The latter of these interpretations places the origin of the saga in the same context as the original composition context of *Leiðarvísir*. The manuscript AM 589 a-f 4to is characterized by Agnete Loth as “ordinary, unremarkable.” It contains fornaldarsagas, late medieval fiction, and examples of post-classical sagas of Icelanders. See Agnete Loth, “Introduction,” in *Fornaldarsagas and Late Medieval Romances*, ed. Agnete Loth (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1977), 7. AM 489 4to is a similar manuscript, but also includes translations of Old French romances, such as *Ívens saga*, *The Saga of Tristram ok Ísodd*, and *Flóres saga ok Blankiflúr*, see Foster W. Blaisdell, “Introduction,” in *The Sagas of Ywain and Tristan and other tales: AM 489 4to*, ed.

battle descriptions, reminding us of the crusades as described in *chansons de geste*, violent and bloody, but also relatively formulaic and common for these genres. An episode relevant in this context is the description of Kirialax's journey to the sea of Jerusalem [Iorsala háf]⁶⁸ and to Jorsalaborg. The description is detailed, mentioning various sites and their theological significance for the life of Christ and the history of Christianity. The description is relatively list-like, and in this sense, it recalls the description of Jerusalem in *Leiðarvísir*. The sites mentioned are the *Pulchro kirkia* (otherwise the designation of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre), described as a large temple in the middle of the town, built by St Helena, mother of Constantine. There then follow five other churches: Church of the Cross, where the Cross of the Lord stands; another church above the Lord's grave, close to the rock with a large hole in which the Cross stood, and under the rock there is yet another church, where you find the stone that was under the cross, still covered with Christ's blood. Then there are the Church of Simeon and the Church of Holy Caritas. We hear of the rock where one can see Jesus' handprint when he was thrust into the mud. We are told of coloured columns in the Pulchro Church and about the pillar on which Our Lord was whipped, and the candles in marble pillars in the north of the Pulchro Church, which are lit by heavenly fire each year on the Saturday before Easter. We are told of the thirteen seats on which Christ and his apostles sat and how they shine with fire-red gold, as well as the *Ions spitali* (probably the quarters of the Knights Hospitaller) where divine, ancient and Hebrew services are held. And we hear of *templum domini*, in the eastern part of *Jorsala borg*, where the sepulchre of the Virgin Mary stands, and we are told of the Lord's grave and the large stone on the right, which was removed by the angel from the tomb's entrance on His Resurrection day. Subsequently, Kirialax visits the Mount of Olives and the footprint of Christ, where he stepped before he ascended, the castle of Bethany, the town of Jericho, and the river Jordan. It is said that Kirialax and his men swam in the river, which is believed to bring spiritual benefit.⁶⁹

After violent and bloody struggles and his visit to the worldly Jerusalem, Kirialax' journey continue to the southern hemisphere. There he sees two islands in the sea, which radiate brightly at night: one in light colours, the other in red, but the islands cannot be landed on because of steep shores. One of them is full of silver and the other full of gold, which explains their shining. These treasure islands on the way to Paradise are reminiscent of the treasures that Eiríkr viðförla and his men saw and found on their way to Paradise. The names and meaning of the islands are explained through a reference to Isidore of Seville (d. 636), who calls

F.W. Blaisdell (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1980), 9–62. Both of these manuscripts are from the western part of Iceland.

68 *Kirialax saga*, 62.

69 *Kirialax saga*, 65–7.

them Chrise and Argire.⁷⁰ Then the troops sail along the shores of India, which were also vividly bright and very beautiful, with lots of gold, but impossible to land on because of “murderous dragons and fearful griffins.” Here, we do not hear of a bridge guarded by dragons and griffins, but these creatures may be symbolically guarding the land, just like the dragon in *Eiríks saga víðförla*. The saga goes on to tell of the sweet scent coming from the woods, dispersed by the wind. Kirialax and some of his men go ashore, and there they meet the Phoenix bird: “hans fidri allt var miðlu frammar skinanda en et skiærazta gull med aullum litum, gulum ok grænum, raudum ok blám”⁷¹ [its feathers were shining more brightly than the purest gold in all colors, gold and green, red and blue].⁷² The meaning of the Phoenix is, once again, explained with a reference to Isidore: there is just one Phoenix and when it gets old, it collects branches of all the most costly and aromatic herbs and piles them up as firewood. When the sun is at its brightest, the bird’s wings become black and it lights the herbs’ twigs on fire, lies down directly in the fire and burns itself to ashes, “en i þeiri ausku kviknar eirn ungi, hvar af Fenix verdr i annann tima endr-geten af sinni eiginligri ausku”⁷³ (and in these ashes is brought again to life a young one, there the Phoenix is regenerated for a second time from its own ashes).⁷⁴ We hear further of sweet scented flowers, honey dew on the grass, cinnamon-birds, Sitacus birds which are born communicative, and many fruit trees, but also griffins and fearful lions that kill their horses and scare them off the land and back to their ships.

Finally, we are told that Kirialax travels to Africa and Asia, where he visits the Pillars of Hercules, which he defined as the limit of the world [heims enda]: “they stand in the sea and it seems to one who had seen them that human power could hardly have created them.”⁷⁵ Then the saga writer comments:

But about his journeys and deeds I will write no more because of lack of knowledge and for this reason I will swiftly return to this true story which contains some evidence of truth, as old poems relate it and some learned chronicles and other books of wisdom confirm.⁷⁶

70 *Kirialax saga*, 67. Chrise is variously named as Trisen and Trilen in other manuscripts.

71 *Kirialax saga*, 68.

72 Divjak, *Studies in the Traditions of Kirialax Saga*, 334.

73 *Kirialax saga*, 69.

74 Divjak, *Studies in the Traditions of Kirialax Saga*, 334. On various representations of the Phoenix in other Old Norse texts, such as *Alfræði íslenzk* and *Stjórn*, see Divjak, *Studies in the Traditions of Kirialax Saga*, 230–1.

75 “þeir standa í hafinu, ok þickir svo þeim, er sed hafa, sem varla hafi matt mannligr kraptr því orka.” *Kirialax saga*, 72. English translation by Divjak, *Studies in the Traditions of Kirialax Saga*, 336.

76 “En af hans ferdum edr verkum skrifa eg eigi fleira sakir fá-frædis, ok því skuda eg til þeirar frasagnar, sem naukkur sannenda rauk fylgir, eptir því sem form kvædi votta ok en fylgia nœkut fordir annular ok adrar visenda bækr’.” *Kirialax saga*, 71. English translation by Divjak, *Studies in the Traditions of Kirialax Saga*, 336.

After this textual digression to Paradise, the worldly adventures of Kirialax continue with many references to known lands and kings and praises of various sciences, intellectual skills and virtues.

Many of the elements of this story recall the texts mentioned above. The battle scenes, reminiscent of the historical crusades to the Holy Land, as well as the relatively long and detailed description of the worldly Jerusalem, are directly relevant for the reading of *Leiðarvísir*. The description of Jerusalem, as mentioned above, is very similar to the description of Jerusalem in one of the texts following *Leiðarvísir* in AM 194 8vo. The level of detail deserves comment. Not only are the sites noted, but the direction (left or right, north, south, west or east) and the distance between them is also given, in a similar fashion to the directions and distances between sites in *Leiðarvísir*. Reading this passage is like following in Christ's own footsteps during his passion. The text leads the reader on a mental procession, a cognitive journey through the main moments of the passion narrative. A similar effect could be achieved by visual representations of Christ's passion, where the story is compartmentalized in a chronological presentation of the events.⁷⁷ The various episodes in Christ's passion could be also visualized and structured in the calendars that appear in many liturgical manuscripts, in city plans of Jerusalem, or in other narrative images. Such structured textualizations and visualizations were meant to inspire the reader's mental involvement and contemplation on the sites, which function as mnemonic tags in a "virtual" visit to Jerusalem.

Furthermore, the narrative concludes with a travel to sweet-smelling lands in India, not unlike the ones described in *Eiríks saga*. The sweetness, spread by the winds, the flowers and the herbs, the honey dew, and the Phoenix bird are common paradisiacal tropes in Latin Christianity. Even though the end of the world is placed in different sites in the two texts (beyond India in *Eiríks saga* and by the Pillars of Hercules in Africa in *Kirialax saga*), it is characterized by columns in both texts. As we remember, a guiding column is also mentioned in *Veraldar saga*, a symbol of Christ hanging in the air. In *Kirialax saga*, it is also explicitly noted that it seems impossible for the columns to have been made by men. Finally, the writer's distinction between the truth of the real world, which is to be found in chronicles and books, and the descriptions of these mystical Paradise-like lands suggests that this part of the text signifies something separate. Whether the travels to the Paradise-like south and east were meant to be understood as physical voyages or to provoke intellectual contemplation is unclear. This obscurity may be seen as the main function of this part of the text, namely, to suggest that physical and intellectual/cognitive travelling were connected and complementary aspects of the same process. The

⁷⁷ For a discussion of various art-historical sources that could have had such a function, see Kathryn M. Rudy, "Virtual Pilgrimage Through the Jerusalem Cityscape," in *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem*, ed. Bianca Kühnel, et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014).

structure and progression of the text – the victory over the religious enemy in worldly battles, the visit to the worldly Jerusalem, and finally the discovery of India and the end of the world – further strengthens an allegorical, and even an anagogical reading of the narrative as a whole. The arrival to the heavenly Jerusalem surmounts all the other scenes.

The Vinland Sagas

The characters in *Kirialax saga* did not stop at the two unknown islands passed on the way, but islands are often important elements of the Paradise-like land- and seascape in literature. The passing by, description, and exploration of unknown islands are also found in the narratives of *The Vinland sagas*. They comprise two texts written independently of each other: *The Saga of Erik the Red* [*Eiríks Saga Rauða*] and *The Saga of the Greenlanders* [*Grænlandinga Saga*]. *Grænlandinga Saga* is believed to have been written down sometime in the thirteenth century, but is preserved in the late fourteenth century Icelandic manuscript *Flateyjarbók*. *Eiríks saga* is preserved in two manuscripts: *Hauksbók*, from the fourteenth century and *Skálholtsbók* from the fifteenth century. *Flateyjarbók* also included *Eiríks saga víðförla*, as mentioned above.

In *The Saga of the Greenlanders* Bjarni sets off to Greenland, and he prays God to help him on the trip. The ship is taken by a storm, winds from the North and fog. They sail like this for three days without knowing where they are. They approach a land and see that it is not mountainous, with only small hills covered with forest. They continue and see a second island on the second day, which is also flat and wooded, and is regarded as a resource of timber and water. After three days they reach a third island with high mountains capped by glaciers. After sailing four more days, they reach Greenland.

When Leif, son of Eirik the Red, sails to the islands after he has heard Bjarni's story, we are told that there was no grass on the first island, but glaciers covered with highlands, and the land was like a single slab of rock from the glacier to the sea. They call the land *Helluland* (stone-slab land). The second island is flat and forested, sloping gently towards the sea, with many beaches of white sand – it is called *Markland* (Forest land). On the third island, which lays further north, they find dew on the grass, from which they drank, “and [they] thought they had never tasted anything as sweet.”⁷⁸ With smaller boats they row up a river into a lake and decide to spend the winter there. It is said that they find no lack of salmon in the river and the

78 “ok þóttust ekki jafnsætt kennt hafa sem þat var,” *Grænlandiga saga*, Icelandic Saga Database, http://www.sagadb.org/graenlendinga_saga.on. English translation *The Saga of Greenlanders*, translated by Keneva Lunz, *The Vinland sagas*, London: Penguin books, 2008, 1–22.

lake, and the salmon are larger than any they had seen before. The land is described as good, the temperature above freezing, with a better balance between light and darkness compared to Iceland and Greenland. Then we hear of how Tyrkir finds grapevines and grapes. The land is therefore called *Vínland* (Wineland).

Subsequently, Leif's brother Thorvald sails to Vinland. He confirms his impression from the land explained in very specific terms – fine land, forests, beaches, shallow waters, no men or animals, wood, and grains. After they mark *Kjalarnes* (Keel point), they sail eastwards and come to another forested fjord, where they meet native people. Thorvald dies there and is buried under the cross at *Krossanes* (Cross point).

Finally, it is Karlsefni's turn to visit Vinland, and once again the richness of the land is emphasized: natural bounty, including grapes, all sorts of fish and game, and other good things. They encounter the natives and exchange products: the natives get milk and milk products in exchange for their goods, even though they want weapons. The narrative continues with the feuds customary in Icelandic family sagas, instigating women, and mysterious stories of ghost-like figures, and concludes with information about Gudrid who travels south in a pilgrimage from Iceland, and then returns to Glaumbaer, where a church has already been built where she later becomes a nun and anchoress.

Some of the same information is given in *Saga of Eirik the Red*, even though there are discrepancies in the narratives between the two texts. There we hear again of Leif's trip to Greenland, but this time we also read that he is asked by King Olaf Tryggvason to convert Greenland to Christianity. After being caught in a storm and tossed at sea for days, he unexpectedly finds lands with fields of self-sown wheat, vine, and trees. He then accomplishes his mission by converting Greenland to Christianity.

Subsequently, we hear of Karlsefni's trip to Vinland, and how they reach Helluland with the flat slabs of stone; then Markland, a land with forests and many animals (a bear is discovered); and finally another wild land with sand flats. They call the wonderful beaches *Furdurstrandir* (wonder beaches). Amongst his troops, Karlsefni has two Scots, Haki and Hekja, who are great and fast runners. They are sent off to explore the land, and after three days they return with grapes and self-sown wheat. At Straumfjord they observe many birds, as well as finding all kinds of livestock, pleasant landscape and mountains, and tall grass. However, the winter is harsh and cold, with little food. They pray to God to help them, "but the response was not as quick in coming as their need was urgent."⁷⁹ Then a whale is stranded on the shore, but it turns out that it is because Thorhall has been addressing Thor. Everyone else refuses to eat

79 "ok varð eigi við svá skjótt sem þeir þóttust þurfa," *Eiríks saga rauða*, ch. 8, Icelandic Saga Database, http://sagadb.org/eiriks_saga_rauda.on. English translation *Saga of Greenlanders* 2008: 42.

from the meat and “[they throw] themselves on God’s mercy.”⁸⁰ Then the weather improves, and they get plenty of supplies from fishing.

Karlsefni continues up a river into a lake and lagoon, which they call Tidal pool. There again they find low-lying lands, with wheat and vines, lots of fish, and great numbers of deer in the forest. This is followed by some encounters with and attacks by the natives, who are in the end frightened away by Freydis’ demonstration of power, when she frees one of her breasts out of her clothes, and smacks a sword against her naked skin.⁸¹ The saga once again ends with giving the details of Karlsefni and Gudrid’s offspring: Karlsefni’s granddaughter Hallfrid was the mother of Bishop Thorlak Runolfsson (1086–1133); the daughter of their son Thorbjorn, Thorunn, was the mother of Bishop Björn Gilsson of Hólar (d.1162). Bishop Brand Sæmundarson of Hólar (1136–1201) was also the offspring of Snorri Karlsefni.

These sagas are of a different genre than the others described above. Many scholars have discussed the historical facts about the discovery of North America retold in the sagas, and much is confirmed by archaeological excavations in Newfoundland. This does not, however, prevent us from reading them as literary texts.⁸² The description of the travels and the lands may be read as an allegory, as many of the characteristics of these lands have deep metaphorical meanings in the Christian tradition. The sagas operate with some of the same Christian symbols as discussed above: the flat wide fields and the forests are also mentioned in *Kirialax saga* and *Eiríks saga víðförla* and are recurrent symbols of Paradise in Christian literature. The forest motif appears in works of St Augustine, and in many vernacular texts of various languages, such as those by Dante, Chrétien de Troyes, and Wolfram von Eschenbach. Here, the forest is construed as a mysterious and dangerous, yet spiritual location. The forest is a space where human laws and norms no longer apply; it is a prime territory, a liminal space, a utopian and dystopian place.⁸³ The sweet dew on the ground recalls the sweet honey mentioned in the other texts, ultimately pointing back to the heavenly food provided for the Israelites as sweet dew on the ground (Exod 16:13–17). The taste of honey and

80 “skutu sínu máli til guðs,” *Eiríks saga rauða*, ch. 8, Icelandic Saga Database, http://sagadb.org/eiriks_saga_rauda.on, chapter 8. English translation *Saga of Greenlanders* 2008: 43.

81 *Saga of Greenlanders* 2008: 46.

82 See Jonathan Grove, “The Place of Greenland in Medieval Icelandic Saga Narrative,” *Journal of the North Atlantic* special volume 2 (2009); Thorunn Sigurdardottir and Andrew Wawn, eds., *Approaches to Vinland: A Conference on the Written and Archaeological Sources for the Norse Settlements in the North-Atlantic Region and Exploration of America* (Reykjavik: Sigurdur Nordal Institute, 2001); Matthias Egeler, *Islands in the West: Classical Myth and the Medieval Norse and Irish Geographical Imagination* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017).

83 Albrecht Classen, “The Role of the Forest in German Literature: From the Medieval Forest to the *Grünes Band*. Motif Studies and Motivational Strategies for the Teaching of the Middle Ages,” *Journal of Literature and Art Studies* 3 (2014).

sweetness are commonly related to God in Christian theology.⁸⁴ The milk given to the natives in *The Saga of the Greenlanders* may be related to the symbolism of milk in Christian theology, as it is often given to the spiritually immature and youthful.⁸⁵ The fish, and sometimes dragons, may be seen as a symbol of Christ and Christianity.⁸⁶ *Saga of Eirik the Red* includes wine and wheat, which together are symbols of God's body and blood which is to be consummated in the Eucharist.⁸⁷ The many birds may also be relatable to the description of the Phoenix bird, as the most superior bird of all and often surrounded by many other birds.⁸⁸ The bounty of the land, the perfect climate and light conditions are all commonly known Christian symbols. The framing of both stories is Christian – the first tour in the saga of the Greenlanders is blessed by means of Christian skaldic verse, and the last tour is a pilgrimage on which Gudrid dedicates her life to God as a nun. *Saga of Eirik the Red* begins with King Olaf Tryggvason's desire to Christianize Greenland and ends with a list of the names and religious roles as bishops of Karlsefni's offspring.

84 Fulton, "‘Taste and see that the Lord is sweet’ (Ps 33:9)."

85 1 Pet. 2:2–3, Vulgate; Fulton 2006, "‘Taste and see that the Lord is sweet’ (Ps 33:9):" 184.

86 See Bo Almqvist, "The Fish of Life and the Salmon of Life: Some Marginal Contributions to Irish-Icelandic Conceptions of Life and Soul," in *Viking Age: Studies on Folklore Contacts between the Northern and the Western Worlds; Presented to the Author on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Éilís Ní Dhuibhne-Almqvist and Séamas Ó Catháin (Aberystwyth: Boethius Press, 1991).

87 On the symbolism of wine, see Eric Palazzo, "Les fonctions pratiques et symboliques du vin," in *Olie e vino nell'alto medioevo, Spoleto 20–26 aprile 2006*, Atti delle settimane (Spoleto: Fondazione Centro Ital. di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2007). Together with wine, wheat is mentioned in the Bible many times and signifies love and charity, the wheat-field is the Church, the wheat-seeds are the good things born from the Christian faith, see for example Jer 12:10,12–13: "Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot: they have changed my delightful portion into a desolate wilderness. / Spoilers are come upon all the ways of the wilderness, for the sword of the Lord shall devour from one end of the land to the other end thereof: there is no peace for all flesh. They have sown wheat, and have reaped thorns."

88 In the Latin *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*, or the Anglo-Norman version of Benedeit, there is a description of the "paradise of birds," an island where the saint and his companions stop to celebrate Easter. There is a spring there, too, next to a wonderful tall tree and many birds sing the service of the divine hour. In patristic commentary, the evergreen tree is associated with the word of God. See Tom Artin, *The Allegory of Adventure. Reading Chrétien's Erec and Yvain* (London: Associated University Press, 1974), 141–162. The landscape of the fountain in Yvain has also been read allegorically as the earthly Paradise. After the storm, birds of all kinds gather from the forest beside the fountain and sing, see Artin, *The Allegory of Adventure*, 166.

Conclusion

This excursus may continue, to include many other texts from the manuscripts already mentioned, or from others produced in the same contexts. I will however stop here, as this suffices to illustrate the literary and intellectual context in which *Leiðarvísir* was read.

The reader may now ask how all this relates to the very prosaic and almost bullet-point listing of places along the pilgrim's route from Iceland to Jerusalem in *Leiðarvísir*. The travels that we have just discussed were known in the same cultural context where *Leiðarvísir* would have been read. They suggest a way of reading, a way of thinking, and possibly a way of living, where the physical, spiritual, and cognitive aspects of a phenomenon are linked. Even though *Leiðarvísir* itself does not respond easily to allegorical interpretations, its list-like character may be seen as an intention for a verbal mapping, the construction of a mnemonic tool, which would have helped its readers – even those who had not travelled to Jerusalem – to imagine the journey. The creation of mental pictures of places and sites and their associations with historical events, the passion of Christ, and the course of salvation history, would inspire the readers of *Leiðarvísir* to contemplate their own individual salvation. Furthermore, the presence of the texts discussed above in immediate proximity to *Leiðarvísir* indicates that its audience would have been accustomed to allegorical thinking, to mental habits of interpreting physical endeavours such as travels and battles, as metaphors for mental, spiritual and cognitive transformations. That this was a way of thinking may be confirmed by the fact that the elements allowing for allegorical interpretations of travel appear in texts of such various literary genres – a saga about world history, a legendary saga, an indigenous Icelandic romance, and an Icelandic family saga. This was a way of thinking and thus of narrating – travel was a metaphor that spoke of a greater narrative of spiritual transformation and movement not only from one physical place to another, but from this universe to Paradise and Heaven. *Leiðarvísir* may thus be seen as a detailed literal description of the route from Iceland to Jerusalem, which could have functioned as an actual or virtual mnemonic guide for fourteenth-century Icelanders. The allegorical and anagogical potential in *Leiðarvísir* comes forth into the light when it is read together with other texts in its immediate proximity, texts that explicitly account for the link between physical and spiritual journeys of the soul from this world to Heavenly Jerusalem and Paradise.

Maria H. Oen

Chapter 13

The Locus of Truth: St Birgitta of Sweden and the Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

The Son of God speaks to blessed Birgitta, his bride, saying: “Go now and depart from Rome for Jerusalem! Why do you bring up the excuse of your age? I am the creator of nature. I can weaken or strengthen nature, just as I please. I shall be with you. I shall direct your way. I shall lead you there and bring you back to Rome, and I shall procure for you what you need, more sufficiently than you have ever had before.”¹

With these words, Christ exhorts the Swedish noblewoman Birgitta Birgersdotter (c.1303–1373) to leave the city that had been her home for more than two decades and to undertake a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The quotation is taken from Birgitta’s *Liber celestis revelacionum* (*The heavenly book of revelations*, hereafter referred to as *Revelaciones*), a work that claims to record divine visions she received from the time of her husband’s death, in Sweden in the mid-1340s, until her own death, in Rome in 1373.² Birgitta is said to have experienced hundreds of

¹ “Filius Dei loquitur beate Birgite sponse sue dicens: ‘Ite iam et recedite de Roma ad Iherusalem! Quid causaris de etate? Ego sum nature conditor, ego possum infirmare et roborare naturam, sicut michi placet. Ego ero vobiscum, ego dirigam viam vestram, ego ducam et reducam vos ad Roman [sic] et procurabo vobis necessaria sufficiens quam vmquam habuistis prius.’” Birgitta of Sweden, *Revelaciones Books I–VIII*, 8 vols, ed. Carl-Gustaf Undhagen, *et al.*, Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, Stockholm & Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell Boktryckeri AB, 1967–2002, (Rev. VII: 9). All translations from the *Revelaciones* are from *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*, 4 vols, trans. Denis Searby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006–2015.

² For critical editions of the textual corpus, see Birgitta of Sweden 1967–2002, *Revelaciones*; Birgitta of Sweden, *Opera minora*, 3 vols, ed. Sten Eklund, Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, Stockholm & Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell Boktryckeri AB, 1972–1991. For an introduction to Birgitta of Sweden and her life, see Bridget Morris, *St Birgitta of Sweden* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1999) and Maria H. Oen (ed.), *A Companion to Birgitta of Sweden and Her Legacy in the Later Middle Ages* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2019). On Birgitta’s visions, see also Maria H. Oen, “The Visions of St. Birgitta: A Study of the Making and Reception of Images in the Later Middle Ages,” PhD diss. (Oslo: University

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visions, or revelations, concerning a wide variety of issues: the fate of souls in purgatory; divine instructions on political matters; and practical advice regarding her personal life, including her transfer from Sweden to Rome and later to Jerusalem. Additionally, she received a number of promises from Christ and the Virgin that one day she would come to the very place where Christ was born and died and that, upon arrival there, she would learn even more about the *true* circumstances of these sacred events.³ And so it seems she did. In November 1371, Birgitta, who was then approaching seventy years, left Rome and sailed from Naples to the port of Jaffa, via Cyprus, together with an entourage including two of her children, Katarina and Birger, her Swedish confessors, who had been residing with her in Rome, Master Peter Olofsson of Skänninge (1298–1378) and Prior Peter Olofsson of Alvastra (1307–1390), as well as her staunch supporter Alfonso Pecha (c.1330–1389), former bishop of Jaén in Spain.⁴ After about sixteen months, in the spring of 1373, the group returned to Rome, where Birgitta died on 23 July. Immediately after her death, Birgitta's followers, led by her fellow pilgrims to the Holy Land, set about the process of having her elevated to sainthood: the two Swedish confessors composed a *vita* that recorded Birgitta's virtuous life and miracles; paintings of her were commissioned for the promotion of the cult; and petitions for her canonisation were sent to the pope. As a part of this endeavour, Alfonso of Jaén, who had joined Birgitta's circle in Rome around 1367, compiled the first editions of her *Revelaciones*, and had the text copied and distributed among European royalties, nobility, and, importantly, the papal commission that would evaluate the orthodoxy of the text.

In this chapter, I will explore the pivotal role of Birgitta's pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the construction of her image of holiness. Birgitta's primary claim to sanctity was her *Revelaciones*, which recorded her supernatural visionary experiences. The authentication and validation of the Swedish laywoman's bold assertion of having access to transcendent realities and to truths that left even scriptural truth wanting was thus paramount to the campaign for proving her sanctity. In the following it will be argued

of Oslo, 2015), Claire L. Sahlin, *Birgitta of Sweden and the Voice of Prophecy* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2001), and Julia Bolton Holloway, *Saint Bride and Her Book: Birgitta of Sweden's Revelations* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1992).

³ For example, *Revelaciones*: 5, 172–5 (especially Rev. V: 13); 7, 114, 130 (Revs VII: 1, 6).

⁴ On Birgitta's journey, see Aron Andersson, *St. Birgitta and the Holy Land* (Stockholm: The Museum of National Antiquities, 1973); Morris, *St. Birgitta of Sweden*, 118–142; Sylvia Schein, "Bridget of Sweden, Margery Kempe and Women's Jerusalem Pilgrimages in the Middle Ages," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 14:1 (1999); Arne Jönsson, "Birgitta's pilgrimsfärd till det heliga landet," in *Birgitta av Vadstena. Pilgrim och profet 1303–1373*, ed. Per Beskow and Annette Landen (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 2003); Alessandra Bartolomei Romagnoli, "Brigida di Svezia e la reinvenzione della Storia Sacra. Il cammino la terra la visione," in *Predicatori, mercanti, pellegrini. L'Occidente medievale e lo sguardo letterario sull'Altro tra l'Europa e il Levante*, ed. Giuseppe Mascherpa and Giovanni Strinna (Mantua: Universitas Studiorum, 2018).

that, during the canonisation process, Birgitta's journey to the Holy Land and her visits to the shrines in and around Jerusalem were adduced to support the truthfulness of her *Revelaciones*. As a part of this process, and for the establishment of her saintly reputation, Birgitta is both explicitly and implicitly linked to *auctoritates*⁵ who were also famous Jerusalem travellers and whose presence in the Holy Land played a central role in their perceived access to the divine. Thus, the strategy chosen for the promotion of Birgitta differed from those employed for other holy women of the period, while nonetheless tying in directly with contemporary discourse from throughout the Middle Ages regarding the value of the Jerusalem pilgrimage and the significance of personal experience of the biblical sites for a deeper understanding of sacred history.⁶

By highlighting Birgitta's ties to the Holy Land and other well-established saints who travelled to the *loca sancta* of Palestine, Birgitta's supporters were able to form connections with existing debates on Jerusalem pilgrimage, and also on knowledge acquisition, especially concerning Scripture and spiritual knowledge. But this attempt to draw attention to Birgitta's presence in the Holy Land may also be related to her Swedish origin and the general perception of the Nordic region in the Middle Ages. In the canonisation bull of 1391, Boniface IX directly references a view commonly found in ancient and medieval literature that the North is the regional source of all evil [*ab Aquilone omne malum*].⁷ The visionary is described as being from afar, from remote

5 *Auctoritas* is a complex word to define. In medieval usage it refers to "authority", but it is also closely connected to the word *auctor* (author) – someone who *possesses* authority. *Auctoritates* can also be texts, i.e. works worthy of faith, obedience, and imitation. In his discussion of the concepts *auctor* and *auctoritas* in the Middle Ages, Albert Russell Ascoli emphasises the transpersonal and the transhistorical meaning of the terms. The ultimate *auctor/auctoritas* is God/Scripture, from which authority passes on to the human authors of Scripture, the evangelists and prophets, etc., and to the early interpreters, the Church Fathers and their texts. Saints too possess *auctoritas* and are worthy of faith and imitation. An important strategy in the promotion of a potential saint in the later Middle Ages, when "new" saints became common (i.e. recently deceased people who were venerated for their virtuous lives and perceived holiness, as opposed to the early Christian martyrs and confessors), would be to present this saint *in spe* as imitating, or emulating, an established saint of the past who was culturally understood to possess *auctoritas*. For a useful introduction to the concepts *auctor* and *auctoritas* in medieval usage, see Albert Russell Ascoli, *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), esp. ch. 1, 2.

6 On the role of matter and the physical realm in relation to truth and knowledge in the *Revelaciones* and the canonization proceedings, see Maria H. Oen, "Apparuit ei Christus in eodem loco. . .: Physical Presence and Divine Truth in St. Birgitta of Sweden's Revelations from the Holy Land," in *Faith and Knowledge in Late Medieval and Early Modern Scandinavia*, ed. Karoline Kjesrud and Mikael Males (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020) and "Iconography and Visions: St. Birgitta's Revelation of the Nativity of Christ," in *The Locus of Meaning in Medieval Art: Iconography, Iconology, and Interpreting the Visual Imagery of the Middle Ages*, ed. Lena Liepe (Kalamazoo MI – Berlin: Medieval Institute Publications, 2019).

7 This is also articulated in the Old Testament, where, in the prophecy of Jeremiah (Jer 1:14), God expresses that "from the north shall evil break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land" [*ab aquiline pandetur malum super omnes habitatores terrae*], cf. the introduction to this book (Kristin

lands [*de ultimis finibus*], and that she was chosen by God “in order that something good might come even from the North” [*ut etiam ab Aquilone aliquid boni esset*].⁸ As Birgitta’s claim to sanctity differed greatly from that of the Scandinavian martyr kings of the conversion period, such as St Olav of Norway, it is possible to construe the strong focus on her pilgrimage to Jerusalem – the geographical centre of the world and of Christianity – as an element in the validation strategy. Birgitta’s journey toward sainthood entailed moving, literally, from the “evil” fringes of the world into its very heart. The emphasis on her pilgrimage makes clear this process, as does the tactic of enrolling established authoritative female saints from the upper classes of Rome who also made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. They served as models for her to emulate as she, too, having left the North behind for good, embarked from the *caput mundi* to the *umbilicus mundi* and back again.

The chapter opens with a presentation of Birgitta’s pilgrimage and the particular access to divine truth that, according to the *Revelaciones* and the hagiographical texts, she acquired in the Holy Land. I will then proceed with a discussion of the concept of sacred places and their epistemological potential expressed in these sources, as well as a consideration of the *auctoritates* that Birgitta’s supporters employed to legitimize the claim of her access to divine knowledge beyond Scripture.

Birgitta and the *Loca Sancta* of the Holy Land

The last of the seven books of revelations compiled and edited by Alfonso of Jaén centres on Birgitta’s pilgrimage to Jerusalem.⁹ Thus, the roughly chronologically structured corpus culminates in the arrival of the visionary in the sacred city in 1372, where – exactly as Birgitta has been promised in previous revelations – she would learn the truth about the earthly lives of the main protagonists in her visions, namely, Christ and his mother.¹⁰ Birgitta’s pilgrimage, in this edition, is thus framed as a journey towards a deeper insight into sacred history that is expressly

B. Aavitsland), 21–4. All biblical references are made to the Clementine Vulgate. For the canonisation bull, see *Acta sanctorum*, 68 vols, ed. Johannes Bollandus and Godefridus Henschenius, Antwerp & Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1643–1940.

8 *Acta sanctorum* 1643–1940: 4, col. 469.

9 There is general consensus among the editors of the critical corpus that Alfonso made two redactions during the 1370s. The first one included only seven books, whereas the second redaction included another book, *Liber caelestis imperatoris ad reges*, consisting mainly of chapters already present in the foregoing books with a specific political content, as well as a prologue, written by Alfonso himself, which serves as an apology supporting the authenticity of Birgitta’s visions, the so-called *Epistola solitarii ad reges*. For the second redaction, see Birgitta of Sweden 1967–2002, *Revelaciones*: 8. For a discussion of Alfonso’s edition of the *Revelaciones*, see the introduction of Carl-Gustaf Undhagen in vol. 1, 1–37.

10 See, *Revelaciones*: 5, 172–5 (espc. Rev. V.13); 7,114, 130 (Revs VII: 1, 6).

connected to the shrines marking the geographical sites described in the Gospels. What, then, did Birgitta learn upon her arrival in the Holy Land?

The first reference in the *Revelaciones* to Birgitta's presence in Jerusalem occurs in Alfonso's prologue to a vision she is said to have received upon first entering the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, on 11 May 1372.¹¹ Fittingly, the vision concerns the value of pilgrimage to this specific place. Since the early days of Christianity, the Fathers of the Church disagreed about the significance of Jerusalem. The question rested on whether it was necessary to go *there*, to earthly Jerusalem, in the quest for salvation. Does God not reside in Heavenly Jerusalem, in that spiritual place that every Christian can find in his or her heart? Or would a physical presence at the sites described in Scripture, where Christ had lived and died and his sacrifice had been prophesied, yield greater knowledge of sacred history and thus bring one closer to God? Writings by Church Fathers such as Gregory of Nyssa, Jerome, Augustine, Eusebius, and Cyril of Jerusalem provide varying answers to these questions; and the patristic debate on the value of pilgrimage to the city of Jerusalem continued throughout the Middle Ages.¹² In Birgitta's first vision from Jerusalem, God's opinion, according

11 *Revelaciones*: 7, 163 (Rev. VII: 14). The date is given in Alfonso's deposition in the canonisation proceedings: ". . . octava ascensionis Domini . . ."; see *Acta et processus canonizationis b. Birgittæ*, ed. Isak Collijn, Samlingar utgivna av Svenska fornskriftsällskapet, Ser. 2, Latinska skrifter, Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell boktryckeri, 1924–1931.

12 For an overview of the scriptural foundation of attitudes to Jerusalem, see Bianca Kühnel, *From the Earthly to the Heavenly Jerusalem: Representations of the Holy City in Christian Art of the First Millennium* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1987), 17–59. On the attitudes of the Church Fathers towards Jerusalem pilgrimage, see P. W. L. Walker, *Holy City, Holy Places? Christian Attitudes to Jerusalem and the Holy Land in the Fourth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); John Wilkinson, "Jewish Holy Places and the Origins of Christian Pilgrimage," in *The Blessings of Pilgrimage*, ed. Robert Ousterhout (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990); Hillel Isaac Newman, "Between Jerusalem and Bethlehem: Jerome and the Holy Places of Palestine," in *Sanctity of Time and Space in Tradition and Modernity*, ed. Alberdina Houtman, *et al.*, Jewish & Christian Perspectives Series (Leiden: Brill, 1998); and Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony, "The Attitude of Church Fathers toward Pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries," in *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. Lee I. Levine (New York: Continuum, 1999). On the origins of Christian pilgrimage and an evaluation of different theoretical positions, see Kenneth G. Holum, "Hadrian and St. Helena: Imperial Travel and the Origins of Christian Holy Land Pilgrimage," in *The Blessings of Pilgrimage*, ed. Robert Ousterhout (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990). There are numerous scholarly works on pilgrimage to Holy Land. For an overview of the early Christian period and the later medieval period, see E. D. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Empire AD 312–460* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982) and Nicole Chareyron, *Pilgrims to Jerusalem in the Middle Ages*, trans. Donald Wilson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), respectively. On pilgrimage and the reception of the architecture of the Holy Land, see Kathryn Blair Moore, *The Architecture of the Christian Holy Land: Reception from Late Antiquity through the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2017). For Scandinavian pilgrimages to Jerusalem, see Chapter 11 (Denys Pringle) in the present book, 198–217. While pilgrimage to the Holy Land increased dramatically in the time after the Crusades, voices from the monastic realm were not exclusively positive. An example is the ambivalent attitude expressed by Bernard of Clairvaux, in the years before the Second

to the visionary (or the editor Alfonso), is made clear: special grace is indeed to be obtained upon arrival at the shrine, but only for those who come “. . . with the perfect intention of rectifying themselves according to their better conscience and do not wish to fall back into their former sins.”¹³ Thus, in the *Revelaciones* the materiality of Jerusalem and its holy sites do play a significant role for an individual’s salvation, but this can occur only if the individual has first gone to that spiritual place in her or his heart. In other words, it is not sufficient to travel to the Holy Land; the pilgrim must also come with the right attitude, purpose, and virtues.¹⁴ The following chapters in the *Revelaciones* make it clear that the reader should understand Birgitta herself to have arrived with such perfect intention.

Three days after the first visit to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, on Friday, 14 May, Birgitta returned to the shrine accompanied by her fellow pilgrims.¹⁵ Again, she

Crusade; see Bernard of Clairvaux, *Epistola LXIV*, PL, 182, cols 169–170, and *De laude novae militiae ad milites templi liber*, PL, 182, cols 917–40.

13 “. . . cum voluntate perfecta se emendandi iuxta meliorem conscienciam suam nec volentes reciduiare in priora peccata . . .”, Birgitta of Sweden 1967–2002, *Revelaciones*: 7, 163 (Rev. VII: 14.3). In this connection, it is worth mentioning that pilgrimage was central to Birgitta’s spirituality. In addition to the final pilgrimage to the Holy Land, she had visited Santiago de Compostela, St Olav’s shrine in Nidaros, and numerous shrines on the Italian peninsula. On Birgitta’s pilgrimages, see Jane Tylus, “‘Su dunque, peregrino!’: Pilgrimage and Female Spirituality in the Writings of Birgitta of Sweden and Catherine of Siena,” in *Sanctity and Female Authorship: Birgitta of Sweden & Catherine of Siena*, ed. Maria H. Oen and Unn Falkeid (New York: Routledge, 2020).

14 This point is also made in a revelation in the fifth book; see, *Revelaciones*: 5, 175 (Rev. V: 13.23). The emphasis on the traveller’s purpose for, and attitude towards, the pilgrimage can also be seen as an expression of Birgitta’s rejection of some of the activities of the Franciscan “custodians” of the Holy Land who guided the pilgrims around at all times (see Chareyron 2005, *Pilgrims to Jerusalem in the Middle Ages*: 82–83). In the later Middle Ages, the business of indulgences, i.e. remission of a specified time of punishment in purgatory, played a major role in Jerusalem pilgrimage, where the devotees could obtain leaflets from the Franciscans with specifications regarding which prayers to say at which shrines in order to attain indulgences. On this practice, see Michele Bacci, “Locative Memory and the Pilgrim’s Experience of Jerusalem,” in *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem*, ed. Bianca Kühnel, et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014,) 69–70, n. 7. In fact, the *Revelaciones* makes a point of the Virgin not wanting Birgitta to stay at the Franciscan monastery at Mount Sion, but rather in the humbler pilgrim’s hospice to set a good example. See *Revelaciones*: 7, 173 (Rev. VII: 17). It should be noted, however, that Birgitta was not opposed to Franciscans. Far from it, she was highly devoted to St Francis, as numerous of the revelations bear testimony to, and in Rome she kept a close contact with the Poor Clares of S. Lorenzo in Panisperna. On Birgitta’s interest in Francis and the Franciscans, see Henrik Roelvink, “Andlig släktskap mellan Franciskus och Birgitta,” in *Heliga Birgitta – Budskapet och förebilden. Föredrag vid jubileumssymposiet i Vadstena 3–7 oktober 1991*, Konferenser 28. Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1993) and Unn Falkeid, *The Avignon Papacy Contested: An Intellectual History from Dante to Catherine of Siena* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2017,) 140–143. On Birgitta’s connection to the Poor Clares in Rome, see Isak Collijn, *Birgittinska gestalter. Forskningar i italienska arkiv och bibliotek* (Stockholm: Michaelisgillet, 1929,) 65–92.

15 For a discussion of the dating of Birgitta’s visit, see Bridget Morris, in Birgitta of Sweden 2006–2015, *The Revelations*: 3, 234, n. 1.

is said to have experienced a vision while she is, as Alfonso carefully notes, in ecstasy, or “taken in spirit” [*rapta in spiritu*]. The description of this revelation immediately follows the previous revelation from the same site, only now there is an emphatic shift in the text from the usual third person to the first person, when Birgitta states: “As I was weeping in sorrow at Mount Calvary, I saw my Lord, naked and scourged, led out to be crucified . . .”¹⁶ She then offers a long and detailed account of the Crucifixion of Christ as she witnessed it while standing in the Chapel of Mount Calvary, on the very site where it supposedly had happened on the same day of the week more than a millennium before. In a minute description of the torture of the body of Christ and the reactions of some of the “historical” eyewitnesses – the Virgin, St John, and a surrounding group of Jews – she discusses how Christ was fastened to the cross, his blood and his pain, as well as her own reaction to the emotional torment of the Virgin. This chapter in the *Revelaciones* evokes contemporary devotional literature, notably the genre of *meditaciones* (referring to meditations on the life of Christ), in which the reader is invited to visualise internally scenes from the Gospels, such as the Crucifixion, in order to emotionally engage with the protagonists, as if the meditator her- or himself were physically present as a witness.¹⁷ In the Birgittine text, as in other examples of such *meditaciones*, familiar iconographical themes not corresponding to the Gospels are conjured up; for example, the motif of the *Pietà* is called up in the mind of the reader when Birgitta describes how she saw Mary take the dead body of Christ in her arms “. . . and sat down with him, all torn, wounded and bruised, placed on her lap”.¹⁸

From the *Revelaciones* we also learn that Birgitta had a similar vision when she travelled to Bethlehem with her entourage to visit the cave that, since the second century, had been venerated as the birthplace of Christ, now located under the apse of the fourth-century basilica, the Church of the Nativity. In his prologue to this revelation, Alfonso reminds the reader that what Birgitta experienced upon entering the cave was precisely what she had been promised by the Virgin in a vision many years earlier: to see for herself exactly how Mary gave birth to Christ (Fig. 13.1).¹⁹ The chapter of the

16 “Ad montem Caluarie dum essem mestissima plorans, vidi Dominum meum nudum et flagellatum ductum per Iudeos ad crucifigendum . . .” *Revelaciones*: 7, 164 (Rev. VII: 15.1). For the whole chapter, see 164–8.

17 For example, see the meditation on the Crucifixion in the popular fourteenth-century pseudo-Bonaventurian *Meditaciones vite Christi* in John of Caulibus, *Meditaciones vite Christi, olim S. Bonaventuro attributae*, ed. Mary Stallings-Taney, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis, 153, Turnhout: Brepols, 1997, ch. 78.

18 “. . . et reclinauit eum sedens in genu totum dilaceratum, vulneratum et liuidum,” *Revelaciones*: 7, 168 (Rev. VII: 15.32).

19 *Revelaciones*: 7, 187 (Rev. VII: 21, prologue). This vision, *Revelaciones*: 7, 114 (Rev. VII: 1) is quoted below. On the cave and the church in Bethlehem, see Michele Bacci, *The Mystic Cave: A History of the Nativity Church in Bethlehem* (Brno: Masaryk University; Rome: Viella, 2017).



Fig. 13.1: Niccolò di Tommaso, Birgitta of Sweden at the cave in Bethlehem, beholding the vision of the Nativity of Christ. This is the earliest known image of Birgitta. It was painted in the period between 1373–1375 by a Tuscan artist who made two more versions of the same motif. Tempera on panel. Vatican City, Pinacoteca Vaticana.

Bethlehem vision opens in the same manner as the previous vision from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre: the specific geographical placement of Birgitta in the moment of the vision is explicitly stated – “When I was at the manger of the Lord in Bethlehem . . .” [*Cum essem ad presepe Domini in Bethleem . . .*] – and there is again the rare use of the first person when the visionary states “I saw” [*vidi*].²⁰ The focus on Birgitta’s personal and sensorial perception of the contents of these visions, as well her own voice in the witness reports that we find in the two chapters referring to her visits to the Nativity Cave and the Chapel of Mount Calvary, is conspicuous in the context of the *Revelaciones*, where, in general, Birgitta is formulaically referred to as “the bride of Christ” or simply as “a person”. The remainder of the text describing the vision of the Nativity is also similar to the one of the Crucifixion on Mount Calvary. Birgitta observes the birth of Christ in its entirety, assiduously presenting every detail

²⁰ *Revelaciones*: 7, 187 (Rev. VII: 21.1). For the whole chapter, see 187–90.

of the holy event. In another chapter, she describes the arrival of the shepherds coming to adore the new-born together with Joseph and the Virgin, which she saw in another vision while still in Bethlehem. Again, the description of Birgitta's experience of the Nativity in the *Revelaciones* bears a strong resemblance to the kind of participatory visual meditation on the life of Christ encouraged and taught by contemporary manuals.²¹

Birgitta's experiences at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Nativity Cave as related in the *Revelaciones* can be compared with those of other pilgrims to the Holy Land, and in many ways the Swedish visionary seems to offer yet another account of the kind of meditation generally practised by pilgrims visiting the sacred sites in Palestine. Several studies demonstrate how the *loca sancta*, and also the buildings marking the holy places, such as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Church of the Nativity, functioned as cues for evoking memory images.²² These images then structured the pilgrim's perception of sacred history based on previous reading of Scripture or biblical knowledge derived from sermons, liturgy, and artworks. In their meditations *in situ*, the pilgrims would re-enact the sacred narrative connected to the place visited based on these recollected mental images, just as in the visualising meditations on the life of Christ encouraged by the devotional manuals (such as the *meditaciones* described above). As Robert Ousterhout explains, all pilgrims came to the holy sites preconditioned; they knew the role of the specific place in relation to sacred history and had imagined them numerous times before in their devotions. Once they arrived at the site, the memories of biblical narratives that had taken place at the shrines were brought forth and experienced, often much more intensely and powerfully due to the pilgrims' physical presence at the *actual* site.²³ As the many descriptions of the experiences of Jerusalem pilgrims suggest, their presence at sites understood to have been the physical stage of the sacred narratives they re-enacted in their meditations seems

21 On this similarity and Birgitta's "meditational" visions, see Oen, "Iconography and Visions: St. Birgitta's Revelation of the Nativity of Christ".

22 For example, Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 40–4; Ora Limor, "Reading Sacred Space: Egeria, Paula, and the Christian Holy Land," in *De Sion exhibit lex et verbum domini de Hierusalem: Essays on Medieval Law, Liturgy, and Literature in Honour of Amnon Linder*, ed. Y. Hen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001); Robert Ousterhout, "'Sweetly Refreshed in Imagination': Remembering Jerusalem in Words and Images," *Gesta: Making Thoughts, Making Pictures, Making Memories: A Special Issue in Honor of Mary J. Carruthers* 48, no. 2 (2009); Thomas O'Loughlin, "'Remembering Sion': Early Medieval Latin Recollections of the Basilica on Mount Sion and the Interplay of Relics, Tradition, and Images," in *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem*, ed. Bianca Kühnel, et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014). On the visual aspect of memory and cognition in medieval thinking and practice, see Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). On the reception of the architecture in Jerusalem, see Moore, *The Architecture of the Christian Holy Land*.

23 Ousterhout 2009, "'Sweetly Refreshed in Imagination'". See also Chapter 10 (Anthony Bale) on pilgrims' preconditioned emotional responses, 191–7.

to have led to an experience of the *real presence* of the biblical characters and the actual events. This notion of real presence was also likely to have been further strengthened and confirmed by the architecture of the shrines that marked the sites and created a space of holiness, enhanced by incense, burning candles, and liturgical rituals.²⁴ It does not come as a surprise, then, that many pilgrim accounts describe the responses of various co-travellers in terms of visionary experiences of the *actual events*. A letter by the fourth-century pilgrim to the Holy Land, the Church Father Jerome, provides an example: he retells the response of his fellow pilgrim Paula when she entered the Nativity Cave in Bethlehem:

. . . with me listening, she swore that she could see with the eyes of faith the infant Lord wrapped in clothes and crying in the manger, the worshipping Magi, the star shining above, the Virgin mother, the attentive foster-father, the shepherds coming by night to see the word that had been made . . .²⁵

Whereas Paula's visionary experience appears similar to Birgitta's from almost a millennium later, other pilgrims left the shrines disappointed. The late thirteenth-century pilgrim Riccoldo di Monte Croce had expected to see "with his bodily eyes" Christ hanging on the cross, when he visited the Chapel of Mount Calvary, but he had to leave with his wish unfulfilled.²⁶

When considering these rituals practised by pilgrims to the Holy Land since the very beginning of Christian pilgrimage – worshippers visiting sites connected to biblical events, and conjuring up memory images based on their knowledge of Scripture, from texts and graphic images, and then engaging emotionally with the protagonists of these events in imaginative meditations, intensified by the physical presence at the actual site – Birgitta's visions of the birth and death of Christ appear as "ordinary" pilgrim's activities. Taken in this light, the *Revelaciones* offer us an interesting insight into the emotional and intellectual response of a Scandinavian woman visiting the Holy Land in the late fourteenth century, and how she configured in her own particular manner the scenes of the birth and death of Christ. However, in the *Revelaciones* the holy places do not function merely as *loci of memory*. Rather, the text suggests that for the Swedish visionary the Nativity Cave and Mount Calvary should be understood as

²⁴ On the construction of a holy place, and the role of the architecture, artworks, rituals and more, see Cynthia Hahn, "Seeing and Believing: The Construction of Sanctity in Early-Medieval Shrines," *Speculum* 72, no. 4 (1997); Robert Ousterhout, "Architecture as Relic and the Construction of Sanctity: The Stones of the Holy Sepulchre," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 62, no. 1 (2003); Moore, *The Architecture of the Christian Holy Land*. See also Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

²⁵ ". . . me audiente jurabat, cernere se oculis fidei infantem pannis involutum, vagientem in praesepe Dominum, Magos adorantes, stellam fulgentem desuper, matrem Virginem, nutricium sedulum, pastores nocte venientes, ut viderent verbum, quod factum erat . . .", Jerome, *Epistola CVIII*, PL, 22, cols 878–906.

²⁶ See Ousterhout, "'Sweetly Refreshed in Imagination'," 160.

loci of truth. That Birgitta and her fellow pilgrims engaged in meditation as described above when visiting the holy sites can be assumed beyond doubt (as this was the main point of visiting the shrines). But this is not how Birgitta's supporters wanted the audience of the *Revelaciones* to understand the descriptions of her experiences in Bethlehem and Jerusalem, which are persistently referred to as "heavenly visions" and were therefore of such a nature that they could confer sanctity on their recipient. In fact, what these supporters ask are for the *Revelaciones* to be given an even higher status than Scripture. When Birgitta arrived *there* in the Holy Land, she learned the *truth* about the sacred events, truths that had not been available to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

The Gospel According to Birgitta

In her retelling of the Nativity and the Crucifixion, Birgitta departs from the Gospels by means of elaboration and the addition of numerous details. Against the background of literary and artistic traditions some of these details appear to be highly idiosyncratic, such as the attention she gives to the afterbirth and the umbilical cord in the Nativity vision, the shepherds' request to see the newborn's genitals in order to verify the sex of the Saviour (or possibly Saviouress), and the specific mode in which Christ was fastened to the cross, to mention a few of Birgitta's more peculiar details. Despite the distinctive character of these features, they would fit well into the kind of meditations encouraged by works such as the popular Pseudo-Bonaventurian *Meditaciones vite Christi*, in which the devotees are invited to appropriate sacred history into something personal, and to draw on their own individual experiences – to make their own personal choices – to intensify their emotional engagement in the biblical narrative.²⁷ This is indeed what Birgitta, *qua* meditator, does in the *Revelaciones*. However, it can be argued that the text serves an end greater than Birgitta's emotional identification with the Virgin. This argument is based in the recurring allusions in both the *Revelaciones* and the canonisation proceedings to a promise the Virgin had given Birgitta fifteen years earlier, when Mary tells her: ". . . go on pilgrimage to the holy city of Jerusalem . . . From there you will travel to Bethlehem where, in the place itself, I shall show you *fully* how I gave birth to my Son, Jesus Christ."²⁸ This view is strengthened in the chapter following the revelation of the Nativity, in which we are told that the Virgin again showed

²⁷ Caulibus, *Meditaciones vite Christi, olim S. Bonaventuro attributae*.

²⁸ Italics added. ". . . tu ibis in sanctam ciuitatem Iherusalem peregrinando . . . Et inde ibis ad Bethleem ibique ostendam tibi in loco proprio totum modum, qualiter ego peperii eundem filium meum Ihesum Christum . . .", *Revelaciones*: 7, 114 (Rev. VII: 1.5–6).

herself to Birgitta, who was still present in the cave, to ensure her of the truthfulness of what she had seen:

Despite the attempts of people to assert that my Son was born in the ordinary way according to their human way of understanding, you can rest assured that it is undoubtedly more true that he was born as I have told you elsewhere and as you have now seen for yourself.²⁹

Thus, the *Revelaciones* explicitly affirms the deviation of Birgitta's account vis à vis Scripture and that this account is the true one.

The claim to scriptural status and the challenge of the Gospels found in the chapters describing Birgitta's Holy Land visions is audaciously affirmed in Birgitta's *vita* composed by her two confessors, Peter and Peter, and most likely revised and expanded on by Alfonso.³⁰ After having described Birgitta's prophetic skills – implicitly creating an equivalence between her and some of the authors of the Old Testament as well as St John, author of Apocalypse – the hagiographers comment on her ability to elucidate dubious biblical narratives and, notably, they compare Birgitta directly with the authors of the Gospels:

Like the holy evangelists, she wrote also about the birth of Christ and about his glorious life, and, in a similar way, about his death and about his resurrection and about his eternal glory, as is shown clearly enough in her revelations.³¹

Because the bulk of the visions related in the *Revelaciones* do not concern the life and death of Christ, it seems evident that the authors of the *vita* are here referring to the revelations from Jerusalem and Bethlehem.³² Again, it will be remembered, the connection between Birgitta's arrival at true knowledge of sacred history and her pilgrimage to Jerusalem and its holy places is spelled out in the visions leading up to her departure.³³ This link between truth and place is also laid out at the canonisation trial in the

²⁹ “Et ideo scias veraciter, quod, quamvis homines secundum humanum sensum conantur asserere, quod filius meus nascebatur per modum communem, verius tamen est et absque dubio aliquo, quod ipse natus est, sicut ego dixi alias tibi et sicut nunc tu vidisti.” *Revelaciones*: 7,191 (Rev. VII: 22.6).

³⁰ See Sara Ekwall, *Vår äldsta Birgittavita och dennas viktigaste varianter*, Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, Historiska Serien (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1965).

³¹ “Scripsit eciam vt sancti ewangeliste de Christi natiuitate et de eius gloriosa vita, similiter et de morte et de resurrectione et de eius eterna gloria, sicut in eius reuelacionibus ostenditur satis clare . . .”, *Acta et processus*, 86.

³² The *Vita* also refers to the pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Virgin's promise to Birgitta fifteen years earlier, that Birgitta should go to Jerusalem and Bethlehem and once there she will be shown how Mary gave birth to her son: “Propter nimium amorem, quem habes ad me, dico tibi, quod tu ibis ad Ierusalem, quando placuerit filio meo, et tunc ibis eciam ad Bethleem, et ego tunc ostendam tibi, quomodo peperit filium meum Jhesum Christum.’ Quam promissionem adimpleuit virgo Maria post xvj annos, quando domina Brigida fuit in dictis locis, vt in libris reuelacionum lacius continetur in quadam reuelacione facta ei in Beethleem, que loquitur de partu virginis Marie.” *Acta et processus*, 96. For the journey to the Holy Land, see 95–6, and 98.

³³ Most explicitly in the revelation opening book VII, see *Revelaciones*: 7, 114 (Rev. VII: 1.5–6).

depositions of several of the witnesses who had accompanied the visionary on the pilgrimage. For instance, Birgitta's daughter Katarina (1331–1381) and the fellow Swede Magnus Petri (d. 1396) comment on her reception of visions in the Nativity Cave and in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and they also confirm their own presence at the time of the miraculous events, which had been experienced only by Birgitta and not the others in her company (who were “simply” meditating we can presume).³⁴ Alfonso offers a more detailed report of the events and even presents a model for understanding the miracle of these visions. In his description of the Crucifixion vision he is not content with only stating that it happened in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre; he also notes *exactly* where Birgitta stood, that is, by the hole in the rock of the mountain where the cross of Christ had been placed, now located inside the Chapel of Mount Calvary, and he also specifies his own position – near the Chapel of Mary and the column of Christ's flagellation – when Birgitta recounted what she had seen.³⁵ Alfonso also mentions that in the vision Birgitta related to him, Christ had shown her the specific place and the hole in the rock, as is also stated in the *Revelaciones*, where Christ asks Birgitta to pay special attention to this physical point.³⁶ In addition to his concern for topographical details, Alfonso emphasises that Birgitta had seen the Passion in its entirety “one by one and in detail” [*singillatim et seriose*]; he subsequently uses this to argue that Birgitta's vision of the birth of Christ is more true than the quoted vision of Paula related by Jerome (discussed further below).³⁷ In his account of the miraculous aspect of Birgitta's experience of the Crucifixion, Alfonso compares her revelation with a famous incident from the life of St Francis of Assisi, when a wooden crucifix in the church of San Damiano came alive and Christ spoke to him through it. In other words, for Alfonso, Birgitta's supernatural perception of transcendent truth in all its concrete details regarding the death of Christ, which she experienced in *that* specific place where it had happened, resembled principally the event in Assisi, wherein the wooden crucifix had suddenly erupted into life, according to Francis' two hagiographers, Thomas of Celano and Bonaventure.³⁸ Just as the wood of the cross miraculously became animated and Christ manifested himself in the mundane object, so too Christ became instantiated in that church, in that chapel, on that rock, for Birgitta. Alfonso seems to present Birgitta's experience in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as something akin to what Caroline Walker Bynum has referred to as “holy matter”: phenomena appearing in the later Middle Ages, including miraculously bleeding

³⁴ For Katarina's deposition, see *Acta et processus*, 328, and for Magnus's, see 270.

³⁵ *Acta et processus*, 385.

³⁶ “. . . ostendit ei locum et foramen in monte, vbi crux eius infixata fuerat tempore passionis . . .”, *Acta et processus*, 385; *Revelaciones*: 7, 164 (Rev. VII: 15.2–3).

³⁷ *Acta et processus*, 385–386.

³⁸ Thomas of Celano, *Vita Secunda S. Francisci Assisiensis in Analecta Franciscana*, ed. Collegii S. Bonaventurae, X, Quaracchi, 1927, 3–221 and Bonaventure, *Legenda sancti Francisci*, 10 vols, Doctor Seraphici S. Bonaventurae Opera omnia, 8, Quaracchi, 1882–1902, 502–549.

hosts, panel paintings and frescoes that bleed and cry, and animated statues such as the cross in San Damiano.³⁹ But unlike Francis, and despite Alfonso's comparison, Birgitta is not experiencing Christ but a *place*, and not just any significant place, but the *loca sancta* of Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Moreover, Birgitta does not simply claim to see or experience an animated Christ; she (or the editor Alfonso) also asserts, through the voice of the Virgin, that regarding certain highly significant events in the life of Christ, the Gospels are wrong and she is right, because she was shown the truth *there, in that place*. How, then, should we construe the notion of "holy place" as we encounter it in the case of Birgitta?

The Testimony of a Holy Place

Nearly all the references to the Bethlehem Nativity vision presented in the Birgittine sources stress that Birgitta had been promised such a divine vision, and that it was *there*, in the cave in Bethlehem, that knowledge about how Christ had truly been born would be revealed – and that it was indeed the Virgin herself who would reveal this. And this particular vision serves as the strongest claim regarding Birgitta's access to higher truth, i.e. where she is contradicting Scripture and existing traditions.⁴⁰ This point is central to the assertion in her *vita* that Birgitta could clarify scriptural matters that were obscure or doubtful.⁴¹ The biblical references to the birth of Christ, for example, are very few. Only Matthew and Luke describe the event, and the only information these Gospels provide is that the child was Mary's firstborn, he was born in Bethlehem, laid in a manger, and adored by three Magi and shepherds to whom the arrival of a king had been announced by celestial means. Later apocryphal texts, such as the eighth-century Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, which claims to be an authentic translation by Jerome and was widely disseminated through its inclusion in Jacobus de Voragine's

³⁹ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2011).

⁴⁰ However, Birgitta is certainly not opposing doctrine in this text. What is distinctive about her description of the birth is the constant insistence on Mary's virginity, before, during, and after the birth, and the uniqueness of the event in relation to normal childbirth. In Birgitta's account, the Virgin gives birth as if it was a vision, that is, she is kneeling in prayer and suddenly the child manifests itself on the ground in front of her. Thus, she gave an explanation to a mystery that had been accepted as part and parcel of the Church since at least the seventh century, the so-called "perpetual virginity of Mary." This may also explain why Birgitta's description of the birth was so successful as an iconographical model, as it gave artists an opportunity to visually distinguish between the virginal birth of Christ and that of other biblical figures. On this, see Oen 2019, "Iconography and Visions: St. Birgitta's Revelation of the Nativity of Christ". The influence of Birgitta's vision on artistic representations of the Nativity of Christ was first acknowledged by Henrik Cornell, see Henrik Cornell, "The Iconography of the Nativity," *Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift* (1924). See also Morris, *St Birgitta of Sweden*, 138–9.

⁴¹ *Acta et processus*, 86.

Legenda aurea, elaborate on the event; but even the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew does not explain *how* the birth took place, as Birgitta's revelation does. What this apocryphal text does say, however, is that the Virgin was alone in the cave when giving birth because Joseph had gone in search of a midwife.⁴² Birgitta also notes that Joseph left the site at the special moment of the arrival of Christ incarnated. Thus, the only witness to the sacred moment in history was the Virgin herself – and the cave. The evangelists Matthew and Luke were certainly not present. When the Virgin chose to show Birgitta the birth of Christ, inside the physical space, which, other than the Virgin, was the only “witness” to the event, Birgitta gained claim to a validity for her “gospel” that surpassed those of Luke and Matthew; for neither of those two evangelists had been present at the site or moment of the birth, and thus they lack the detailed knowledge about the event which Birgitta now possesses through direct visual perception.

The concept of Christian *loca sancta* in late antiquity hinged on the physical space commemorated at the very site of a biblical event; this space served as a witness to the episode and could therefore bear witness to its veracity. For Cyril of Jerusalem (313–386), who was bishop of the holy city in the fourth century and a key figure in the promotion of the sacred topography of the region and its value to Christians, it was precisely the role of the physical places *as witnesses* to Christ and his miracles, his birth, death, and resurrection, his humanity and his divinity, that gave places like the cave, the rock of Calvary, and the tomb their special significance and, indeed, holiness.⁴³ Cyril's *Catechetical Lectures*, delivered to catechumens to instruct them and strengthen their faith, serve as the primary source of his views about the shrines.⁴⁴ When he composed his catechesis, the process of conversion to Christianity was ongoing, and Jerusalem had a large Jewish population for whom Jesus was *not* the resurrected saviour. The strong focus on producing witnesses to Jesus as the *true* Saviour in the rhetoric of Cyril – witnesses he finds in the sacred topography of his city, in nature, as well as in the Old Testament prophecies and the New Testament protagonists, and all considered equally – must be understood in this specific context in which

42 “The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew” in *Apocryphal Gospels, Acts, and Revelations*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325, 16, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1867–1873.

43 On the role of Cyril of Jerusalem, as well as that of Eusebius, in promoting Christian pilgrimage and the notion of the Christian *loca sancta*, see Walker 1990, *Holy City, Holy Places?*. On attitudes towards the sacred topography of the Holy Land, see also Moore, *The Architecture of the Christian Holy Land*.

44 Cyril of Jerusalem, *The Works of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem*, 2 vols, trans. Leo P. McCauley and Anthony A. Stephenson, Fathers of the Church Patristic Series, Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1969–1970. See especially vol. 1, 208–209 (10.19) on the testimony of the wood of the cross and the rock of Golgotha; vol. 2, 28 (13.35), where he again mentions the testimony of the rock of Golgotha and the stone closing the Sepulchre while he comments on its visible presence there in his day; and vol. 2, 29–30 (13.38), where he adds that the Garden of Gethsemane, the Mount of Olives and the House of Caiaphas – all of which were local places well known to the listeners – as witnesses to Christ. Similar descriptions are also found in vol. 2, 30 (13.39).

Cyril had to convince his listeners of the veridicality of the role of Jesus Christ offered by the Christian religion. In addition to the importance of places as bearers of witness to events, which after the conversion process became part and parcel of the pilgrim's approach to holy sites, Cyril's catechesis touches on another issue of consequence for those visiting the Holy Land throughout the Middle Ages. When he speaks to his catechumens about the testimony of holy places and physical objects, such as the wood of the cross, the manger in the cave in Bethlehem, and the rock of Calvary, the bishop is also careful to note that the places and objects are *still visible*, and that those who are present there in Jerusalem (as all his listeners were) could experience directly this physical reality that bore witness to the transcendent reality.

The enthusiasm for the sensuous experience of the *loca sancta* and their ties to salvation history and the truth of Scripture that Cyril expresses when he notes that "others merely hear, but we see and touch" is also found in other sources of a more exegetic than apologetic nature.⁴⁵ In his work on the early development in, and attitudes towards, pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the fourth and fifth centuries, E. D. Hunt points out that Christian pilgrimage to the shrines in the Holy Land was, from the very beginning, connected to Scripture, both with respect to establishing a biblical canon and to exegetical interpretation.⁴⁶ The late-fourth-century pilgrim Egeria, probably a contemporary of Cyril's, was reading the relevant parts of the scriptures on site as she came to the various shrines. For her, seeing the holy places was "intimately related to her understanding of the Bible."⁴⁷ And for Jerome (347–420), the visual perception of the places described in the text was imperative to an understanding of the sacred texts. While he was engaged in the great project of producing a new Latin translation of Scripture, the Vulgate, Jerome left Rome together with his fellow pilgrim, Paula, and her daughter Eustochium and set out for the Holy Land never to return. As a result, when he embarked on the task of producing the new translation of the Old Testament, Jerome not only went to the original Hebrew version – as opposed to the Greek Septuagint, which formed the basis of the Latin Bible of the time, the *Vetus Latina* – but he also went to the original places described in the biblical texts. In a famous quotation taken from the prologue to his version of *Chronicles*, Jerome states:

As those who saw Athens will better understand Greek histories . . . so a clearer understanding of the sacred Scripture for whoever will see Judea with his own eyes, and will recognize the memories of the ancient cities or places under their own or under changed names.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Cyril of Jerusalem 1969–1970, *The Works of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem*: 2, 19 (13.22).

⁴⁶ Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage*, 83–106.

⁴⁷ Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage*, 88.

⁴⁸ "Quomodo Graecorum historias magis intelligunt, qui Athenas viderint . . . ita sanctam Scripturam lucidius intuebitur, qui Judaeam oculis contemplatus est, et antiquarum urbium memorias, locorumque vel eadem vocabula, vel mutata cognoverit." Jerome, *Prefatio Hieronymi in librum Paralipomenon juxta LXX interpretes*, PL, 29, cols 401–4.

According to Hunt, Jerome thus shows that he clearly associates his exploration of the Holy Land with the ancient scholarly tradition of travelling to the sites of classical history.⁴⁹ This comparison of the biblical “tourism” of his day with ancient Greek and Roman scholars who would journey to see the places described in the Homeric tradition allowed Jerome to underline the intellectual and scholarly purposes of seeing the holy sites of the Bible. And he emphasises the value of visual perception for the establishment of knowledge in another work, when he notes his reaction upon arriving in Jerusalem: “. . . what I previously had heard by report, I verified by the evidence of my own eyes.”⁵⁰

Jerome, his translation project, and his approach to the *loca sancta* are all especially relevant to connections drawn in the sources reviewed above between Birgitta’s presence at the shrines and her access to spiritual truth. First, it should be noted that when Birgitta and her entourage came to the Church of the Nativity, one of the sacred sites these Holy pilgrims spent time at was a vaulted chamber near the cloister of the building, where Jerome supposedly sat when he produced his translation. In the late fourteenth century, pilgrims visiting this site were aware of the relation between Jerome’s presence in the Holy Land, in Bethlehem specifically, and his version of Scripture; and it was here that Birgitta would be able to grasp a higher meaning of Scripture beyond the text available to her.

Alfonso of Jaén provides a more explicit comparison between Birgitta’s Nativity vision and Jerome. In his deposition from the canonisation process he states that Birgitta’s vision is more miraculous than the one Paula experienced, narrated by Jerome [*quod narrat Jeronimus*], because Birgitta “saw the Nativity of the Lord *more clearly and in detail*” [*seriosius et clarius vidit natiuitatem Domini*].⁵¹ This link between the *Revelaciones* and Jerome is clearly intended to lend authority to Birgitta’s new

⁴⁹ See Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage*, 94.

⁵⁰ “. . . quae prius ad me fama pertulerat, oculorum iudicio comprobavi.” Jerome, *Apologia adversus libros Rufini*, PL, 23, cols 395–492.

⁵¹ Italics added. *Acta et processus*, 386. In his critical edition, Collijn says that the vision narrated by Jerome concerns St Eustace. This reading, however, is not very likely as indicated by one of the three surviving codices containing the complete acts and depositions of the canonization process. The MS A 14 of Kungliga Biblioteket (the Royal Library) in Stockholm describes the saint in question clearly as a woman – “illa sancta” (fol. clviii, original pagination). According to Collijn’s conclusions, this MS is produced by one hand alone, in Italy, most likely in Rome, in the late fourteenth century. The other principal MS for his edition, Vatican City, BAV, Ottob. lat. 90, is written by 13 different hands, and belong to the 16 copies that were commissioned to be distributed among the cardinals in the 1390s. The different scribes responsible for the quires containing the deposition of Alfonso in the two MSS both refer to the saint in question as “Eustachio” (in the ablative). The fact that St Eustace is not specifically known in medieval cults, nor from the hagiography, to have had a vision of the Nativity of Christ, makes Collijn’s reading less plausible. I believe the scribe responsible for the Stockholm MS was correct, and that it is far more likely that Alfonso is discussing St Eustochium (whose ablative form, *Eustochio*, is indeed very similar to the ablative of Eustace, *Eustachio*), Paula’s daughter, and to whom the letter in which Paula’s famous vision of the Nativity

version of the Gospel as presented in her text. Like Jerome, who better apprehended Scripture by going to the Holy Land and seeing for himself the places described, so too did Birgitta, resulting in the *Revelaciones*. Interestingly, with his new translation predicated directly on the “Hebrew truth” – a translation highly controversial when it was written – Jerome’s primary aim was to make Scripture more clear and detailed. As he states in the prologue to his translation of the Book of Job, he did not undertake the task in disregard of the Septuagint “. . . but rather so that those things in it which are either obscure or missing or certainly corrupted by the error of scribes may be made more clear by our interpretation.”⁵² This is also what Birgitta does in her *Revelaciones*, which, like Jerome’s Vulgate, was claimed to convey the true *historia sacra*. And it should also be remembered that in the *vita* submitted to the canonisation committee, which in all probability Alfonso edited, Birgitta is praised for her exegetical skills and her ability to clarify “. . . many things concerning certain doubtful matters in Sacred Scripture.”⁵³ For Alfonso, Jerome thus becomes an important *auctoritas* with which Birgitta is compared, and who can, in turn, confer authority on Birgitta’s claim to sanctity and possession of divine truth. Like her predecessor, Birgitta arrives at a more truthful and correct understanding of sacred history on the basis of her presence at, and physical perception of, the *loca sancta* in the Holy Land, so that she too could correct, or augment, the scriptures like a true evangelical author [*auctor*], that is, as someone who possesses *auctoritas*.⁵⁴ Ironically, the sacred text Birgitta was revising, and whose revision Jerome is evoked to sanctify, was indeed the Vulgate of Jerome.

is addressed. Although this unusual female name may have been strange to the scribe responsible for this particular section in the BAV copy – and who is therefore likely to have changed it into the masculine form, and thus to the more well known saint Eustace – the particular letter to Eustochium that I argue Alfonso is referring to, was in fact also very well known in the fourteenth century, as it was included in Jacobus de Voragine’s *Legenda aurea*, though here it appears under the name of St Paula. I have not been able to examine the third extant copy of the canonisation acts, namely London, British Library, MS Harley 612. This MS is, however, of a much later date, second or third quarter of the fifteenth century. For Collijn’s discussion of the three MSS in question, see his Introduction in *Acta et processus 1924–1931*: i–xiv. For Jerome’s letter in the *Legenda aurea*, see Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, 2 vols, ed. Giovanni Paolo Maggioni, Florence: SISMEL, Edizioni del Galluzzo, 1998. On Alfonso of Jaén and the Hieronymite Order; see Arne Jönsson, ed. *Alfonso of Jaén: His Life and Works with Critical Editions of the Epistola Solitaria, the Informaciones and the Epistola Serui Christi*, Studia Graeca et Latina Lundensia (Lund: Lund University Press, 1989), 31–82.

52 “. . . sed ut ea, quae in illa aut obscura sunt, aut omissa, aut certe scriptorum vitio depravata, manifestiora nostra interpretatione fierent . . .” Jerome, *Praefatio S. Hieronymi in librum Job*, PL, 28, cols 1079–1084.

53 “. . . de aliquibus dubijs sacre scripture plurima,” *Acta et processus 1924–1931*: 86. On Alfonso’s contribution to the *vita*, see Ekwall, *Vår äldsta Birgittavita*.

54 On the interconnected meaning of *auctor/auctoritas*, see n. 5 above.

The Authority of the Jerusalem Pilgrim

Jerome is not the only *auctoritas* employed by Birgitta's hagiographers and supporters to confirm Birgitta's saintly image and to validate her *Revelaciones*. In fact, the narratives and hagiographical texts associated with women who made the pilgrimage from Rome to Jerusalem in late antiquity represent perhaps the most important models for Birgitta's *vita*. In late medieval biographical legends written to promote laywomen, there is, as argued by Bynum and others, a strong focus on the physical aspects of their devotion to Christ and their bodily identification with him.⁵⁵ Birgitta's contemporaries and predecessors, such as Marie d'Oignies (1177–1213), Margaret of Cortona (1247–1297), and Chiara of Rimini (1282–1348), to mention a few, are portrayed as imitators of Christ in a highly physical manner; they practise extreme corporal punishment in a fashion modelled on the torture of Christ during the Passion, and many of them receive stigmata. Furthermore, in the hagiography pertaining to venerated laywomen in the later Middle Ages there is a recurrent emphasis on their linguistic ignorance and illiteracy – a point used to bolster the divine origin of their visions and their biblical knowledge in a time when religious women who claimed to possess such knowledge and, even worse, instructed others (especially men), were viewed with grave suspicion by the Church.⁵⁶ Seen against the backdrop of contemporary hagiography, Birgitta's *vita* stands out. The Swedish visionary is portrayed as a wealthy *domina* who, after the death of her husband, began to practise an ascetic lifestyle – though not at all in such an excessive manner as found in contemporary *vitae* – before she renounces her wealth and departs on a lifelong pilgrimage. More conspicuously, she began to study Latin and she wrote down her revelations “in her own hand” [*manu sua propria*], albeit in her native Swedish language, as her hagiographers take care to note.⁵⁷ This image of the wealthy, pious, and *highly literate* noblewoman who is not only a great philanthropist but also travels around freely on pilgrimages, significantly to Rome and to the Holy Land, is reminiscent of the rhetoric found in the *vitae* of the saintly women and Jerusalem pilgrims Augusta Helena (d. 329), mother of

55 For an overview, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987) and *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1992).

56 On the hostility towards women preaching, teaching, and writing, see Alastair Minnis, “Religious Roles: Public and Private,” in *Medieval Holy Women in the Christian Tradition, c.1100–c.1500*, ed. Alastair Minnis and Rosalynn Voaden (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010) and Dyan Elliott, “Dominae or Dominatae? Female Mysticism and the Trauma of Textuality,” in *Women, Marriage, and Family in Medieval Christendom: Essays in Memory of Michael M. Sheehan, C.S.B.*, ed. Constance M. Rousseau and Joel T. Rosenthal (Kalamazoo MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1998). On the illiteracy and xenoglossia of holy women, see Christine F. Cooper-Rompato, *The Gift of Tongues: Women's Xenoglossia in the Later Middle Ages* (University Park PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010).

57 *Acta et processus*, 84.

Constantine; St Paula (d. 404), Jerome's close friend and companion in the Holy Land; and Melania the Younger (d. 439), Roman matron and visionary.⁵⁸

Regarding the first of these three, Helena, it can be noted that most of Birgitta's Holy Land visions are in Bethlehem and Jerusalem, the former being the place where Helena founded the basilica commemorating the cave of the Nativity of Christ, and where Birgitta would have her vision of the true circumstances of the event. And the emphasis on Birgitta's disclosure of a hidden truth can be compared with the popular legend that the emperor's famous mother also discovered the True Cross. In other words, Helena, whose *vita*, according to Lynda L. Coon, established the very prototype of the saintly aristocratic woman, travelled to the *loca sancta* and there discovered a tangible truth beyond Scripture, namely, what would become the most famous relics of the Middle Ages, the wooden cross on which Christ had been crucified.⁵⁹

Appearing within a century after the death of Helena, other patrician women travelled from Rome to Jerusalem, where they experienced visions of Christ, and where they continued the philanthropic activities that she was celebrated for; they set up monasteries and spent their whole fortunes on supporting the Christian communities in the Holy Land and their building activities. These women, such as Jerome's friend Paula, her daughter Eustochium, and Melania the Younger, are also praised in the hagiography not only for their asceticism and philanthropy but also for their intellectual capacities, their language skills, and their exegetical abilities.⁶⁰ The *vita* of Paula, written by Jerome in the form of a letter addressed to Eustochium, was very popular in the later Middle Ages, not least because of its inclusion in the *Legenda aurea*.⁶¹ The text presents the patrician woman's noble lineage (she was from one of the greatest families of Rome) and how, as a widow, she adopted an ascetic life – first in her own Roman home, where she would be visited by Jerome, and later in the monastery she would found in Bethlehem. When she followed Jerome on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, she left behind her earthly family – with the exception of one daughter – and she distributed all of her wealth to charitable causes. In the Holy Land, Paula, who is also celebrated by Jerome for her exegesis and her knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, experienced vivid visions of Christ at all the shrines she visited.

The hagiographical portrayal of Birgitta's noble lineage, her ascetic lifestyle, her engagement in establishing a monastic order, the renunciation of her fortune and her

58 There are many versions of Helena's *vita*. The first one is included in the second book of Eusebius of Caesarea's *Life of Constantine*, with later versions appearing over the following centuries. For a summary of these, see Lynda L. Coon, *Sacred Fictions: Holy Women and Hagiography in Late Antiquity*, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1997), 95–103. For Melania the Younger, see *Vie de Sainte Mélanie*, ed. and trans. Denys Gorce, Sources Chrétiennes 90, 1962. Paula's *vita*, composed by Jerome, will be discussed below.

59 Coon, *Sacred Fictions*, 99.

60 On this particular model of sainthood, see Coon, *Sacred Fictions*, 95–119.

61 See Jerome, *Epistola CVIII*, and Voragine, *Legenda aurea*: 1, 201–8.

earthly children – again, with the exception of one daughter – to facilitate travel throughout the Mediterranean, her studies of language and her reading of Scripture, and her pilgrimage from Rome to the Holy Land are all themes that not only allude to but often directly parallel Jerome’s *vita* of St Paula. Moreover, there is also the direct comparison of Birgitta and Paula in Alfonso’s deposition. Significantly, in Alfonso’s edition of the *Revelaciones*, the order in which Birgitta visits the shrines follows Paula’s itinerary, and, as noted above, Alfonso makes an explicit point of Birgitta’s vision of the Nativity in Bethlehem being more miraculous than that of Paula’s, since the Swedish pilgrim had seen everything more clearly and with more details. It is tempting to see the use of Paula as a model for Birgitta to emulate, and the many references to the pilgrimage of Jerome, Paula, and Eustochium to the Holy Land as attempts by Alfonso to allude to himself as a new Jerome who, similarly, is travelling to Jerusalem and Bethlehem with his own Paula and Eustochium, i.e. Birgitta and her daughter Katarina. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that Alfonso was not only very concerned with the Church Father, but he, together with his brother, even sought – and succeeded – to have papal approval for a new Hieronymite Order.⁶² Without speculating further about Alfonso’s possible reasons for fashioning his own role in Birgitta’s hagiography on Jerome, it is clear that the trio of the saints – Jerome, Paula, and Eustochium – offered Alfonso and Birgitta’s other hagiographers a particularly powerful example to evoke and imitate. This model allowed them to promote Birgitta’s engagement with sacred language, scribal activities, and scriptural exegesis, which at the time were unconventional and potentially very problematic. And they also served to promote the claim that her presence and perception of the Holy Land had provided her with profound wisdom beyond Scripture, which she, possessing the knowledge and skills necessary, could now amend.

Conclusion

Birgitta left Sweden – the fringes of the world, according to the canonisation bull – as a widowed aristocrat in 1349, and in 1374, the year after she died, she was returned as *if* she were already a saint. Birgitta’s relics were “translated” from Rome and enshrined in the church of the first Birgittine monastery, in the old royal palace at Vadstena. The little Swedish town was thereby put in direct contact with the Christian centres of the world, as the woman, whose bones they received, was already celebrated for her holiness in Rome as well as in other states on the peninsula such as Naples and Florence. Eighteen years later, in 1391, Birgitta was formally canonised by Boniface IX, thereby proving the campaign for her sanctity and the authority of the *Revelaciones* successful. The image of Birgitta as a pilgrim, which implied her

62 On Alfonso of Jaén and the Hieronymite Order, see Jönsson, *Alfonso of Jaén*, 31–82.



Fig. 13.2: St Birgitta of Sweden with pilgrim attributes. Fresco, early sixteenth century. Harg Church, Uppland, Sweden.

recognition of the importance of physical shrines, relics, and notably the pilgrimage to the *loca sancta* of the Holy Land, became an essential element of her saintly portrait. Numerous artworks that present Birgitta with a pilgrim's hat and staff (Fig. 13.2), made in various media and found all over Europe from the late fourteenth century

onwards, bear visual testimony to this.⁶³ Interestingly, there is also evidence that other laywomen seeking holiness went to Rome and to the Holy Land to venerate, and also imitate, Birgitta. A famous example is Margery Kempe (d. after 1438), who travelled from Norfolk, England, to Rome and thence to Jerusalem between 1413 and 1415, where she too experienced numerous visions in accordance with Birgitta, Margery's model and authority.⁶⁴

While the process of Birgitta's canonisation was a success, claims regarding the *Revelaciones* being equal to, or, in fact, *truer than* Scripture were contested for centuries. Birgitta's title, but most importantly her heavenly revelations, were challenged at the Councils of Constance (1414–1418) and Basel (1431–1449), resulting at the latter meeting in 1436 in a prohibition against the promulgation of the text as "heavenly."⁶⁵ Nonetheless, excerpts from the *Revelaciones*, notably the chapters describing the visions from Jerusalem and Bethlehem, continued to appear in various contexts, where they held the status claimed by Birgitta and her supporters. In the sermons preached by the male members of the Birgittine Order, the *Revelaciones* were quoted on a par with Scripture.⁶⁶ Another significant example is an English devotional book of the *meditaciones* genre, *Speculum devotorum*, from the first half of the fifteenth century, where Birgitta's versions of the Nativity of Christ and the Crucifixion, as narrated in the *Revelaciones*, appear alongside those from the Gospels.⁶⁷ As in the *Meditaciones vite Christi* of Pseudo-Bonaventure, the compiler of *Speculum devotorum* invites his reader to choose herself which version of sacred history to employ in her meditations. Yet he leaves the reader in no doubt regarding his own preference. When describing the Crucifixion of Christ he states explicitly that he prefers Birgitta's version, which is not only more detailed, but also "more secure."⁶⁸

63 See Mereth Lindgren, *Bilden av Birgitta* (Höganäs: Wiken, 1991), 34–43.

64 Einat Klafter, "The Feminine Mystic: Margery Kempe's Pilgrimage to Rome as an *imitatio Birgittae*," in *Gender in Medieval Places, Spaces and Thresholds*, ed. Victoria Blud et al. (London: University of London, School of Advanced Study, Institute of Historical Research, 2019). See also *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Lynn Staley, Kalamazoo MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996.

65 See Heymericus de Campo, *Heymericus de Campo: Dyalogus super Reuelacionibus beate Birgitte. A Critical Edition with and Introduction*, ed. Anna Fredriksson Adman, Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2003, and Anna Fredriksson, "The Council of Constance, Jean Gerson, and St. Birgitta's 'Reuelaciones,'" *Mediaeval Studies* 76 (2014).

66 See Roger Andersson, "Birgitta and Her Revelations in the Sermons of the Vadstena Brothers," in *A Companion to Birgitta of Sweden and Her Legacy in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Maria H. Oen (Leiden: & Boston Brill, 2019).

67 For a critical edition of the text, see *The Speculum devotorum of an Anonymous Carthusian of Sheen*, ed. James Hogg, Analecta Cartusiana 12–13, Salzburg: Universität Salzburg, 1973–1974. For a discussion of the text and the use of Birgitta's *Revelaciones* as an *uctoritas* in this work, see Ian Johnson, "Auctricitas? Holy Women and their Middle English Texts," in *Prophets Abroad: The Reception of Continental Holy Women in Late-Medieval England*, ed. Rosalynn Voaden (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1996).

68 *Speculum devotorum*, 2, 267.



Fig. 14.0: Procession of women accompanying the Virgin Mary to the Temple, echoing the common ritual of post-partum churching. Norra Strö Church, Scania, c.1450–1475.

**Part III: Jerusalem Transposed and Reenacted:
Townscapes, Churches, and Practices**



Fig. 14.1: St Olav, king and martyr. Stained glass window from Lye Church, Gotland, c.1325. The holy king holds an axe – his attribute – in his right hand and a lidded chalice in his left.

Øystein Ekroll

Chapter 14

St Olav, Nidaros, and Jerusalem

Norway became incorporated into the Western Christendom during the eleventh century, a process which was completed with the establishment of a Norwegian church province in 1153. This history is inextricably linked with the history of St Olav, the most important medieval Scandinavian saint. A recurring theme in his cult is his Christ-like persona, which was also expressed in the architecture of Nidaros Cathedral, his final resting-place. During the twelfth century, cultural impulses were transmitted from Jerusalem to Nidaros, leaving marks on the town, the cathedral, and his cult. This chapter explores how and why this happened.

In the 1070s, during the early reign of King Olav III (1067–1093), the chronicler Adam of Bremen (d. c.1085) wrote his large history of the archbishops of Bremen, and in his work he included some information about the Nordic lands, which until 1104 formed a part of the archbishopric of Hamburg/Bremen. According to Adam, the largest town in Norway was Trondheim, which was embellished with several churches and is visited by many. The body of the blessed king and martyr Olav rested there, and at his grave God worked many miracles, and people who sought help from the holy man come there from afar.¹ His martyr feast is celebrated on 29 July, and his memory is honoured among the peoples around the Northern ocean: Norwegians, Swedes, Goths, Danes, and Slavs.²

Concerning the circumstances of Olav's martyrdom, Adam had conflicting information. He recorded that some say that Olav was killed by sorcerers, who were numerous in Norway, others report that he died in battle, and yet others maintain that he was assassinated by agents of King Knud the Great (d. 1035). Adam himself found the latter theory most probable.³ Adam never visited Norway, but he travelled to Denmark and received much information from King Sven Estridsen (1047–1076).

Perhaps unknown to Adam, the cult of St Olav was already established in England. The oldest liturgical sources for the cult of St Olav are English, consisting of an office and litanies preserved in the *Leofric Collectar* from the 1050s–1060s,

¹ Adam of Bremen, *The History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, trans. Francis Joseph Tschan, New York: Columbia University Press, 1959.

² Adam of Bremen, *The History of the Archbishops*., ii, ch. 61.

³ Adam of Bremen, *The History of the Archbishops*., ii, ch. 57, 61.

named after Bishop Leofric of Exeter (c.1016–1072) who had close contact with the highest circles in Anglo-Saxon England. There seems to be general agreement that this office was created by Grimkjell, the missionary bishop of St Olav, who canonized the king. Grimkjell is probably identical with *Grimketel/ Grimcytel/ Grimkillus* who was bishop of Selsey in Sussex 1038–1047.⁴

In the 1050s, Bishop Leofric attested that Countess Gyða gave a donation for a church in Exeter, built for the benefit of the souls of her husband, Earl Godwin, and herself. This church was to be dedicated to *Sancti Olavi regis et martiris*. Likewise, Earl Siward of Northumbria built a church in York dedicated to St Olav, in which the earl was buried in 1055, and King Edward the Confessor (1003–1066) made donations to build a church dedicated to St Olav somewhere in England. Before 1100, perhaps even before 1066, there were at least three churches dedicated to St Olav in the city of London, and other churches dedicated to him in Southwark, Exeter, Chichester, Norwich, and Chester. In 1074, we hear about relics *de uestimento sancti Olavi regis* (of the vestments of St Olav the king) in the Christchurch in Dublin, and a St Olav church was built in the harbour area.⁵

Considering the close family contacts between the Scandinavian and Russian royal dynasties during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, it is not surprising to find an early St Olav church in Novgorod and reports of miracles taking place there.⁶ By the 1090s, a church was also built in honour of St Olav in Constantinople as a result of the saint aiding the Byzantines at a critical moment during a large battle.⁷ St Olav was canonized before the Great Schism in 1054, and he was thus one of the last saints that was recognized in both the Orthodox and Roman Church.

Within a few decades of his death, the cult of St Olav had become international and was established from the British Isles in the west to Constantinople in the east, at least among Scandinavian merchants and mercenaries and the local elites of Scandinavian descent. The rapid spread of his cult, fuelled by the many miracles attributed to him, is remarkable in an eleventh-century context. The Norwegian church was still in its infancy and possessed few resources to promote the cult. The Norwegian kings had a stronger power base, but until 1066 were constantly engaged in conflicts and wars with the surrounding kingdoms.

4 NBL, s.v. *Grimkjell*.

5 Øystein Ekroll, “Olavsrelikvier – myter og fakta,” in *Helgenkongen St. Olav i kunsten*, ed. Øystein Ekroll (Trondheim: Museumsforlaget, 2016), especially 269.

6 The church is mentioned in the *Passio Olavi*, and was situated in the merchants’ quarter by the River Volkhov.

7 This miracle is first described in the the poem *Geisli* from c.1153 (see e.g. *Einarr Skúlason’s Geisli: A Critical Edition*, ed. M. Chase, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), and took place during the reign of Emperor Alexios I Komnenos, probably in 1091. It is also mentioned in the *Passio Olavi. Lidings saga og undergjerningane åt den heilage Olav*, trans. Eiliv Skard, Oslo: Det norske samlaget, 1930.

St Olav also placed the small and hitherto insignificant town of Nidaros/Trondheim, situated on the northern edge of the Christian world, on the European map of pilgrimage sites. According to Adam of Bremen, by 1070 people from several countries ventured to Trondheim to pray for help at the saint's shrine. His cult made Trondheim into an international town early on, and the many pilgrims who came brought influences and impulses to Trondheim which otherwise would not have been transferred there.

Trondheim's distant position on the very edge of the known world, bordering on wild and icy regions filled with demons and evil creatures also turned it into a mythical place, situated within reach only for the dedicated few who were prepared to brave many dangers.⁸ The place shared this mythical dimension with Santiago de Compostela and especially with Jerusalem, which was also situated beyond the ocean but without the same dangers attached. However, one hundred years later Trondheim was firmly established as a metropolitan seat and its urban structure was consciously developed to reflect important aspects of contemporary Jerusalem. Eventually, the cult of St Olav also became modeled on how Christ was depicted and venerated. The question is then, how did this come to happen in the course of a century?

The Life and Death of King Olav Haraldson, 995–1030

King Olav Haraldsson belonged to the royal line which had ruled Norway since around 900. He was the great-grandson of King Harald Fairhair (d. 932), who first united Norway into one kingdom.⁹ Olav was born in 995, and after his early years spent as a Viking and a mercenary from the age of twelve, mainly in the British Isles, he was converted to Christianity and baptized in Rouen in Normandy in 1014. By then, he had collected a considerable treasure, and in 1015 his window of opportunity came to conquer the throne of Norway. The two earls, Eirik and Svein, sons of Earl Haakon of Lade (c.935–c.995), governed Norway as vassals of the Danish kings, first Svein Forkbeard and then his son Knud the Great. When King Knud called Eirik, the most able of the brothers, to England in 1015, Olav

⁸ On the conception of the monstrous arctic regions, see Kristin B. Aavitsland's introduction to this book, Chapter 1, 21–4.

⁹ The following story of St Olav's life is mainly taken from the literary descriptions in the various sagas written down in the thirteenth century, mainly Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla* written c.1230 (Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, 3 vols, trans. Alison Finlay and Anthony Faulkes, London: Viking Society for Northern Research, University College London, 2016, vol. 2, *Óláfs saga helga*). The main facts can be verified through contemporary sources, but the details must be regarded as a mixture of popular legends and literary inventions.

sailed to Norway with two ships, and through generous gifts he managed to gather wide support for his claim to the throne. In March 1016, Olav beat the forces of Earl Svein in the sea battle at Nesjar in Vestfold.¹⁰ Svein fled to Sweden and died shortly after, and Olav was proclaimed king of Norway at the *Eyrathing* in Nidaros.¹¹

With the zeal of the newly converted, Olav set out to eradicate the last remnants of paganism in his kingdom, which was often done by force with sword in hand, leaving a bloody trail. In this process, the local magnates lost much of their power, and a disgruntled number of them made a secret alliance with King Knud the Great of Denmark and England, who strived to bring Norway back into his North Sea empire. The magnates accepted Knud as their over-lord, and in his turn he promised to give them a large degree of self-rule. In 1028, this alliance forced King Olav into exile, and he fled to Russia, to the court of Grand Prince Yaroslav of Kiev and Novgorod (978–1054) and to Yaroslav's Swedish-born wife, Ingegerd, the half-sister of Olav's wife, Astrid.

King Knud's promise to the Norwegian magnates was not fulfilled, however, as he installed his oldest son Svein (c.1020–1036) and his English mother Ælfgifu (Alfiva) of Northampton as rulers of Norway, residing in Nidaros. They soon managed to make themselves more unpopular than Olav had been, and according to the sagas, the Norwegian magnates soon regretted their deal with Knud.

In an effort to regain his kingdom, King Olav left Russia in 1029 with a small army. His five year old son Magnus was left in Russia in the care of his father's in-laws. Olav marched through Central Sweden and Jemtland and crossed into Norway through Verdal, but his enemies met him with a large army at Stiklestad in the lower part of the valley. Olav was killed in the Battle of Stiklestad on 29 July 1030, as was most of his army. His half-brother and later king Harald was wounded, but escaped and eventually found his way back to Russia and then to Constantinople where he joined the Imperial Guard (the Varangians).

According to Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla* from c.1230, king Olav's body was hidden by a local farmer in a shed or barn, washed and placed in a coffin. The farmer and some trusted friends hid the coffin in a boat and brought it by night to a shed by the river in Nidaros. The town was in the hands of the king's enemies, however, and none of the king's friends dared to take charge of the coffin. The men therefore carried the coffin back into the boat, rowed further upriver out of sight from the town, and buried the coffin in a sandbank by the river, and then obliterated all traces of the burial before returning home. This secret and unceremonious

¹⁰ In Chapter 4, Bjørn Bandlien discuss the battle of Nesjar and its ideological reception and symbolic interpretations in skaldic poetry, 59–85.

¹¹ The *Eyrathing* was an assembly that convened solely to proclaim a new king. The assembly met on the gravelly flats (ON *eyrr*) where the River Nid meets the Trondheim Fjord, hence its name.

burial by night would normally spell the end of the story of a failed king who had gambled and lost everything.

Shortly after, however, rumours started to swirl about miracles taking place in connection with the king's death, heralding that he was a holy man. Thorir Hundr, one of the men who killed the king, was instantly cured of a hand wound when he touched the dead king's body.¹² Simultaneously, an old and blind beggar got some of the blood-mixed water from the washing of the king's body into his eyes, and instantly his eyesight was restored.¹³ According to the Saga of King Magnus the Good, Thorir soon left Norway on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to atone his deed, and was believed never to have returned home.¹⁴ This is the first recorded connection between the death of Olav and Jerusalem, and Thorir is the first recorded Norwegian pilgrim.

By the summer of 1031, the rumours had grown so strong that the public sentiment turned against the Danish rulers. King Olav's bishop Grimkjell, an Anglo-Saxon who had followed Olav from England in 1015, returned to Nidaros and received King Svein's permission to open the grave. The farmers from Stiklestad were called to Nidaros and pointed out the site of the burial. The coffin had then moved almost to the surface. It was uncovered and reburied outside St Clement's Church, presumably with Christian burial rites.

Soon, however, the coffin re-emerged on the surface, a clear sign that the king did not wish to stay underground. On the 3 of August 1031, one year and five days after Olav's death, the coffin was opened by Bishop Grimkjell in the presence of King Svein and a large crowd. The king's face was uncovered and they saw that it was as fresh as the day he died and his hair and nails had grown during the preceding year. The bishop then lit a fire which he blessed and sprinkled with incense. He cut off some of the king's hair and placed it in the fire, and the hair emerged unharmed.

Despite the protest of Ælfgifu, who demanded a second test without blessing the fire, this was taken as decisive evidence of the king's holiness, and with the approval of King Svein and the assembled populace the bishop then declared that Olav was a saint.¹⁵ The coffin was placed above or behind the altar in St Clement's Church, covered in costly textile and a canopy of cloth hung above it.

¹² Snorri Sturlusson, *Heimskringla*, vol. 3, *Magnúss saga ins goða*, ch. 11.

¹³ Snorri Sturlusson, *Heimskringla*, vol. 2, *Óláfs saga helga*, ch. 236.

¹⁴ Snorri Sturlusson, *Heimskringla*, vol. 3, *Magnúss saga ins goða*, ch. 11.

¹⁵ At this time, this procedure sufficed to declare that someone was a saint. Before c.1200, the pope and the curia had no final say in the matter of declaring saints.

The Early Cult of St Olav in the Churches at Nidaros

During a period of sixty years, the shrine of St Olav was kept in no less than four different churches in Nidaros. This attests to the rapid expansion of the town as well as the cult and importance of the saint. In the following, we will trace the movements of St Olav's shrine through the first century of his cult.

St Clement's Church

When the saint's coffin was placed in St Clement's Church, it immediately became a place of pilgrimage, as two scaldic poems from the 1030s indicate. The first, *Glælognskvida* by Torarin Lovtunga, begins with a description of the saint's incorrupt body with his hair and nails growing. This was the greatest miracle of all, a direct sign of God's mercy. Then we hear how bells rang and candles were lit by themselves without help by human hands, and how the blind and crippled walked away seeing and healthy after praying at Olav's shrine. The second poem, *Erfidråpa* by Sigvat Thordsson, is addressed to King Svein and advises him to pray to St Olav and accept his holiness if he wants keep his power.¹⁶

But this good advice was in vain: By 1035, the public sentiment had turned so much against King Svein and his dominant mother Ælfgifu that they left the country. A group of Norwegian magnates went to Russia and brought the young Magnus Olavsson back to Norway, and he was acclaimed as king of Norway the same year. Fortunately for him, King Knud died in November 1035, creating a power vacuum in his Anglo-Danish empire. King Magnus was therefore able to reign in Norway until his death in 1047, and from 1042 he was also king of Denmark after the death of King Knud III (Hardeknud), the last son of King Knud the Great. From 1046, King Magnus shared the throne with his half-uncle Harald the Hardruler (d. 1066), who returned from Constantinople with a great treasure that he split with Magnus.

King Magnus died in Denmark, and his body was brought all the way to Nidaros and buried in St Clement's Church, thus establishing the first royal dynastic burial church in Norway.¹⁷

¹⁶ Else Mundal and Lars Boje Mortensen, "Erkebispesetet i Nidaros – arnestad og verksted for olavslitteraturen," in *Ecclesia Nidrosiensis 1153–1537. Søkelys på Nidaroskirkens og Nidarosprovinsens historie*, ed. Steinar Imsen (Trondheim: Tapir akademisk forlag, 2003), 354–7.

¹⁷ Snorri Sturlusson, *Heimskringla*, vol. 3, *Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar*, ch. 30.

St Olav's Church

According to *Heimskringla*, King Magnus began to build a new royal residence in Nidaros with a stone hall and a stone church dedicated to his saintly father, but he died before either were completed. These were the first known stone buildings in Norway. The church was placed on the site of the shed where Olav's coffin lay hidden during the night after his death. King Harald the Hardruler completed both buildings, but converted the hall into a church dedicated to St Gregory.¹⁸ The coffin of St Olav, which by now was covered with silver and gold was transferred to St Olav's Church when it was completed, probably c.1050.

St Mary's Church

This residence was not used by the king for long, if at all. King Harald established a new royal residence some hundred meters further south along the river and built a stone church there dedicated to St Mary. When it was completed, the shrine of St Olav was transferred to this church. This took place before King Harald's death in the Battle at Stamford Bridge outside York in 1066. The year after the battle, King Harald's body was brought across the North Sea and buried in this church. Harald probably intended St Mary's to become a royal burial church with the shrine of his holy half-brother as its center, but this was not to be.

The Holy Trinity Church (Christchurch)

Harald's son King Olav III the Peaceful (r. 1067–1093) inherited the throne, and he built a large new stone church in the royal residence, close to St Mary's Church, which his father had erected. It was dedicated to the Holy Trinity but usually called the Christchurch, and it became the predecessor of the present-day Nidaros Cathedral. According to the saga, its altar was placed on the site of St Olav's grave from 1030 to 1031.¹⁹ The tradition of the high altar standing above St Olav's grave is at best a pious fraud [*pia fraus*] which was not uncommon in the Middle Ages. When the ground below the altar was investigated in 1872, two medieval altar foundations

¹⁸ Snorri Sturlusson, *Heimskringla*, vol. 3, *Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar*, ch. 38.

¹⁹ Snorri Sturlusson, *Heimskringla*, vol. 2, *Óláfs saga helga*, ch. 245.

were found, resting on three large, parallel slabs. These were lifted with great excitement, but below them was no trace of a grave, only a thick layer of clay.²⁰

The cathedral stands on the highest point of the Nidarnes peninsula, and archaeological excavations next to it in 1995 and 2005 uncovered the remains of several large wooden buildings here dating to the tenth and eleventh century. This was not a lonely and desolate place in 1030, but the center of a manor or large farm. It is possible then, that the real grave site was located on the sandbanks 200–300m further south by the river which was out of view, but a large stone church could not be built there. The whole location was thus transferred to the most prominent building site in the area, which formed the western part of the extensive royal residence.

When the Christchurch was completed, some time before King Olav III died in 1093, the shrine of St Olav was transferred to this church from St Mary's, and placed above the altar. The remains of his son, King Magnus Olavsson, were also transferred to this church.²¹ King Olav III died in the south-eastern part of Norway, but his body was brought all the way to Nidaros and buried in the Christchurch, as were almost all Norwegian kings during the next hundred years.

The foundation was thus laid for the Christchurch to become a dynastic royal mausoleum, which without doubt was the intention of King Olav III. He had chosen not to expand St Mary's, his father's church, but rather to build the larger Christchurch next to it, justifying this move by claiming that the royal saint had now returned to his original grave site. The saint's grave and shrine formed the nucleus of almost all royal burials in Norway during the twelfth century, until the tradition was discontinued by King Sverre and his descendants who chose to be buried in Bergen.

The importance of returning the saint to his presumed grave site is an interesting feature. In the case of older royal saints, e.g. St Edmund and St Oswald, their original burial sites did not attract the same importance in their cult as the churches where their relics finally came to rest. In the case of the two other Nordic royal saints St Knud and St Erik, their graves also did not attract the same importance. Their relics were kept in churches built close by, but not above, their original burial sites. Opposed to the Christchurch with St Olav's shrine, the churches of St Knud and St Erik did not attract the burials of their medieval descendants – a feature demonstrating the weaker position they retained in Denmark and Sweden respectively. Instead, the Danish royal mausoleum was formed around the grave of a third royal saint: Duke Knud Lavard, the

²⁰ Otto Krefting, "Supplement til en i 1865 i Thronhjems Domkirke foretagen Undersøgelse," in *Foreningen til norske Fortidsmindesmærkers Bevaring Aarsberetning for 1872* (Kristiania: Carl C. Werners & Comp's Bogtrykkeri, 1873).

²¹ King Magnus was reburied outside the south wall of the chancel, but when the chancel was replaced by the octagon c.1200 the grave site was incorporated into the new building, situated under the south ambulatory. See Øystein Ekroll, "Magnus 1. Olavsson kaldet Magnus den Gode," in *Danske Kongegrave*, ed. Karin Kryger (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Forlag, 2014), 157–67.

son of King Erik the Good, who was murdered in 1131 and buried in Ringsted Abbey Church on Zealand. His son King Valdemar (r. 1154–1182), who was not yet born when his father was killed, managed to have his father canonized by the pope in 1170 after Valdemar emerged victorious from a bloody civil war. Ringsted Church was rebuilt and rededicated for this occasion, and as a part of the celebrations Valdemar's seven year old son, the later King Knud VI (r. 1182–1202), was anointed and crowned. This was the first Danish coronation, which helped to establish the church at Ringsted as the dynastic burial and coronation church of Denmark, with the shrine of the holy ancestor as the focal point. Until 1319, most Danish kings were buried in this church in front of Knud's shrine, which became the Danish parallel to the Christchurch in Nidaros.²²

There are obvious parallels between how the royal families of Norway and Denmark in the 1160s consciously constructed their legitimacy and tried to consolidate their power by establishing an alliance with the Church by creating a triangle of royal saint, mausoleum, and anointment and coronation. This was not necessarily a direct reflection of the practise in the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem, but a close parallel, as most of the Latin kings were crowned and buried in the Holy Sepulchre Church, underlining their status as servants and vassals of Christ.²³

The Cult of St Olav at the New Metropolitan See of Nidaros

In July 1152, Cardinal Nicholas Brekespear (c.1100–1159) arrived in Norway with the papal mandate to establish two new archbishoprics in Norway and Sweden respectively. The cardinal made his way north to Nidaros, and during the winter of 1152/1153 the archbishopric of Nidaros was formally established as the second Nordic archbishopric after Danish Lund (1104). Bishop Jon of Stavanger was elected as the first archbishop, invested with the pallium the cardinal had brought from Rome.

Leaving Norway, Cardinal Nicholas traveled to Sweden in order to establish a third Nordic archbishopric consisting of Sweden and Finland, but his successful visit to Norway stands in contrast to the situation he met in Sweden. The various Swedish factions were unable to agree on the location of the metropolitan seat, and the cardinal had to leave Sweden without completing his task. He left the pallium in the care of the archbishop of Lund with a mandate to invest the first archbishop.

²² Jens Fleischer, "Danske kongegrave i et europæisk perspektiv," in *Danske kongegrave*, ed. Karin Kryger (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanæum Forlag, 2014), 28.

²³ Denys Pringle, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem. A Corpus. Volume III: The Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 16.

In spite of this setback, Cardinal Nicholas' expedition was still judged successful enough to elect him pope shortly after his return to Rome, under the name of Hadrian IV.²⁴ It took another eleven years before Sweden finally received its own archbishop with Old Uppsala as the metropolitan seat. One important reason for this was the lack of a strong and stable monarchy in Sweden that could play a decisive role in the process.

Another difference between the two countries was that Sweden lacked the relics of a major saint which helped to create an undisputed religious centre in the country in the way that Nidaros already had been for more than a century in Norway. Ironically, one of the two kings who ruled Sweden during the cardinal's visit, Erik Jevardsson (c.1120–1160) was to become this saint a few years later. As a result, the construction of a large new metropolitan cathedral on the new location of Östra Aros (today Uppsala) began only in the 1270s, when Nidaros Cathedral was in the final stages of its completion. Östra Aros was the site of the martyrdom of King Erik in 1160, whose shrine became the focal point of the new cathedral. The new cathedral of Uppsala was not placed on the actual site of Erik's martyrdom, but some 50m further north. A smaller chapel dedicated to the saint was built on the presumed site of his martyrdom.²⁵

However, the cult of St Erik took a long time to spread outside the *Svealand* region surrounding Uppsala and Stockholm. A conflict between the chapters of Uppsala and Nidaros in the 1340s demonstrates this. For centuries, the inhabitants of North Sweden (*Norrland*) had voluntarily paid a special tax to St Olav and the Nidaros Cathedral, but now the Uppsala chapter wanted this tax directed to their cathedral which was in need of building funds. But the population of this province was unwilling to desert St Olav and naturally, the Nidaros chapter protested vehemently. The matter went all the way to the papal curia. To strengthen their argument and win over the stubborn northerners, the Uppsala chapter established a new altar dedicated to St Olav and a large statue of the saint was placed in the north portal of the nave, facing the northern regions. Eventually, it seems that the Uppsala chapter emerged victorious from this strife.²⁶

²⁴ Erik Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein – Statsmann og kirkebygger* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1996), 64.

²⁵ Ronnie Carlsson, "Sankt Eriks kapell," in *Sveriges kirker*, ed. Christian Lovén (Uppsala: Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitetsakademien och Riksantikvarieämbetet, 2010), 379–383. For medieval interpretations of this site and its significance, see Chapter 24 (Biörn Tjällén), 520–33.

²⁶ Ingrid Lundegårdh, "Kampen om den norrländske Olavskulten," in *Helgonet i Nidaros. Olavskult och kristnande i Norden*, ed. Lars Rumar (Stockholm: Risarkivet, 1997), 129.

The Archbishopric and the Cult of St Olav

As a part of the Nidaros celebrations in 1153, the Icelandic priest and poet Einarr Skúlason (c.1100–after 1159) was commissioned to create a large poem of 71 verses describing the life and miracles of St Olav. Einarr recited his poem in Christchurch Cathedral in the presence of the three kings who were sharing the throne at the time. When the recital ended, the cathedral was filled with a wonderful scent – a sign that the saint was present and approved of the poem.²⁷

Einarr called his poem *Geisli*, which translates as “sunbeam” or “ray of light,” thus indicating one important theme in the St Olav cult: his similarity with Christ and the parallels between their passions and miracles. Both Christ and St Olav healed the blind, mute and lame, and the sun is said to have eclipsed when they both died. Einarr also described other miracles taking place right up to his own time, and he dwelt especially on St Olav appearing in the battle between the Byzantines and the invading Turkish Pechenegs during the reign of Emperor Alexios I Komnenos (r. 1081–1118). This happened probably in 1091, when the Scandinavian or Varangian Imperial Guard saved the Byzantines in the battle with the Pechenegs. After this victory, a church dedicated to St Olav was built in Constantinople in gratitude for his assistance, and precious gifts were sent to Nidaros Cathedral.²⁸

Geisli marks a transition point in the cult of St Olav, giving the first indications of a comprehensive cult with a clear aim. The further development of the cult was undoubtedly the brainchild of the second archbishop, Eystein Erlendsson (c.1120–1188), who was the chancellor [*fehirdi*] of King Inge, and appointed archbishop in 1157. After traveling to Rome to receive his pallium, Eystein reigned until his death 30 years later in January 1188.²⁹ Until 1180, when Sverre Sigurdsson, the new pretender to the throne, gained the upper hand and Archbishop Eystein went into exile for three years, the archbishop enjoyed free hands to build and develop the cult of St Olav. In addition, Archbishop Eystein also performed the first coronation in Scandinavia in Bergen in 1164, placing all his prestige behind the new child-king Magnus Erlingsson (r.1156–1184) and his father Erling Ormsson *skakki* (“Wry-neck”, d. 1179) in exchange for wide-ranging economic and legal privileges for the new archdiocese.³⁰

During Archbishop Eystein’s reign, the permanent framework of the cult of St Olav was created. The liturgy – *liber ordinarius* – and the music – *officio* – were partly

²⁷ Knut Ødegård, “Geisli, det guddomelege ljuset,” in *Geisli. Gjendiktning ved Knut Ødegård* (Trondheim: Tapir Akademisk Forlag, 2003), 22.

²⁸ *Passio Olavi*, 23.

²⁹ The saga tells that he was appointed by the king right after the death of Archbishop Jon in 1157. The inscription states, however, that the chapel was dedicated on 26 November 1161, in the first year of his episcopacy.

³⁰ For the political manoeuvres of Erling Ormsson, see Chapter 6 (Pål Berg Svenungsen), 96–112.

compiled from older versions and partly newly written to fit the special circumstances of the new archbishopric, compiled in the *Ordo Nidrosiensis*.³¹ The Office of St Olav contains the famous sequence *Lux illuxit laetabunda* which uses the same symbolism as the poem *Geisli*, i.e. comparing St Olav with the divine light streaming over the world, which is a metaphor used for Christ.

During the 1160s and 1170s, the miracles and a short hagiography of St Olav were also collected and partly written by Archbishop Eystein, who himself narrated some of the miracles and was the object of one of them. This collection is today known as the *Passio et miracula beati Olavi*.³² To aid the clergy in dealing with local situations not covered by the Canon Law, the archbishop also compiled the *Canones Nidrosienses*, consisting of a large number of questions sent to the pope and the pope's answers to them.³³

Archbishop Eystein also introduced a new Church Law for the province.³⁴ In connection with the coronation of the young King Magnus, Archbishop Eystein introduced a new Law of Royal Succession and the concept of St Olav as the eternal king of Norway [*rex perpetuus Norvegie*]. The earthly king received his crown as a vassal of St Olav, and swore that after his death, his crown should be sacrificed to Nidaros Cathedral.³⁵ This act of sacrificing the royal crown as a symbol of vassalage was a new tradition that originated in the crusader kingdom of Jerusalem, where the kings were vassals of Christ.³⁶

Archbishop Eystein as Augustinus

Altare hoc dedicatum est ab Augustino archiepiscopo . . . begins the long dedication inscription in the Chapel of St John the Baptist, dedicated on 26 November 1161. Writing in Latin, Archbishop Eystein used the name Augustinus, which was a

31 Agnar Sandvik, "Messe- og tidesang i den norske middelalderkirken," in *Nidaros erkebispestol og bispesete 1153–1953*, ed. Arne Fjellbu (Oslo: Forlaget Land og Kirke, 1955), 635–58; Gisela Attinger and Andreas Haug, eds., *The Nidaros Office of the Holy Blood. Liturgical Music in Medieval Norway*, Senter for middelalderstudier, skrifter nr. 16 (Trondheim: Tapir Academic Press, 2005); Eyolf Østrem, "The Early Liturgy of St. Olaf," in *Gregorian Chant and Medieval Music. Proceedings from The Nordic Festival and Conference of Gregorian Chant Trondheim, St. Olaf's Wake 1997*, ed. Audun Dybdahl, et al., Senter for middelalderstudier (Trondheim: Tapir Academic Press, 1998), 43–59.

32 Frederick Metcalfe, *Passio et Miracula Beati Olavi* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1881); *Passio Olavi*.

33 Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein*, 135–9.

34 Two such laws are mentioned in the sources, named *Grágás* (Grey Goose) and *Gullfjær* (Gold Feather) after the codexes containing these laws. See Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein*, 131–3.

35 Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein*, 122–8.

36 Trond Norén Isaksen, *Hellig krig om Norges krone* (Oslo: Forlaget historie & kultur, 2017).

conscious choice on his part, as it is not a translation of his Norse name. The reason is obvious: Eystein was himself an Augustinian, probably educated at the Abbey of St Victor in Paris – as were his two immediate successors.³⁷ During Eystein's reign, six Augustinian houses were founded in Norway, at least two of them by Eystein himself. One was the priory of *Sancta sedes* across the river from the cathedral of Nidaros, where the archbishop was the titular abbot.

During the twelfth century, the Augustinians formed an intellectual elite of Western Europe, and the Abbey of St Victor was the greatest centre of learning. The teachers of the abbey had a strong interest in Ezekiel's prophesy of the Heavenly Jerusalem and contemporaneously developed a close connection to Crusader Jerusalem. All the main religious sites in Jerusalem, like the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the *Templum Domini* on the Temple Mount, St Mary's Church on Mount Sion, and the Ascension Church on the Mount of Olives had Augustinian houses attached, which gave the Augustinians enormous power and influence over the holy sites.³⁸

Through the movement of the canons between the various abbeys, the network of the Augustinian Order must have played a vital role for the transmission of ideological conceptions of Jerusalem to the west. The Abbey of St Victor was the hub of this movement, and the later archbishops of Nidaros must have received important impulses and inspiration during their stay in the abbey.³⁹

Nidaros as a Pilgrim Town

When studied in a historical context, one can see that by 1200 not only the cathedral, but the whole town of Nidaros and its nearest environs was transformed into a liturgical landscape which would have been easily recognizable to pilgrims and travellers coming from afar. The parallels with other places of pilgrimage are striking. The leading clerics of Nidaros clearly had a vision of how they wanted to develop the town on par with other places of pilgrimage, and Jerusalem was the ultimate model for a pilgrim town in the twelfth century.

When approaching the town by road from the south, the location on the hill of Byåsen where the travelers got their first glimpse of the cathedral and the town, was in 1179 called *Feginsbrekka*, a Norse translation of the Latin *Mons Gaudi* (Mount Joy).⁴⁰ The fact that this Latin name was translated into Norse shows that the knowledge

³⁷ Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein*, 49.

³⁸ Ekroll, "Olavsrelikvier," 326–328.

³⁹ It is unknown if any of them ever visited the Holy Land, or whether any Augustinians who had lived in the Holy Land ever came to Nidaros.

⁴⁰ For further discussion of this and other similar locations, see Chapter 10 (Anthony Bale), 191–7.

about this kind of pilgrimage place was established not just among the clergy, but also among the laypeople. This location was probably marked, perhaps by a cross.

Further on along the hill, the road passed under the walls of the royal castle of Sverresborg or Zion from c.1180, situated on a large rocky outcrop. From the road, the town was not yet visible, but from the keep of the castle the king's men could observe the town and all the ships arriving and leaving its busy river harbour. A few minutes later, the pilgrims stood on the brink of the steep hill of Steinberget, offering a wonderful view of the whole town situated on the flat peninsula below the hill, strung out along the lower stretch of the river Nid.

During the twelfth century, the town had grown quickly. In addition to the large royal and archiepiscopal building projects, 10–12 smaller parish or guild churches were built. The many whitewashed stone churches but especially the cathedral rose above the low wooden houses with their green turf roofs, and the town was surrounded by three monasteries: towards the north the Benedictine Abbey of St Lawrence at Munkholmen island, towards the east St Mary's nunnery at Bakke east of the river and to the south the Augustinian priory *Sancta Sedes* south of the river. These three monasteries with their inhabitants living in prayer formed a spiritual ring of defense around the town. Towards the west, a protective castle wall of earth and wood was built across the narrow neck of the peninsula, and only after passing through its gate, the traveller could enter the town, even though the western half of the peninsula still consisted of open fields with a few houses.

The traveler's gaze must invariably have been drawn towards the large complex of stone buildings in the riverbend on the south side of the town, their height and size signaling that here lived the high and mighty. In the middle of this complex, on the highest point of the peninsula, rose a church far larger than the rest, even if the jagged walls and lack of roofs showed that some of it was still clearly under construction. This was the destination of the long walk, the cathedral which was the resting-place of the saint (Fig. 14.2).

Walking towards the cathedral precinct, a traveller would see many things that were instantly recognizable. The precinct was surrounded by a wall with gates, providing some extra security. On the south side of the cathedral rose the impressive stone walls of the archbishop's residence, while on the north side a cluster of large houses and halls designated the location of the canons' residences. East of the cathedral, between it and the river, the halls and towers of the king's residence were visible. To the south, a very long wooden bridge provided an easy passage across the river not just for travelers from the east, but also for farmers bringing their produce to the town and for the workers and animals transporting stone on sleighs from the quarries east of the town for the ever-expanding cathedral. On the north side of the cathedral, a cluster of isolated buildings marked the location of St Mary's hospital for exhausted or sick pilgrims.

Arriving by sea, the ship would enter the town's harbour situated in the lower part of the river. A large cross was raised on the point where the River Nid joined



Fig. 14.2: Nidaros Cathedral, seen from the NE in 1872. The chapter house is restored, and the restoration of the octagon (to the left) is yet to begin. The Baroque cupola with its open lantern was soon after replaced by the present pointed spire, which is a reconstruction of the medieval roof.

the fjord, signalling that this was a Christian town. A tall watchtower of stone protected the river harbour against enemies, and behind it lay the compact wooden town with its narrow streets and passages and the market place.

All in all, except some differences in building materials, everything would have been easily and comfortably recognizable to all pilgrims who had visited other cathedral towns on his or her way north. It must have felt very reassuring to arrive here to relative safety and comfort, after the long weeks spent walking through often terrifying and unpopulated mountains and narrow valleys or sailing along the rocky coast to reach their destination.

The Zion of the North

The castle *Zion* or Sverresborg was built by King Sverre Sigurdsson (1151–1202), who in 1177 emerged from the deep forests near Sweden with a band of ragged brigands in birch-bark shoes, claiming to be the illegitimate son of King Sigurd Munn

(r.1136–1155).⁴¹ Two years later, he won his first great victory: he slew Earl Erling Ormsson *skakki* in a battle by the cathedral in Nidaros, causing King Magnus to flee to Denmark and Archbishop Eystein to England. To consolidate his newly acquired power, Sverre hurriedly built his castle on the rock. By naming his castle *Zion* like King David's castle just outside Jerusalem, King Sverre consciously alluded to the Jerusalem model, thus projecting the conflict between Saul and David, two Old Testament monarchs, directly into the contemporary political situation in Norway.

Sverre consciously cast himself in the role of King David, who received a heavenly mandate to rebel against a false king (Saul) and the prophet (Samuel) who had appointed and anointed Saul. This was a very intentionally drawn parallel with Sverre's own struggle with King Magnus Erlingsson and Archbishop Eystein Erlendsson, who had replaced the old law of royal succession in order to have Magnus recognized as a lawful king.⁴² King Magnus was cast in the role of King Saul who had forfeited his kingdom because he had lost his royal legitimacy, even if he was anointed by the Prophet Samuel, i.e. Archbishop Eystein, who was then cast as the wrongdoer who had anointed the wrong man.

Sverre also claimed that as a youth, St Olav had appeared in a dream and given him his own sword and battle standard, i.e. making him his heir.⁴³ In 1177, Sverre had another dream of an old man, who was the prophet Samuel, claiming to be sent by God. In the dream Samuel anointed Sverre's hands with holy chrism which gave Sverre a divine mandate of kingship.⁴⁴

The most important conclusion we can draw from this is that the Holy City of Jerusalem was a highly relevant model for twelfth-century Nidaros, in its urban development, legitimation of political power, and in the developing cult of St Olav. This is supported by the conscious drawing of parallels between St Olav and Christ, in liturgy as well as architecture.

The Second Shrine of St Olav

With the great expansion of his cult, the old shrine of St Olav, which consisted of his plain wooden coffin covered with decorated sheets of gilt silver, was not deemed

⁴¹ King Sigurd was killed in 1155, aged 22. According to the Saga of King Sverre, partly dictated by the king himself, Sverre grew up on the Faroe Islands and became a priest before claiming the throne. The birch-bark shoes gave his men the unflattering name *birkebeiner* (birch-legs), by which they are still known.

⁴² According to the old law, all sons of a king were lawful heirs to the kingship, be they legitimate or not. The new law stated that a king first and foremost had to be born in wedlock.

⁴³ *The Saga of King Sverri of Norway*, ed. and trans. J. Sephton, London: David Nutt, 1899, *Sverris Saga*.

⁴⁴ *The Saga of King Sverri*, ch. 10, *Sverris Saga*.

sufficient enough. It was probably in the 1160s or 1170s that a second shrine containing the first shrine was made. Snorri Sturluson became well acquainted with this shrine during his stay in Nidaros in the winter 1219/1220 as the guest of Earl Skule Baardsson (1189–1240). Writing *Heimskringla* ten years later, Snorri included a description of this shrine in the saga of King Magnus the Good, to whom he attributed it:

King Magnús had a shrine made and ornamented with gold and silver and set with precious stones. And this shrine was both in size and its shape made in other respects like a coffin, except that there were legs underneath and on top the lid was shaped like a roof and up above it figureheads and a ridge. On the lid there are hinges at the back and hasps in front, and these are locked with a key.⁴⁵

This description fits exactly with the design of a group of small reliquaries in Iceland, Norway, and Northern Sweden which clearly were made as copies of St Olav's second shrine.⁴⁶

However, Snorri's dating of the church-shaped shrine must be incorrect. Shrines of this size do not belong to the mid-eleventh century but to the late twelfth or the thirteenth century. It is more likely that it was the oldest coffin from 1030 that King Magnus the Good covered with sheets of gilt silver. But then, who commissioned the second shrine, and why was Snorri told by the cathedral clergy that it was donated by King Magnus the Good (r. 1035–1047)? I believe that this was a white lie or *pia fraus*, and that it was another King Magnus – Magnus V Erlingsson – who donated the shrine some time between 1164 and 1184 as an act of gratitude for the archbishop's support.

There were also other Jerusalem relics in the cathedral. In 1110, King Sigurd Magnusson the Crusader obtained a piece of the True Cross for the cathedral in Jerusalem from King Baldwin.⁴⁷ In 1165, a golden ring containing some drops of the Holy Blood arrived in Nidaros, a costly gift best understood as a gift of gratitude after the coronation of Magnus in Bergen the year before.⁴⁸ After Magnus was killed and King Sverre founded a new dynasty, the cathedral clergy seems to have adapted to the new political situation by conveniently forgetting the recent King Magnus V and instead attribute the great shrine to St Olav's own son Magnus I, who was also buried in the cathedral.

⁴⁵ Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, vol. 3, *Magnúss saga ins goða*, ch. 10.

⁴⁶ Øystein Ekroll, "St. Olavs skrin i Nidaros," in *Ecclesia Nidrosiensis 1153–1537. Søkelys på Nidaroskirken og Nidarosprovinsens historie*, ed. Steinar Imsen, Senter for Middelalderstudier, NTNU, Skrifter, Bd. 15 (Trondheim: 2003), 328.

⁴⁷ Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, vol. 3, *Magnússona saga*, ch. 11. For this cross relic and its long and complicated way to Nidaros, see Chapter 8 (Lukas Raupp), 156–65.

⁴⁸ *Islandske Annaler indtil 1578*, ed. Gustav Storm, Christiania: Grøndahl & Søns Bogtrykkeri, 1888.

In several European countries, the 1160s and 1170s were important for the creation of new shrines for royal saints. During these two decades, a group of new royal saints were created, most of whom needed shrines. Most or perhaps all of these shrines were house-shaped, and a new and more splendid shrine for St Olav would fit well into this development.⁴⁹

According to independent descriptions from the Reformation period, there were then three shrines, one standing inside the other, “but the outer one had no bottom.” This was in fact a protective “cover” which had to be hoisted up by the help of ropes and pulleys and is a parallel to important English shrines like St Cuthbert’s in Durham, St Edmund’s in Bury or St Thomas Becket’s in Canterbury.⁵⁰

Stiklestad, a Golgotha of the North?

Nidaros was not the only place of pilgrimage associated with St Olav. His site of martyrdom at Stiklestad clearly played a vital role in his cult, even if the written sources are sparse. The *Passio et miracula beati Olavi* tells that a stone church was built on the site, and the boulder or stone on which the king leaned when he was killed was incorporated in the altar so that it was partly visible, complete with blood stains from the saint.⁵¹ The dedication of the church, which is still standing at Stiklestad, must have taken place in the early 1160s, as its chancel is strikingly similar to the Chapel of St John the Baptist from 1161 in the Nidaros cathedral. In the twelfth century, two or more crosses stood on the battlefield, probably marking important locations.⁵² In the sixteenth century we hear that the supposed barn or shed where the king’s body was hidden was still standing, and the king’s blood was still visible on its walls.⁵³

The *Passio Olavi* describes three miracles that took place in the church which was built on this site. When the church was dedicated, a king staying at the royal manor of Haug, not far from the church, had a life-threateningly infection in his leg. His servants carried him to the church and placed his leg against the stone on which St Olav

⁴⁹ Among these new shrines for royal saints could be mentioned King Erik of Sweden (1160), King Edward the Confessor of England (1163), the Magi, venerated as kings (1164), Charlemagne (1165), and the two Knuds of Denmark, the king and the duke (1170). See Chapter 5 (Øystein Ekroll), 92.

⁵⁰ Ekroll, “St. Olavs skrin i Nidaros,” 331–4.

⁵¹ *Passio Olavi*, 47.

⁵² The standing monument from 1807 replaced an older monument in a tradition going back to the Middle Ages. A hillock close to it is called *Korshaugen* (Cross Hill), indicating the existence of a cross here once, and below it runs *Korsbekken* (Cross Brook).

⁵³ *Historisk-topografiske Skrifter om Norge og norske Landsdele forfattede i Norge i det 16de Aarhundrede*, ed. Gustav Storm, Christiania: A.W. Brøggers Bogtrykkeri, 1895.

once had died, and he was immediately cured.⁵⁴ In the second miracle a blind woman regained her eyesight in the church, and in the third, a deaf and mute young man was cured when he fell asleep in the church and St Olav appeared before him in a dream.⁵⁵

Regardless of the historical truth in these stories, during the Middle Ages Stiklestad was a location where the last day of St Olav's life could be experienced and relived by pilgrims who would even touch the famous stone. With the crosses on the hillocks, the blood-dyed stone and the small shed resembling a burial chamber, the site seemed to be developed in a way which echoed the lay-out of Golgotha. Stiklestad would also be a natural stop for pilgrims heading from Nidaros from the east and the north.

Jerusalem in Nidaros Cathedral

The importance of St Olav's grave for the development of Nidaros Cathedral can hardly be overstated. In 1887, the sharp-minded state antiquarian Nicolay Nicolaysen correctly stated that "the grave is the red thread running through the history of the cathedral."⁵⁶ For nine centuries, the high altar has been the fixed and stable point in a cathedral which has lived through numerous alterations. The large building campaigns undertaken on the cathedral during the Middle Ages can only be understood in the context of its multiple roles as a pilgrimage church, a metropolitan church with a large chapter of canons, a royal and aristocratic burial church, a coronation church, and the cathedral of the Nidaros diocese.

Very few major Christian churches combine the grave and the shrine of the saint. The vast majority of relics of saints were transferred to other sites and churches, and the bodies or bones of most saints were also divided up and scattered across large areas. It is remarkable that so much effort was put into presenting the high altar of the Christchurch as standing on the very grave site of St Olav, when he was in reality buried on the riverbank c.200 m to the south.

According to a late medieval saga, shortly after Olav's canonization a wooden chapel was built over this grave on the riverbank.⁵⁷ Building a chapel over the site of martyrdom or the grave is a parallel to other royal saints, e.g. St Knud Lavard in Denmark, St Edmund in England and St Erik in Sweden. But in Nidaros we hear

⁵⁴ *Passio Olavi*, 47. A stone which was found under the floor during the church's restoration in 1928–1929, and which some believe was the stone described in the saga, has recently been inserted in a niche in the back of the altar.

⁵⁵ *Passio Olavi*, 48, 74.

⁵⁶ Nicolay Nicolaysen, "Atter om Thronhjems domkirke," *Historisk Tidsskrift* 2. rk., no. 6. bd. (1887): 44.

⁵⁷ Johan Hadorph, *S. Oluffz Saga paa Swenske Rijm*, Stockholm, 1675.

nothing more about this chapel. Instead, the gravesite and the shrine became combined at the high altar in the cathedral.

It is very possible that the “transferral” of the gravesite from the riverbank to the cathedral took place only in the late twelfth century when the octagon was under construction, in order to underline its close resemblance to the Holy Sepulchre Church in Jerusalem. After all, the first mention of this connection is found in Snorri’s *Heimskringla* from c.1230, and by then this was clearly an established “truth” on par with the story of who donated the second shrine of St Olav. If so, it underlines the conscious effort of linking St Olav to Christ by presenting the grave and the shrine on the same spot and in the same building, and suppressing the possible original location of St Olav’s grave.⁵⁸

The greatest attraction of St Olav was the claim that his body was preserved in an incorrupt state. At the time of the Reformation, various sources attest that a complete body lay in the shrine, but later historians have suggested that this was not the real St Olav, but a later replacement after the original body was cut up for relics.⁵⁹ Interestingly, not a single known medieval source mentions an undisputed body relic of St Olav, only *brandea* (secondary or contact relics). Most of these relics consist of pieces of his shirt or standard, both of which were handily preserved as relics in the Nidaros Cathedral.⁶⁰ In order to experience the body relics and the spiritual power of St Olav one therefore had to venture to Nidaros Cathedral and pray at the shrine containing his incorrupt body, a powerful argument in favour of undertaking a hazardous pilgrimage to the northernmost shrine in Christendom.

Among the most important churches combining grave and altar/shrine are of course the Holy Sepulchre Church in Jerusalem, and Canterbury Cathedral in England, where the shrine of St Thomas Becket stood since the 1180s in the feretory built directly over the site of his temporary grave in the old crypt below. In Rome, the graves of the apostles Peter and Paul are still preserved under the high altars of the Basilica di San Pietro in the Vatican and in San Paolo fuori le Mura. In contrast, St Erik of Sweden and St Knud the King of Denmark were enshrined in a different church a short distance from their site of martyrdom.

58 When the site of the high altar was excavated in 1872, two altar foundations were found. According to the excavator, the older and smaller foundation belonged to the eleventh-century chancel, while the upper was contemporary with the octagon. It measured 4.2 x 4.2 m, which indicates that it could have supported some kind of edicule or symbolic burial chamber as well as the altar and shrine base. See Krefting, “Supplement til en i 1865 i Thronhjems Domkirke foretagen Undersøgelse”.

59 Grethe Authén Blom, *Helgenkonge og helgenkrin. En kongeskikkelse i forvandling fra sagatid til reformasjonstid*, Småskriftserien (Trondheim: Nidaros Domkirkes Restaureringsarbeiders forlag, 1994), 23.

60 Ekroll, “Olavsrelikvier,” 266–72. A silver reliquary contained the shirts (NB! plural) of St Olav.

The New Cathedral

The establishment of the new archbishopric in 1153 unleashed a cultural activity and creativity in Nidaros during the next 30–40 years which was never surpassed. Before 1200, the old Christchurch had been greatly expanded into a cross-shaped Romanesque cathedral in which the old Christchurch was retained as the east arm.

An unusual feature of the cathedral is that it contains double chapels. The north and south transepts have floor-level chapels protruding towards the east, but there are also upper chapels on the triforium level above them. In the south transept, the altar of the lower chapel was consecrated by Archbishop Eystein on 26 November 1161, as attested by a carved dedication inscription running around three walls. It was dedicated to St John the Baptist, St Vincent, and St Silvester. The cult of these three saints was encouraged during the Gregorian reform, and connects the archbishop directly to the reform movement. The first two saints stood up against tyrants and lost their lives for their faith, while Silvester was the pope who it was (falsely) believed to have given the temporal power by Emperor Constantine the Great, which placed the pope above the emperor, *sacerdotum* above *regnum*.⁶¹

The upper chapel, situated above the Chapel of St John the Baptist, demonstrates a direct link to Jerusalem. It was dedicated to St Olav and St Stephen on 5 January. This dedication inscription sadly omits the year, but it cannot be much later than the lower chapel, perhaps in the mid-1160s. The dedication inscription is carved into the east wall of the chapel and states that it was jointly dedicated to SANCTI STEPHANI PROTOMARTYRIS ET SANCTI OLAVI, relics of whom were contained in the altar together with CORPORE DOMINI, i.e. a consecrated host. The inscription explicitly connects the first Christian martyr with the first Norwegian martyr. Interestingly, the translation day of St Olav was 3 August, which was also the feast day for the invention of the relics of St Stephen in Jerusalem.⁶² This created a second connection between the two saints, which was clearly not coincidental. Describing King Olav's death in the battle of Stiklestad, the *Historia de antiquitate regum Norvagiensium* (History of the ancient Norwegian kings) written c.1180 in Nidaros by Theodoricus, also draws a parallel between St Stephen and St Olav. The author underlines how Stephen prayed for those who stoned him and how Olav gave donations to those who later would kill him, as depicted on an altar frontal made in Nidaros around 1300, to which I will return below (Fig. 14.3).⁶³

⁶¹ Eirik Vandvik, *Erkebiskop Eystein som politiker*, Utgitt ved 800-årsminnet for vigselen av Johanneskapellet 26. november 1961 (Trondheim: Nidaros Domkirkes Restaureringsarbeider, 1961.) 4–6.

⁶² I am grateful to Mr. Eirik Steenhoff for pointing this out to me.

⁶³ Theodoricus Monachus, *An Account of the Ancient History of the Norwegian Kings*, in *Text Series 11*, trans. David McDougall and Ian McDougall, London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1998.

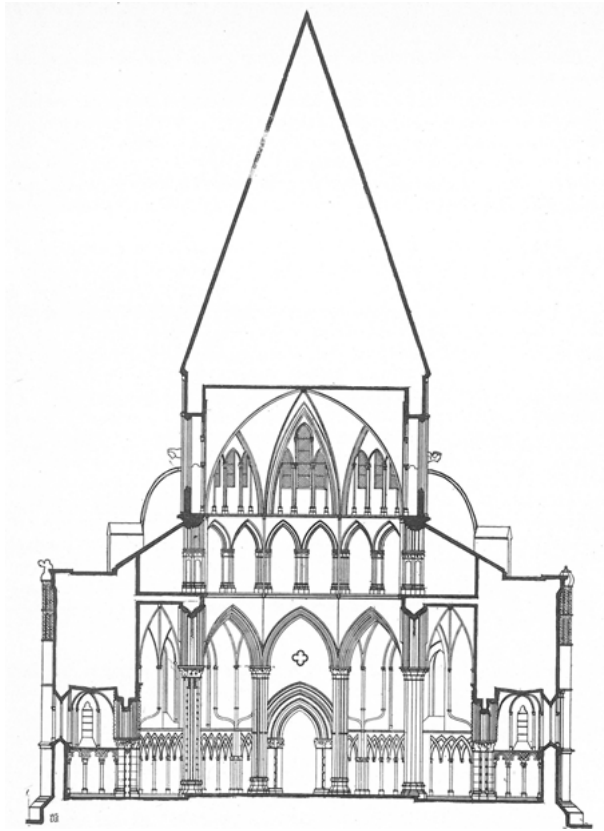


Fig. 14.3: Vertical section of the Nidaros Cathedral octagon seen towards the East. Drawing by Hermann M. Schirmer, printed in Johan Meyer: *Domkirken i Trondhjem* (Trondhjem 1914), Fig. 10. In this reconstruction drawing, the triforium arches lack their detached shafts and tracery.

Crowning the Work: The Octagon

A cathedral is a physical construction, but also a spiritual one. Apart from Nidaros, it is doubtful whether any other cathedral in Scandinavia was designed as a place of pilgrimage, or any other cathedral where pilgrimage and the cult of a saint was so crucial for its existence.

In spite of the great rebuilding, architecturally the cathedral c.1200 did not stand out in a special way when compared to other contemporary cathedrals in Europe. The saint's shrine was still kept in the square eleventh-century choir which was cramped and presented many practical problems. The choir had become too narrow for the combination of the saint's growing status, the developing liturgy, the royal tombs, the number of clerics, and the ever-growing number of pilgrims. The emphasis now put on the similarities between St Olav and Christ in liturgy, literature, and iconography also necessitated an architectural expression which could physically visualize this connection.

There can be no doubt that without the cult of St Olav, Nidaros Cathedral would never have been built as large as it actually was. Most first-time modern visitors express surprise at finding such a large church so far north, and this experience must have been even more striking in the Middle Ages. Nor would the Metropolitan See of Norway have been placed in Nidaros, but rather in Bergen or Oslo which also had important cults of St Sunniva and St Hallvard respectively, if less popular than St Olav's.

The key to its symbolism and architecture is St Olav's double identity as king and martyr (*rex et martiris*). His martyr status was defined shortly after his death, even if he had fallen in battle fighting to the very end, while a Christian martyr should preferably receive death passively without resisting. The cult of St Olav gradually moulded the old warrior king and former pagan Viking into the more acceptable form of a humble Christian. His cult was partly modelled on older royal cults like those of St Edmund and St Oswald in England, but the greatest inspiration was clearly the worship of the Passion of Christ as it was developed in Jerusalem after the Crusader conquest of the city in 1099.

Nothing makes the cathedral stand out more from other cathedrals than its eastern termination – the *octagon* – which has no parallel in Northern Europe. No other saints or shrines in this part of Europe received anything like it around their graves or shrines, and any parallels or models for it must be searched for further away.⁶⁴

With the old single-aisled nave of the Christchurch becoming the new choir of the Romanesque cathedral, there was literally space for constructing a new eastern termination and an appropriate building around the grave and shrine of the royal saint. The dating of the commencement of the work on this impressive building part is disputed. The octagon is built in the shape of an Early Christian *martyrion* church with a centralized plan: a central room surrounded by an ambulatory. It was often believed that Archbishop Eystein got the inspiration for it during his English exile from 1180 to 1183, and that he started its construction immediately after his return to Nidaros.⁶⁵ The outer walls were probably built then. When completed, the central room of the octagon would have looked not unlike the round nave of the Temple Church in London which was consecrated no later than 1185, and perhaps already in 1163.⁶⁶ The octagon must have been completed no later than c.1210/1215.

⁶⁴ For a comprehensive study and analysis of the octagon, see my PhD thesis from 2015 (Øystein Ekroll, "The Octagonal Shrine Chapel of St Olav at Nidaros Cathedral: An Investigation of its Fabric, Architecture and International Context" (PhD Thesis, NTNU, 2015)).

⁶⁵ Gerhard Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim I-II. Kirkebygget i middelalderen* (Oslo: Forlaget Land og Kirke, 1965), 127–34.

⁶⁶ Christopher Wilson, "Gothic Architecture Transplanted: the Nave of the Temple Church in London," ed. Robert Griffith-Jones and David Park, *The Temple Church in London: History, Architecture, Art* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010), 16–45.

The ambulatory walls have pointed arches and openings which give them an impression of Gothic architecture, but the walls are extremely thick and solid, and a closer study of the details reveals that almost all of the ornaments belong to the Romanesque tradition.

Many of these ornaments derive from Classical architecture in general and Roman funerary architecture in particular, like the astragal, kymation and acanthus borders, laurel leaves, palmettes, dentil borders, and Ionic capitals. Those who designed the ambulatory walls clearly wanted a building which gave the visitor a clear association of a grave church resembling the Early Christian *martyrion* churches (Fig. 14.3).

The Holy Sepulchre Church and the Nidaros Octagon

These churches were often octagonal, deriving from the mausoleums of the Late Roman emperors, e.g. Diocletian's mausoleum in Split in present Croatia from c.300 CE. His successor Emperor Constantine the Great built several splendid churches, both basilicas and centralized churches. The latter design, including rotundas as well as octagons, was used especially for churches built above the graves of martyrs, with the Holy Sepulchre complex in Jerusalem as the most splendid example.

This Holy Sepulchre complex was a combination of three elements: a basilica, an atrium, and a vast rotunda with a raised central room surrounding the Tomb of Christ at its center. Constantine's masons isolated the chamber tomb by carving away the living rock surrounding it, leaving it as a freestanding and (probable) octagonal structure in the center of the rotunda.⁶⁷ Despite later destructions and rebuildings, much of the Constantinian structure of the Rotunda still stands today, including the ambulatory walls.

In my view, the ultimate inspiration for the design of the Nidaros octagon can be traced back to the Holy Sepulchre Church in Jerusalem and its appearance after its restoration by the Western crusaders which was completed c.1150. During this work, the Rotunda received the conical roof which it had until the fire of 1808.⁶⁸ The circular Anastasis was the most prestigious Christian site of pilgrimage in the twelfth century, and together with the octagonal Dome of the Rock, which the crusaders wrongly identified as Solomon's Temple and called *Templum Domini*, it formed the mental background for the construction of the Nidaros octagon which can be regarded as an amalgamation of these two buildings.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Virgilio C. Corbo, *Il Santo Sepolcro di Gerusalemme I–III* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1982); Martin Biddle, *The Tomb of Christ* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1982).

⁶⁸ Pringle, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem*, 20f.

⁶⁹ Ekroll, "The Octagonal Shrine Chapel of St Olav at Nidaros Cathedral," 354–8.

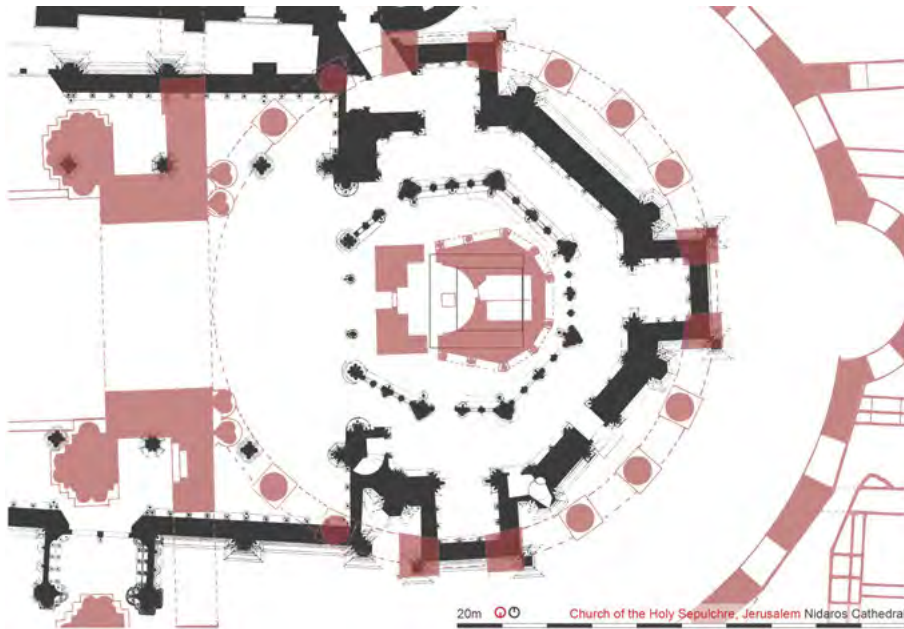


Fig. 14.4: The ground plan of the Holy Sepulchre Church rotunda (in red) interpolated on the plan of the Nidaros Cathedral octagon (in black). Note that the external diameter of the Nidaros ambulatory at ground level seems to be identical to the internal diameter of the HSC rotunda, and the slightly off-centre position of the altar above the gravesite of St Olav coincides with the similar position of the Tomb of Christ. Graphics by Samuel B. Feragen.

Even a superficial look makes clear the similarities in design between the rotunda and the Nidaros octagon c.1200, including the conical roof. But was this only a superficial similarity or can we find a deeper connection? By comparing the ground plans of both buildings, a very interesting picture emerges, especially when interpolating the plans in the same scale: the external diameter of the octagon at ground level is identical to the internal diameter of the arcade surrounding the edicule containing the Tomb of Christ, and the external diameter measured across the octagon chapels, measured at the ground level in the middle of the wall, is identical to the external diameter of this arcade. But the most interesting correlation comes when we interpolate the ground plans of the two buildings. On ground level, the external diameter of the octagon across the chapels is identical with the maximum diameter of the Anastasis arcade, and the outer diameter of the ambulatory is identical with the inner diameter of the Anastasis arcade (Fig. 14.4). This can hardly be a coincidence, and in the Middle Ages the concept of “copy” was different from today: a single feature or a converging measurement was enough for the contemporaries to call one building a copy of another.

The open space of the central room surrounding the Edicule was the easiest possible measurement to take. It could be measured with a rope, a chain, or a staff, but naturally these measurements were not as exact as moderne measuring methods.

In addition, the position of the altar in the Nidaros octagon, standing on the purported grave site of St Olav, fits exactly with the position of the tomb chamber in the Edicule. Neither of them are located in the center of the building, but are a little off-center so that the centerpoint of the building is occupied by the person performing the liturgy in front of the altar/tomb.

Conclusions and Continuations

The parallell between St Olav and Christ became even more emphasized in the following centuries. A good example is the well-known St Olav altar frontal which was made in Trondheim c.1300 and probably belonged to the Nidaros cathedral (Fig. 14.5). St Olav is depicted in the center, flanked by the symbols of the four evangelists, which is normal for depictions of Christ but highly unusual – probably unique – for a saint. The four scenes, one in each corner, depicting Olav's last days can just as well be read as analogous to the passion of Christ: Olav's dream of the ladder rising to heaven the night before the battle (upper left) relates to Jesus in Getsemane and to Jacob's dream of the angelic ladder. Olav riding to Stiklestad (lower left) alludes to Christ's entry into Jerusalem. Olav's death in battle (lower right) corresponds to Christ's crucifixion at Golgatha, and finally, Olav's translation (upper right) refers to Christ's unction and burial. This Christological analogy must have been approved among the clergy of the cathedral and thus had official sanction. The image of Olav had changed: instead of fighting to the end, Olav was now portrayed as throwing away his weapons and resignedly meeting death like a true Christian martyr should. When he died, the sun was said to turn dark, just like when Jesus died. There was indeed a solar eclipse in this region on 31 August, one month after the battle, and in popular tradition this eclipse was soon fused with the battle.⁷⁰

Contrary to popular belief, the Reformation of 1537 did not spell the end to the interest in St Olav. After being kept safely under lock for almost 30 years in Steinvikholm Castle, his body was brought back to the cathedral in 1564 and placed in an open grave inside the church. This took place during the power vacuum created by the retreat of the Swedish occupying forces. Four years later, however, by royal decree the grave was backfilled and made anonymous.

⁷⁰ This solar eclipse is mentioned in a poem about St Olav composed by Sigvat, the court scald of King Olav, which is referred to in Snorri Sturlusson, *Heimskringla*, vol. 2, *Óláfs saga helga* ch. 227.



Fig. 14.5: Altar frontal from c. 1300, Trondheim. Nidaros Cathedral. St Olav surrounded by the symbols of the four evangelists and scenes from his passion and death.

In 1611, a curious instance happened which perhaps connects the two St Olav sites of Stiklestad and Nidaros Cathedral. In the cathedral accounts of that year, a sum was paid to a mason for immuring “The Stone of St Olav” in a wall.⁷¹ The accounts do not tell what this stone was or where it was placed, but in the eighteenth century a large marble stone in the nave wall was identified as this special stone.⁷² The only stone clearly connected with St Olav was the the stone on which he died at Stiklestad. Was this stone brought from Stiklestad Church and united with the saint under the same roof, three generations after the Reformation? When the chancel of Stiklestad Church was restored in 1929, the altar area was excavated but the medieval

⁷¹ Trygve Lysaker, *Domkirken i Trondheim, Bind III. Fra katedral til sognkirke 1537–1869* (Oslo: Forlaget Land og Kirke, 1973), 20.

⁷² Ekroll, “Olavsrelikvier,” 259.

altar had been removed in 1869, when relics of St Ivon and the Holy Men of Selje were found.⁷³ Below the altar, there was no trace of any large rock or stone. Had it been brought to Nidaros Cathedral and inserted in the walls of the cathedral?⁷⁴

Disregarding the historical value of this scrap of information, it demonstrates that two generations after the body of St Olav disappeared from view, there was still an intense local interest in the saint. During the ensuing centuries, this interest in St Olav turned up in unexpected places. Around 1800 the Trondheim-born governor Ole Bie (1733–1805) of the small Danish-Norwegian colony of Frederiksnagore (Serampore) in Bengal, India, built a new church in the colony and had it named after the saint (and himself). In Trondheim itself, despite conflagrations and urban rebuilding, the historical substance and structure of the medieval city lived and still lives on. The many stories and legends have become an indestructible part of the urban myths. Most of the places associated with St Olav can still be visited, even if the remains of medieval churches and streets are buried underground. The recent discovery and excavation of what is probably St Clement's Church, with wooden posts dating to c.1010, has brought the age of St Olav to light in the middle of modern Trondheim.⁷⁵

⁷³ Per Göte Larsen, *Stiklestad kirke. Vårt nasjonale arnested* (Verdal: Stiklestad sokneråd, 2013), 47.

⁷⁴ The diary of Architect Jacob Holmgren, transcribed by Arne Østraat and Øystein Ekroll. The stone which today is placed in a niche behind the altar was salvaged in 1929 by the then minister, and was kept in his family until the 1990s.

⁷⁵ The excavation of the wooden church was completed in 2018, and the remains and finds are exhibited in a site museum which opened in May 2019.

Line M. Bonde

Chapter 15

Jerusalem Commonplaces in Danish Rural Churches: What Urban Architecture Remembers

The phrase *SALOMON ME FECIT MONASTERIU(m)* (Solomon made me, the church) is carved in majuscules on the inner northern jamb of a portal in the rural Hunseby Church on the small island of Lolland, Denmark (Fig. 15.1a).¹ It evokes the metaphor of the Christian church as Solomon's Temple, effectively establishing the rural church as a local Jerusalem.² Hunseby Church, built during the long twelfth century, is part of the massive wave of stone churches built all over medieval Denmark in this period. The art of building in stone came in the wake of the late Christianization of the Danes and was exclusively used to erect churches; churches built in the style of the so-called Romanesque. However, the visual articulation of the "novel" architectural expression was more than mere play with forms and formats; it was visual rhetoric. As such, the "style" of the early stone churches carried with it a plethora of Christian metaphors and allusions intended to translate Jerusalem and the Christian story-world onto Danish soil.

Architecture relates to a concept of recognisability – a point of reference. It remembers "something." The Hunseby inscription illustrates that the Medieval church building – no matter size, or status, or geographical location – remembers the Temple of Jerusalem, the House of the Lord. Its inscription rejects the modernist dichotomy between "subject" and "object," "interpreter" and "interpreted," by giving voice to the physical building itself. This "animation" of the building calls to mind the medieval mass expositions and rhetorical practices, especially as the facing inner jamb reads

1 My translation. For a very brief discussion of previous Danish translation, suggestions and interpretations see DK Maribo, 908 and ns 8–9.

2 Originally the portal was placed in the South wall of the nave, but was secondarily used as churchyard gate. Today placed as an entrance in the west wall of the tower DK Maribo: 907.

Note: This chapter is based on my forthcoming PhD Thesis. I wish to thank my supervisors Kristin B. Aavitsland and Martin Wangsgaard Jürgensen for support, constructive criticism, and inspiring conversions throughout my work. All shortcomings are mine alone.

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Fig. 15.1: Portal jambs, Hunseby Church, Lolland. a. Inscription, inner northern jamb; b. Inscription, inner southern jamb.

INTROIBO IN DOMUM (“I will come into [thy] house,” Ps 5:8) (Fig. 15.1b). Allegorical readings in the mass expositions appear as a plethora of interpretations all determined by the course of salvation history. They centre on ritual practices, vestments, and ecclesiastical architecture, as mental structures to build associations over.³ A convention in these expositions is the interpretation of the physical church building as the New Jerusalem; an earthly glimpse of what is to come.⁴ This alignment beautifully demonstrates how conceptions of Jerusalem informed the Christian imagination in the Middle Ages. Jerusalem framed all events in human history. It transcended and redirected all history. It was the longed-for goal of the medieval storyworld.⁵ As such, Jerusalem brought with it a biblical and a historical past, while manifesting itself in the present.

The interconnection between architecture and meaning making that is expressed in these allegorical readings echoes the statements by Huseby Church. Yet, in the medieval exegetical texts, the church building is not only a metaphor for the Temple in Jerusalem or a physical scene set for the ritual practices. In the expositions, the church building actively partakes in the process of meaning making. This chapter explores how conceptions of Jerusalem functioned as architectural cues in this process. By taking the large corpus rural stone churches from twelfth-century Denmark as an illuminating case study, I want to argue that *one* ubiquitous “stylistic” motif – monumental as well as ornamental – functioned as an especially salient architectural cue; albeit flexible in its implications.

The “Minimum Church Model”

The Danes were assimilated into Latin Christendom quite late. Tradition has it that it happened after the baptism of King Harald Bluetooth (d. 986) in late tenth century. As has been argued in the introduction to this volume, the Christianization process necessitated a Christian adaptation of the Nordic past in order to establish

³ A large part of this article is inspired by the pioneering work of Mary Carruthers, especially Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) and *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁴ A case in point is from the synthetic work ‘Rationale divinatorum officiorum’ by William Durandus from 1292/1296: “Ecclesia [. . .] materialis spiritualem designat”, i.e. “the material church [. . .] represents the spiritual.” Cited from William Durand of Mende, *Rationale divinatorum officiorum*, ed. and trans. Timothy M. Thibodeau, *The Rationale divinatorum officiorum of William Durand of Mende: A New Translation of the Prologue and Book One* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007). Cf. also Timothy M. Thibodeau, “Introduction,” in *The Rationale divinatorum officiorum of William Durand of Mende: A New Translation of the Prologue and Book One*, ed. and trans. Timothy M. Thibodeau (2007).

⁵ For a definition and applications of this concept see *Prelude*, 7–8 and Chapter 1 (Kristin B. Aavitsland), 12–41.

a future.⁶ One strategy to consolidate Christianity from the late eleventh century and onwards into the twelfth was the massive wave of stone church building. This extraordinary effort is in itself a potent, visual rhetoric, and it becomes even more powerful when we take into account that there was no precedence or tradition for stone buildings in this area. In order to explore further the rhetorical aspects of the stone architecture, we need initially to get an idea of how the twelfth-century rural churches looked, and how they differed from the older tenth- and eleventh-century wooden churches. Only by appreciating the novelty of the stone churches' visual articulation we are able to explore them as a means to establish "tradition" and impart intend.

It is not known how many churches were erected in the immediate wake of Harald's acceptance of Christianity. Yet, the German chronicler Adam of Bremen (d. c.1085) tells us that around the year 1075, Scania had 300 churches, and Zealand 150 churches, while the island of Funen had but 100 churches.⁷ The mainland of Jutland is not mentioned, but this region most likely held the largest number. Almost all of these early churches were built of wood, presumably looking something like the reconstruction of Hørning Church, Jutland (Fig. 15.2).⁸ There are no written sources testifying to the building of the earliest stone churches that followed them, but we know from archaeological evidence and the many still extant stone churches that between c.1080 and c.1250 more than 3100 stone churches were built in medieval Denmark.⁹ Of these approximately 1700 are still in use, albeit in a heavily restored and rebuilt state.

6 The aspects of adjusting the local past has been explored before, cf., e.g., Birgit Sawyer and Peter Sawyer, *Medieval Scandinavia: From Conversion to Reformation, circa 800–1500* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Lars Boje Mortensen, "Introduction," in *The Making of Christian Myths in the Periphery of Latin Christendom (c.1000–1300)*, ed. Lars Boje Mortensen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2006); Kristin B. Aavitsland, "Defending Jerusalem: Visualizations of a Christian Identity in Medieval Scandinavia," in *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem*, ed. Bianca Kühnel, et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014).

7 Adam of Bremen, *The History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, translated by Francis Joseph Tschan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959).

8 Thomas Bertelsen, "Kirker af træ, kirker af sten – arkitektur og dateringsproblemer på Svend Estridsens tid," in *Svend Estridsen*, ed. Lasse C.A. Sonne and Sarah Croix (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2016). It should be noted that the Danish stave churches differs from the Norwegian ones.

9 According to the Danish archaeologist Jakob Kieffer-Olsen has recently argued that five-digit number of churches (not necessarily stone-churches, however) were most likely built in Medieval Denmark prior to the Reformation. Most of these were deserted or torn and are by now unknown, Jakob Kieffer-Olsen, *Kirke og kirkestruktur i middelalderens Danmark*, University of Southern Denmark Studies in History and Social Sciences (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2018). The above given number of 3100 churches includes Scania, Halland, Blekinge (present-day Sweden), and South Schleswig (present-day Germany) and are all known churches. For a diffusion map see Jes Wienberg, *Den gotiske labyrint. Middelalderen og kirkerne i Danmark* (Stockholm: Almqvist, 1993), 76. Cf. also Henriette Rensbro, "Spor i kirkegulve. De



Fig. 15.2:
Reconstruction of
Hørning Church,
c.1060, Moesgaard
Museum, Aarhus.

On a very general level, most of the rural churches were based on the same “minimum model” when it comes to architectural layout, furnishings, and, at least to some extent, decoration (Fig. 15.3).¹⁰ The rural stone churches¹¹ were small two-cell buildings with corresponding door¹² and window openings in the northern and southern walls of the nave (Fig. 15.4). The chancel area usually had between one and three windows and did often include an apse to the east.¹³ The thick walls were limed and often decorated with recesses or carved granite sculpture. Inside, the high altar stood in the chancel to the east, placed with enough space for the priest to pass around it. A narrow chancel arch provided access between chancel and nave. In the nave,

sidste 50 års arkæologiske undersøgelser i kirkegulve som kilde til sognekirkernes indretning og brug i middelalder og renaissance” (PhD Thesis, Aarhus Universitet, 2007), 16.

10 There are, of course, variations in layout, size, and building materials, not to mention regional differences in details. Nevertheless, the overarching visual expression seems to have been somewhat “homogenous” in the first generation of stone churches.

11 According to the Danish historian Mouritz Mackeprang, roughly 75% of the extant rural churches are built of granite: ashlar (48%) or boulders (27,1%). The former is by far the most common in the mainland of Jutland while not used at all on island of Zealand, on which the latter is more frequent. Only the islands of Lolland-Falster brick is most common, Mouritz Mackeprang, *Vore Landsbykirker. En Oversigt*, second ed. (Copenhagen: Høst, 1944), 26–27.

12 It was not customary to have a west entrance. The two-door system seems to have been part of contemporary European trend, see Martin Wangsgaard Jürgensen, *Ritual and Art Across the Danish Reformation: Changing Interiors of Village Churches, 1450–1600*, Artes et Ritus (RITUS) (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018). Especially the churches ashlar built churches in Jutland have portals with elaborate granite carvings, see Mouritz Mackeprang, *Jydske Granitportaler*, 2nd ed. (Højbjerg: Hikuin, 2007 [1948]).

13 Jürgensen 2018, *Ritual and Art*: 32–36. Some churches also had a tower to the west of the nave, see e.g. Henriette Rensbro and Mogens Vedsø, “Kirke Hyllinge and Snesere. Romanesque Twin Towers Recently Excavated,” *MIRATOR* 16, no. 2 (2015).

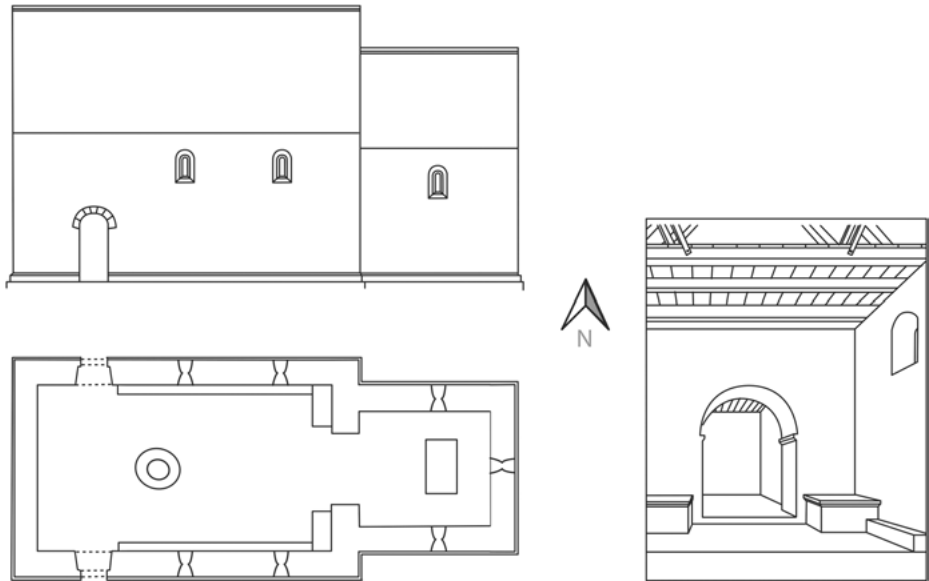


Fig. 15.3: The “minimum church model:” plan, elevation, and cross-section facing East. Based on schematic drawings from *Danmarks Kirker*. Altered by the author and digitized by Kim Bonde, 2019.

side altars flanked the chancel arch (Fig. 15.3),¹⁴ and along the walls were low stone benches. The baptismal font¹⁵ was situated on an elevated podium almost at the centre of the nave. The interior walls were most likely covered with colourful wall paintings, and the granite carvings and baptismal fonts were polychrome.¹⁶

¹⁴ Olaf Olsen, “Rumindretningen i romanske landsbykirker,” in *Kirkehistoriske samlinger. Syvende række* (Copenhagen: G.E.C. Gads Forlag, 1967), 250ff.; Birgit Als Hansen, “Arkæologiske spor efter døbefontens placering i kirkerummet gennem middelalderen,” *Hikuin* 22 (1995): 78.

¹⁵ The vast majority of the more than 1500 extant medieval (i.e. pre-Reformation) baptismal fonts are carved from granite, seemingly by local workshops before 1300. Of these, however, approx. 150 fonts are imported from Scania, the island of Gotland, and from the Mosan area. These are primarily hewed of sandstone and limestone. Practically all Danish rural parish churches still use their original baptismal font today. Mouritz Mackeprang, *Danmarks middelalderlige Døbefonte*, second ed. (Højbjerg: Hikuin, 2003 [1941]), for a diffusion map see Jürgensen, *Ritual and Art*, plate 13.

¹⁶ Due to the many changes over the centuries, we do not know exactly how common wall paintings were. The extant traces, however, indicate that especially the chancel area and the eastern wall of the nave were popular places for elaborate painting programs. See, e.g., Mouritz Mackeprang, “Udvendig malet Dekoration på middelalderlige Kirker og Renæssancebygninger,” *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* (1914); Erland Lagerlöf, “Målade fasader. Någor om färgspår på Gotlandska kyrkoexteriörer,” in *Nordisk Medeltid. Konsthistoriska studier tillägnade Armin Tuulse*, ed. Sten Karling, et al. (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksel, 1967); Karin Kryger, “Middelalderens bemalede stensulptur i Danmark,” *Hikuin* 3 (1977).

As this brief and very schematic description testifies to, the early stone churches have by no means been neglected in previous scholarship. However, almost from the very beginning of scholarly inquiry into these churches, they have been described as “Romanesque” – a term that is by now endemic.¹⁷ The focus has primarily been on the formal aspects of the churches; how did they originally look inside and outside? What variations are seen? How and when were they altered and/ or rebuilt? Furthermore, single pieces of furnishings such as the baptismal fonts or wall paintings have been subjects to individual stylistic and iconographic studies.¹⁸ Only recently have questions of usage and function started to emerge.¹⁹ Thus, the archaeological and art historical categorizations and classifications of previous scholars have abetted a longstanding tradition of isolating objects from their original context: that of architecture. As such, the church building with its attire has seldom been considered as a whole; and motifs are rarely, if ever, explored *across* these conventional groupings. Traditional disciplinary approaches seem to have created a blind spot for further inquiry in to the potential of meaning making of the most common Romanesque shape; namely, the semi-circular structure, usually termed arch or arcade. To me this is quite curious, as it is my firm conviction that such an insistent and homogenous, architectural articulation, repeatedly applied, cannot but be understood as a means of visual rhetoric. The rest of the chapter will thus explore how the arcade motif functioned rhetorically in the early, Danish stone churches, how it evokes Jerusalem and thus may be interpreted as manifestations of the Jerusalem code.

Taking Stock of the Romanesque

The examples provided alongside the description of the “minimum model” are from rural churches all over present-day Denmark and Southern Schleswig (present-day Germany) (Figs 15.3 and 15.4). As already stated, they all show variations over the

¹⁷ Beginning with Niels Laurits Høyen (d. 1870), see J.L. Ussing, ed. *Niels Laurits Høyens Skrifter*, vol. II (Copenhagen: Den Gyldendalske Boghandel, 1874).

¹⁸ Cf. e.g. Ulla Haastrup, “Stifterbilleder og deres ikonografi i danske 1100-tals fresker. Kong Niels og Dronning Margrete Fredkulla malet i Vä Kirke (1121–1122) og elleve andre kirker med stifter figurer,” *ICO Iconographisk Post* 4 (2015); Søren Kaspersen, “Døbefonte og ‘statsdannelse’: Reflesioner over de jyske dobbeltløvefonte,” in *Ecce Leones! Om djur och odjur i bildkonsten: Föredrag vid det 22. Nordiska Ikonografiska Symposiet, Åland 26–29 augusti 2010*, ed. Lars Berggren and Annette Landen (Lund: Artiflex Press, 2018).

¹⁹ J. Exner and T. Christiansen, eds., *Kirkebygning og Teologi* (Copenhagen: G.E.C Gads Forlag, 1965) is a somewhat solitary example of a study that aims at covering the entirety of the church building and its function. Only recently has the extremely thorough study by Martin Wangsgaard Jürgensen been published, see Jürgensen, *Ritual and Art*. The conventional, symbolic potential of the early stone-churches has been explored in Hugo Johannsen and Claus M. Smidt, *Kirkens huse*, Danmarks arkitektur (Viborg: Gyldendal, 1981), 94–109.



Fig. 15.4: Characteristic samples a. Door opening, Branderup Church, Southern Jutland; b. Window opening, Klim Church, Northern Jutland; c. Apse, Munke Bjerghby Church, Zealand; d. Wall recesses, Hammelev Church, Eastern Jutland; e. Chancel arch, Hassing Church, North-western Jutland; f. Baptismal font, Godsted Church, Island of Falster; g. Wall painting, apse, Sæby Church, Zealand.

most common motif found in the rural churches: the round arch. These semi-circular arches and arcades are all different in their physiognomy and, more importantly for the purposes of this chapter; some are monumental, constructive arches while others are purely decorative elements. The obvious question is, then: why is this exact motif ubiquitous?

In the history of art, it is an established convention to distinguish between Romanesque and Gothic architectural style, whose main characteristic is respectively the rounded and the pointed arch.²⁰ As such, the theory goes; the round arch develops into the pointed arch. Romanesque architecture, literally meaning “in the Roman manner,” is usually understood as a token of Roman lineage and as such implies that “something” Roman is imitated. However, architecture within boundaries of medieval Denmark can, at best, be displaced imitations, as this territory is far off the old Roman limes. Nevertheless, Romanesque architecture, Danish as well as German, French, or English for that matter, is traditionally understood as having the same point of reference: namely, the urban, architectural structures of the Roman Empire. What does that mean with regards to, for instance, the exterior recesses of the rural Hammelev Church in Jutland (Fig. 15.4 d), or the arcaded baptismal font in the remote Godsted Church, on the small island of Falster (Fig. 15.4 f)? That is, how is style and rhetoric connected? More pressingly, what do these architectural, yet non-monumental forms, tell us about the adaptation of the Jerusalem code in medieval Denmark? In order to approach these questions, we have to take a brief historiographical detour.

Romanesque is, of course, a conventional stylistic denominator applied to a variety of architectural expressions from all over Europe and within a loosely defined period spanning from the sixth or eighth century to the twelfth or thirteenth century.²¹ In the Danish context, Romanesque usually covers the period between c.1100 and 1250. The construct of the Romanesque as a stylistic denominator came along with the establishment of the academic disciplines within the humanities during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.²² As such, the history of style is

20 For a thorough discussion of the term and its historiography see Tina Waldeier Bizazarro, *Romanesque Architectural Criticism: A Prehistory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). For the interrelated discussion of “Gothic” see e.g. Paul Frankl, *The Gothic: Literary Sources and Interpretations through Eight Centuries* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960) or Norbert Nussbaum, *Deutsche Kirchenbaukunst der Gotik. Entwicklung und Bauformen* (Cologne: DuMont, 1985).

21 This span, of course, depends on whether or not proto-Romanesque and transitional style is included. Cf., e.g., Eric Fernie, “The Concept of the Romanesque,” in *Romanesque and the Past: Restrospection in the Art and Architecture of Romanesque Europe*, ed. John McNeill and Richard Plant (Wakefield: BBA/ Manley Publishing, 2013); Willibald Sauerländer, “Romanesque Art 2000: A Worn Out Notion?,” in *Romanesque Art and Thought in the Twelfth Century: Essays in Honour of Walter Cahn*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Princeton: Princeton University, 2003).

22 See the author’s contribution to *Tracing the Jerusalem Code*, vol. 3, 246–64.

conceived in the post-Kantian era, when religion and aesthetics had been split. The overarching influence of this dichotomy is therefore very apparent in the ornament discourse of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, which essentially left architectural ornament in disrepute.²³ The late nineteenth-century formalist dismissal of architectural ornament as superfluous and devoid of meaning became prevalent in the twentieth century. Moreover, the dismissal came to permeate not only modern architectural theory but also studies of historical buildings, while seeping over into the minor arts as well. Only in the last part of the twentieth century did scholars of various disciplines start to question the dismissal of ornaments in general, especially ornaments on historical buildings and objects.²⁴ Historians of art and architecture have been surprisingly reluctant to engage with the arch and the arcade as motifs per se – presumably, due to their ubiquity. This may also be explained by the fact they appear to fall somewhere in between the two main groups of “ornament” and “micro-architecture,” and as such cause methodological problems: are these architectural structures and elements, for instance, to be regarded as figural or non-figural, as representational or non-representational? Are they autonomous, or, are they part of a larger structural layout? Whatever the reason, non-monumental arches and arcades are often completely ignored or marginalized as framing devices and purely aestheticizing features.²⁵ The scholarship on the early Danish stone churches has largely adopted the formalist position and understood the semi-circular arch – monumental as well as non-monumental – as a stylistic denominator of the Romanesque and as such more or less devoid of meaning.

23 This discourse took off when the so-called “Semperians” (last quarter of the nineteenth century) claimed that architectural style equals form, and that form is conditioned by function that, in turn, is based on available materials; hence configuration must be something external to the subject. From this follows, it was argued, that when form is caused by function and materials, then form is coincidental and therefore devoid of meaning. For a walkthrough of the development of this discourse in the twentieth century, see e.g. Michael Camille, “‘How New York Stole the Idea of Romanesque Art’: Medieval, Modern and Postmodern in Meyer Schapiro,” *Oxford Art Journal* 17, no. 1 (1994).

24 Albeit primarily from universalist perspective, see, espec., Ernst H. Gombrich, *The Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art* (New York: Phaidon, 1979), or Oleg Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament*, The A.W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, Bollingen Series (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).

25 Some art historians have, of course, touched on aspects related to these questions, see, e.g., Kristin B. Aavitsland, “Ornament and Iconography: Visual Orders in the Golden Altar from Lisbjerg,” in *Ornament and Order: Essays on viking and Northern Medieval Art for Signe Horn Fuglesang*, ed. Kristin B. Aavitsland and Margrethe C. Stang (Oslo: tapir akademisk forlag, 2008); Cynthia Hahn, “Narrative on the Golden Altar of Sant’Ambrogio in Milan: Presentation and Reception,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 53 (1999).

This leads us, however, back to the question of the implications of the Roman heritage, the *romanitas*, of the Romanesque.²⁶ Contrary to what is the case in large parts of Europe and England, it is significant that in Denmark the Romanesque coincides with the consolidation of the Church.²⁷ As such, it is the first visual articulation that clearly distinguishes between local (domestic) and international (official). Thus, not just the semi-circular motifs, but also the whole structure of the church itself would, at least for a while, have been novel and unique in the setting of twelfth-century rural Denmark. The older local churches as well as all domestic buildings and farms were wooden, half-timber work, or, built from a mixture of turf and soil and with very limited wall openings.²⁸ Yet, as more and more churches were erected, the novelty and uniqueness would eventually wear off and be replaced by a sense of recognisability and recollection. Whatever form this recognisability might take would be determined by memory, which in turn would be intertwined with individual perceptions. So, how are we to understand the ubiquity of the imported urban architectural style to rural Denmark? Are the Romanesque arches and arcades merely a stylistic anachronism, or could we rethink the term Romanesque and ask what these forms and formats might intend? As already stated, it seems reasonable to assume that such an insisting expression can in fact be regarded as a visual rhetoric. It also seems justifiable to propose that the common and repeated semi-circular motif was indeed intended to function as a memory-based framework of related stories activated by ritual practices unfolding around and within the church building; much as indicated by the mass expositions. The main question is, in other words, whether the semi-circular motif carries the same connotations and thus has the same function across the different, and traditionally well-defined, categories of decoration and monumental architecture. Does the blind arcade moulding on the exterior of Lyngby Church function rhetorically in the same way as its interior chancel arch? How can the arches and arcades be understood as visual rhetoric?

26 Etymologically, Romanesque was a derivative of the vernacular Romance-speaking Southern regions of Western Europe. Yet, the physical setting of the Romanesque is primarily Germanic Europe. Cf. Wayne R. Dynes, “Art, Language, and Romanesque,” *Gesta* 28, no. 1 (1989).

27 For the consolidation of the church in Denmark and the rest of Scandinavia, see, Chapter 1 (Kristin B. Aavitsland), 34–9.

28 In the early Middle Ages, the poorest domestic buildings were made from turf and dirt, while the richer farms were built of timber (*bulhus* (da.) ~ *bole house*). These types of buildings did not have any openings aside from the door opening and an opening in the roof construction. During the Middle Ages half-timber work houses with mudbuilt walls became regular. See KLNLM, s.v. “Husbygge.”

The Commonplace Theory and Its Semi-Circular Connotations

Exactly because the semi-circular arch is commonplace in the rural churches, I propose using this exact term and labelling the semi-circular motif a “commonplace motif.” Commonplace, however, is not to be understood as a platitude. By contrast, I suggest using this notion as it derives from the Classical Latin *locus communis*,²⁹ designating “*general arguments*, which do not grow out of the particular facts of a case, but are applicable to any class of cases.”³⁰ The point is thus that this motif by its very nature is in flux, and as such, it constitutes a dynamic interplay between the conventional static categories of ornament, iconography, microarchitecture, and monumental architecture. From this follows, I claim, that the same exact motif must be flexible in its rhetorical implications, essentially encompassing a scale from “explicit representation” to “trite stylistic denominator” depending on recipient and setting. Yet, even the “empty characteristic” of a style still embeds its parental origin; be it actively acknowledged or just chosen on purely aesthetic grounds.³¹

Let us, then, return to the examples of commonplace motifs presented above. First, we can ascertain that use of arches and arcades is not conditioned by structural function. Neither are arches and arcades tied to a specific medium. However, they vary greatly in configuration and physiognomy. Some arches are proper architectural structures, as is the case of the north portal in Sinding (Fig. 15.5). Others are stylized, completely lacking capitals, bases, and even columns (Fig. 15.4 a, b, f). Moreover, while some arches and arcades frame figures or iconographic scenes (e.g. the tympanum of Sinding with its three crosses), others appear empty and as mere ornaments (Fig. 15.4 c, d). But, looking at Godsted Church’s arcaded baptismal font, we should keep in mind that it was originally polychrome (Fig. 15.4 f). It is thus tempting to speculate that the arches and arcades carved in low relief actually framed painted images, which might – at least as a hypothesis – also have been the case with a lot of the now empty arcades found everywhere in the rural churches.³² Whatever the case, multiple questions arise about the “framing aspect” of the commonplace motif: why you would frame something? Why would you frame it with an urban, architectural

²⁹ Rendering Greek “*koinos topos*” ~ general theme.

³⁰ *A Latin Dictionary*, ed. William Freund, *et al.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

³¹ Note that aesthetic in Greek *aisthesis* can be defined as “routine ways in which things are bodily and mentally sensed and perceived and to the pleasant and unpleasant ways in which these sensations and perceptions affect the respective bodies and minds;” definition cited from Andreas Reckwitz, “Affective Spaces: A Praxeological Outlook,” *Rethinking History* 16, no. 2 (2012). I will return to the subject of “affective spaces” below.

³² We even have one surviving example of a completely smooth font with its original polychromy testifying to a painted arcade, namely, the Dalum font, Funen.



Fig. 15.5: North portal, Sinding Church, Central Jutland.

structure? What does framing even mean in the context of a twelfth-century rural church? In our modern way of viewing art, a frame is marginal: “an ornament for what is already present (which is the artwork).”³³ The frame’s function is to accentuate that which is being framed. That does not explain, however, the choice of the arch or the arcade as a framing device. Moreover, the modern notion of a frame fails to explain the instances of arches as motifs in their own right. We could point to the bases of the blind arcades encircling the apse of Grønbæk Church, Jutland, as an illustrative example of this (Fig. 15.6). Neither does the modern definition explain the function of arcades in narrative friezes. In such friezes, the singular scenes may appear framed by a sequence of arcades, or one single scene may be divided by two or more arches, as in for instance the wall paintings on the south wall of the nave in Soderup Church, Zealand (Fig. 15.7). In Soderup, the arcades appear not to be intermedial borders or boundaries, while in other instances, such as on the baptismal

³³ Paul Duro, “Introduction,” in *The Rhetoric of the Frame: Essays on the Boundaries of the Artwork*, ed. Paul Duro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 103.



Fig. 15.6: Grønabæk Church, Central Jutland. a. Blind arcades, apse, exterior; b. Detail of column base from the blind arcade of the apse.

front of Husby Church, Jutland, the arcades clearly serve to separate one motif from another (Fig. 15.8). Yet another shortcoming of the modern understanding of the frame is that it is media-specific. It only relates to the modern concept of the artwork. As such, it makes no sense when trying to understand a monumental commonplace motif, such as the Sinding portal (Fig. 15.5). Yet, the small double arches from Grønabæk (Fig. 15.6 b) appear at first glance to be simply decorative. Their size indicates that they most likely never framed anything. It is, therefore, easy to argue along with the formalists that the commonplace motif – monumental or non-monumental – is nothing but an architectural ornament, a whim of fashion, and as such devoid of meaning. Admittedly, the choice to enhance the churches with the many arches and arcades may indeed be motivated by trend impulses and by the beautifying qualities of the arches themselves. Yet, and as already stated, they nevertheless still embed a rhetorical function; be it actively recognized or not.

In order to explain what I mean by the “intend” of the commonplace motif we have to try to get an understanding of the medieval cognition or way of constructing meaning.



Fig. 15.7: Wall painting in Soderup Church, Zealand, southern wall of the nave.

The American historian of medieval literature and rhetoric Mary Carruthers has through her comprehensive studies of medieval memory and cognition convincingly argued that throughout the Middle Ages, certain architectural structures were preferred as devices for mental activity – *memory work*, in Carruthers' wording.³⁴ The arcade is of special interest in this context. In memory practices of medieval monastic culture, arcades were used as storage spaces. Memory, Carruthers argues, was accessed through architectural metaphors, which means, broadly speaking, that architectural structures were the foundations on which to build associations over. The point is thus that the arcade, by its very nature, functions as a visual, rhetorical cue. From this follows, however, that in order for a *specific* motif to generate an *intended* meaning in an onlooker or recipient, both the motif and the onlooker must be part of the same cultural sphere. Yet, intend [*intentio auctoris*] is a rhetorical concept in itself. As Carruthers notes, it was

also a quality possessed by an artefact, a context in which the concept retained its fundamental directional model [. . .] the artefact considered as an agent, motivator, and guide through

³⁴ Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, second ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*.



Fig. 15.8: Baptismal font, Husby Church, Southern Jutland.

those stylistic and formal means that, because they draw on conventions and shared traditions, have considerable agency separate from the human, historical author.³⁵

Juxtaposing Carruthers' definition of medieval cognition with the commonplace-theory given above, we can now turn to the Romanesque style and take a closer look at its claim to Roman parentage. The proliferation of Romanesque architecture across Europe were at least a century ahead of its utilization in Denmark. And, even though its inception into Danish territory could be understood as a logical "development," or a natural spread of stylistic impulses, I would argue that a large part of the sudden interest in this specific architectural articulation is, in fact, due to its expressive potential. However, multiple questions soon arise as to whether

this interest was prompted by the Roman connotations of the style, by the Christian connotations, or by both. One might initially wonder just how important Rome was to the Danes of the twelfth century. Did the arches and arcades intend urban Rome? Did they evoke Charlemagne, Aachen, and the Holy Roman Empire? Did they hint at Byzantium and the glory of the New Rome, Constantinople? Did they connote to the lost Temple in Jerusalem, most canonical of all sacred buildings, whose authority had been transferred to Rome according to the claims of the Roman Church?³⁶ The arches and arcades in the Danish rural churches probably intended all of these at once, making up a complex of references recognized by the few. As this is not the place to delve further into the merging and competing conceptions of Rome in medieval culture,³⁷ it should suffice here to remind about the fact that Rome was introduced in Denmark in the last half of the twelfth century not

³⁵ Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty*, 53. See also Mary Carruthers, "The Concept of *ductus*, Or Journeying Through a Work of Art," in *Rhetoric Beyond Words: Delight and Persuasion in the Arts of the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary Carruthers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

³⁶ Cf. Chapter 3 (Eivor Andersen Oftestad), 49–55.

³⁷ My forthcoming PhD-thesis will include a thorough discussion of merging conceptions of Jerusalem, Rome, Constantinople, and the Holy Roman Empire.

only through architectural motifs but also in the form of literary and rhetorical models. The indigenous twelfth- and early thirteenth-century literature about the history of the Danes was shaped on the fundament of Roman rhetoric.³⁸ Hence, the production of texts modelled on Roman ideals largely coincides with the erection of stone churches somehow connoting to Roman architecture. Conceptually, Denmark underwent a kind of “Romanization” in this period:

I should like it to be known that Danes of an older age, filled with a desire to echo the glory when notable braveries had been performed, alluded in the Roman manner to the splendour of their nobly wrought achievements with choice compositions of a poetical nature.³⁹

This is but one example of how the Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus (c.1160–c.1220) aligns the “Deeds of the Danes” with the deeds of imperial Rome in his celebrated work *Gesta Danorum* (composed sometime shortly after 1208). The obvious purpose of this alignment is to inscribe the pagan past of the Danes in the categories of universal history, as part of God’s providential plan. However, only twice is imperial Rome and its medieval continuation explicitly mentioned; first, when Saxo aligns the peaceful reign of King Frothi with *Pax Augustana* and connects it to the birth of Christ (v.15.3); and second, when he construes Charlemagne’s Christianization of the Saxons as an inclusion of Saxony in the Roman realm (viii.16.5).⁴⁰ Saxo’s primary concern in these cases is to insist upon a predestined past to be relieved by the Christian present.

Saxo was a representative of the Christian and classical intellectual movement that shaped the learned elites of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Western Europe. The reception and further development of Roman rhetoric within this learned tradition is the scope of much of Carruthers’ research. The heritage she refers to is the precepts of the classical rhetoric as found in the works of Cicero and the pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium*.⁴¹ In the intellectual milieu of the twelfth century, “ornaments of style,” for instance allegory as a figure or a trope, were essential parts of

38 Mortensen, “Sactified Beginnings”.

39 “Nec ignotum uolo Danorum antiquiores conspicuis fortitudinis operibus editis glorie emulatione suffusos Romani stili imitatione non solum rerum a se magnifice gestarum titulus exquisitus contextus genere ueluti poetico quodam opera perstrinxisse,” Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum: The History of the Danes*, 2 vols, ed. and trans. Karsten Friis-Jensen and Peter Fisher, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2015).

40 Karsten Friis-Jensen, “Saxo Grammaticus’s Study of the Roman Historiographers and His Vision of History,” in *Saxo Grammaticus: Tra storiografia e letteratura, Bevagna, 27–29 settembre 1990*, ed. C. Santini, I convegni di classiconorrena (Rome: Editricie Il Calamo, 1987); Karsten Friis-Jensen, “Introduction,” in *Saxo Grammaticus: Gesta Danorum / The History of the Danes*, ed. Karsten Friis-Jensen and Peter Fisher (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2015), xxxvii–xxxix.

41 *Rhetorica ad herennium*, ed. H. Caplan and M. Winterbottom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). For Cicero, see, e.g., Cicero, *De Inventione, De Optimo Genere Oratorum, Topica*, ed. H.M. Hubbel (London: Heinemann, 1976).

grammar, taught at collegiate and cathedral schools everywhere.⁴² Allegories⁴³ were part of the recollective cogitation and a thus prerequisites for meaning making and a guiding principle for biblical exegesis, cf. the fourfold interpretation of Scripture.⁴⁴ Allegorical explanation informed and structured the all-encompassing storyworld of the Christian Middle Ages, as seen, for example in the Mass expositions of the twelfth and thirteenth century, mentioned in the opening of this chapter.⁴⁵ Both the learned application of classical rhetoric in texts and the architectural application of the commonplace-motif in church buildings are, in a certain sense, Roman heritage adapted to Danish soil.

If we accept that Saxo's adaptation of the local past within a Roman scheme on the one hand and the building of stone churches on the other may be interpreted as initiatives prompted by a similar urge to be included in the history of salvation, it then follows that the Romanesque style (in architecture as well as in literature) does indeed embed a notion of something Roman. However, this notion should not be reduced to formalism and understood as coarse imitations of imported architectural structures or grammatical compositions. The literary and architectural references to Rome seem to suggest a mythical Rome, inherited through the Carolingians as the allegorical translation of Jerusalem to Rome, the Universal Church, *ecclesia Romana*. In this way, past and present Rome – city and Church – can be understood as the New Jerusalem, just as the local church building, *pars pro toto*, manifested the Roman Church.⁴⁶ Only recently has the visual Christianization of the old city of Rome itself, which came to be of utmost importance for the visual language of the Roman Church throughout the Middle Ages, been explored as an actual response to the stature of the “original” centre of Christendom, the physical city of Jerusalem. At an early stage in the collective Christian memory, the conception of Jerusalem, earthly and heavenly, merged with the conceptions of Rome, which then continuously transformed during the Middle Ages.

⁴² Cf., e.g., Laura Cleaver, *Education in Twelfth-Century Art and Architecture: Images of Learning in Europe, c.1100–1220* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2016).

⁴³ For a discussion of the two types of *allegoria*, see Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 125f.

⁴⁴ Marianne Wifstrand Schiebe, “The Definition of Allegory in Western Rhetorical and Grammatical Tradition,” in *The Definition of Allegory in Western Rhetorical and Grammatical Tradition* (2006).

⁴⁵ See, *Prelude*, 5–6, for a description of Jerusalem as the paradigmatic example of *quadriga*, the fourfold interpretative model in medieval exegesis.

⁴⁶ For the concept *translatio imperii et studii*, see Aleida Assmann, *Zeit und Tradition: Kulturelle Strategien der Dauer* (Cologne – Weimar – Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1999); Eivor Andersen Oftestad, *The Lateran Church in Rome and the Ark of the Covenant: Housing the Holy Relics of Jerusalem with an edition and translation of the Descriptio Lateranensis Ecclesiae (BAV Reg. Lat. 712)* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2019). See also Chapter 3 in this volume (Eivor A. Oftestad), 49–55. The Israeli art historian Galit Noga-Banai argues that during the fifth century “the concept and presence of Jerusalem in the East stimulated and affected the creation of these images [i.e. the visual Christianization] and consequently helped to shape the collective memory of early Christian Rome.” Galit Noga-Banai, *Sacred Stimulus: Jerusalem in the Visual Christianization of Rome*, Oxford Studies of Late Antiquity (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 3.

Against this background it is reasonable to maintain that the architectural articulation of the commonplace-motif itself intends something; it remembers in its own right and as such actively partakes in the meaning making.

The Rhetorical Function of the Chancel Arch

Let me try to illuminate my claim posed above by discussing one conspicuous example of the commonplace-motif found in most if not all Romanesque churches: the chancel arch. This structural component physically and visually marks the division, or threshold, between the two main parts of the church building (Fig. 15.3). In the early stone churches the division was underscored by the elevated floor level of the chancel area, connected to the nave by a step immediately in front of the chancel arch. The architectural articulation of the chancel arch has largely been neglected in previous research, as scholars have primarily concerned themselves with roods, wall paintings, side altars, and/ or screens. Hence, focus has been on the *concealment* of chancel arch – or rather the prevention of direct view into the chancel. However, in the first generation of the early stone churches, the chancel arch was in fact not “disturbed” by fittings.⁴⁷ On the contrary, the architectural structure of the chancel arch seems to be regarded as an “image” or a rhetorical figure in its own right, taking part in the larger rhetorical articulation of the eastern wall of the nave.⁴⁸ As we shall see below, this is an important feature in the process of the church building’s meaning-making.

In scholarship on Danish church architecture, the existence of a side altar placed in front of the chancel arch, variously called *layman’s altar*, *Holy Cross altar*, *Corpus Christi altar*, or *rood altar*, has been vividly discussed. The discussion is tied to the die-hard idea that the high altar in the chancel was reserved for the clergy and hence an altar in front of the chancel arch was needed in order to service the laity.⁴⁹ However, as has recently been argued convincingly, nothing suggests that the high altar did not service lay churchgoers, and as good as no archaeological evidence tells of an altar placed immediately in front of the chancel arch in the small rural churches.⁵⁰ A similar argument applies to rood altars and holy cross altars. Thus, the monumental crucifixes or roods in the aperture of chancel arches seem to have only entered the small rural churches after 1200, just as lofts and

47 A thorough discussion can be found in my forthcoming PhD Thesis.

48 By “rhetorical figure” I allude to the interrelation of the rhetorical terms *pictura*, *descriptio*, *imago*, and *figura*, the point being that they all has the capacity to refer to verbal ekphrasis and/ or graphic image. See Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty*, 140 n14.

49 For a walk through of previous research and references, see Jürgensen 2018, *Ritual and Art*: 91–5.

50 Jürgensen 2018, *Ritual and Art*: 94.

screens also seem to be later and to that a comparatively short-lived phenomena.⁵¹ All of these shielding features seem clearly to belong to the period after 1200, and allow us to assume that in general, there were no obstacles in front of or fitted into the chancel arches in the twelfth century. Having exhausted the physical remnants of the church buildings themselves, we may return to the question of the rhetorical function of the commonplace-motif.

Admittedly, there are no written, contemporary sources testifying to how the chancel arch in a rural church was perceived by churchgoers attending Holy Mass. There are, however, as we recall from the beginning of this chapter, medieval mass expositions [*messuskýringar*] preserved in the vernacular, both from Iceland and Norway, dating between 1150 and 1500, and describing the church interior and its relation to the liturgy.⁵² The Norse expositions generally follow Continental European descriptions and interpretations of liturgical practise.⁵³ Although it is hard to apply the these readings directly onto the actual architectural and liturgical situation in any random medieval church building,⁵⁴ they do provide a textual basis for an

51 In the catalogue of church excavations by the Danish archaeologist Henriette Rensbro only three instances of side altars in front of the chancel arch are recorded, Rensbro, *Spor i kirkegulve*, 234, 43, 90. For a discussion of roods and monumental crucifixes see e.g., Ebbe Nyborg, “Kreuz und Kreuzaltarretabel in dänischen Pfarrkirchen des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts: Zur Genese der Ring- und Arkadenkreuze,” in *Entstehung und Frühgeschichte des Flügelaltarschreins*, ed. Hartmut Krohm, et al. (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2001); Ebbe Nyborg, “Korbue, krucifiks og bueretabel. Om de ældste vestjyske triumfkrucifikser, deres udformning og anbringelse,” *Hikuin* 14 (1988). For a comparison with the Pan-European material, see Justin Kroesen and Regnerus Steensma, *The Interior of the Medieval Village Church / Het Middeleeuwse Dorpskerinterieur* (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2005). There seems to be some confusion within traditional scholarship as how to group and thus where to place the crucifixes in the nave. In general, it has been claimed that the monumental crucifixes were roods and thus placed upon a rood beam suspended in the aperture of the chancel arch and connected to a Holy Cross altar immediately beneath it. However, as has since been pointed out by several scholars, a monumental crucifix was not necessarily placed in the aperture of the chancel arch, but could and often would be positioned anywhere in the nave, just was the case with the side altars. The German church historian Joseph Braun argues that the placement of the crucifix in the nave was prior to an erection of an altar, Joseph Braun, *Der christliche Altar in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung: Arten, Bestandteile, Altargrab, Weihe, Symbolik*, vol. I (Munich: Alte Meister Guenther Koch & Co., 1924), 405. For a discussion of lectoriums, lofts and screens, see Jürgensen 2018, *Ritual and Art*: 114–20; Elna Møller, “Om danske lektorier,” *Nationalmuseets Arbejdsmark* (1950).

52 This Norse collection was first published by the Norwegian church historian Oluf Kolsrud in 1952, albeit in a non-normalized edition, *Messuskýringar. Liturgisk symbolik frá den norsk-íslandske kyrka i millomalderen*, ed. Oluf Kolsrud (Oslo: Kjeldeskiptfondet, 1952). For a synthetic, annotated, and translated edition, see *Messuskýringar*, trans. Elise Kleivane, ed. Sigurd Hareide, et al. (Oslo: St. Olav forlag, 2014). The following is based on Kleivane’s translation to modern Norwegian.

53 Cf., e.g. William Durandus of Mende, *Rationale divinatorum officiorum*.

54 The criticisms voiced in this regard has primarily been directed at symbolic interpretations of church architecture, such as Joseph Sauer, *Symbolik des Kirchengebäudes und seiner Ausstattung in der Auffassung des Mittelalters* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herdersche Verlagshandlung, 1902); Gunter Bandmann, *Early Medieval Architecture as a Bearer of Meaning*, trans. Kendall Wallis (New York:

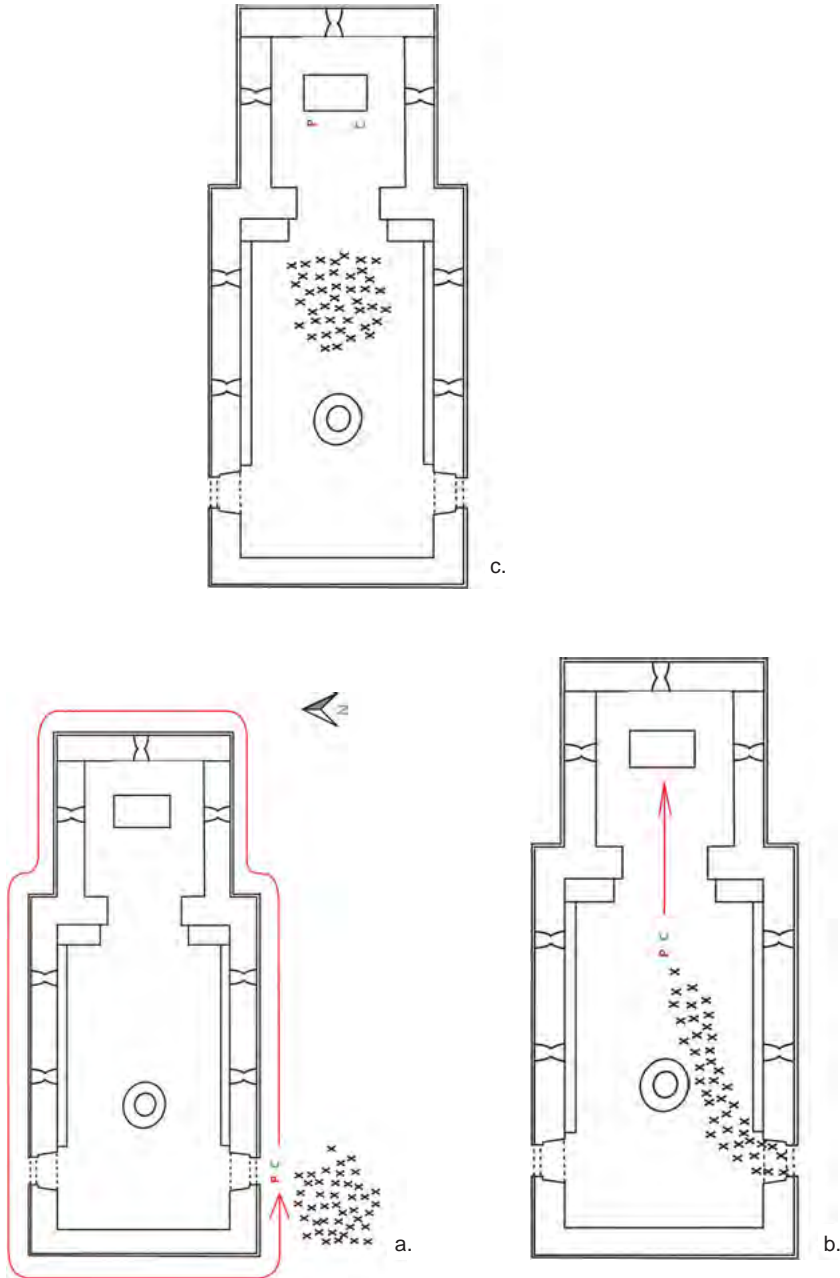


Fig. 15.9: Largescale movements of an idealized celebration of Holy Mass. a. *Asperges me / vidi aquam*; b. *Introitus*; c. *Introitus, Kyrie* etc. Drawn by the author and digitized by Kim Bonde, 2019.

understanding of the largescale movements within a given church during the celebration of Mass. With all methodological reservations, the expositions help us “remember” along with the architecture.

Before addressing the ritual, however, let us as a corrective ask if and what the Norse texts have to say about a possible shielding of the chancel arch. It would appear from the texts that the chancel area was only concealed from direct view during Lent. Moreover, and especially interesting in this context, it is explicitly stated that “in the wall between the chancel and the nave is a door opening. It is there so that one may see all that is happening in the chancel.”⁵⁵ This statement goes well along with the architectural evidence: there were no concealments. We can thus, albeit cautiously, assume that the entire architectural structure of the chancel arch would have been very much visible from the nave.

Having established this, we can turn to rhetorical function of the arch. As previously stated, the mass expositions suggest that the architecture and its furnishings took part in liturgical meaning making. From this follows that the architecture is, in fact, *activated* by ritual practice. Liturgical details lay beyond the scope of this chapter, yet I wish to emphasize that the celebration of Mass seems to have been centred on the threshold of the chancel arch.⁵⁶ In Fig. 15.9 a–c I have tried to illustrate the large-scale movements described in the expositions: 1) the outside procession before entering the church and, 2) the subsequent actual celebration with the priest and clerk performing the ritual inside the chancel area, while the worshippers partake from the nave. Only twice during the celebration did either priest or clerk leave the chancel area. According to the texts, Gradual was “often song below the ‘stair case’;”⁵⁷ which can only be understood as on the floor level of the nave in front of the chancel arch, as there was in general only one step leading up to the chancel in the rural, Danish churches (cf. Fig. 15.3 c). During the Eucharist, the climactic part of Mass, a book should be presented to perform “the sign of peace” and, as it is stated, “the holy kiss moves among all present.”⁵⁸ How and to what extent this happened is, of course, impossible say, and in the continental sources it is usually a so-called *Pax* tablet rather than a book that is offered. Whatever the case, an object to be kissed should ideally be presented from the chancel area, cross the threshold of the

Columbia University Press, 2010 [1951]). Cf., also Timothy M. Thibodeau, “Enigmata Figurarum: Biblical Exegesis and Liturgical Exposition in Durand’s ‘Rationale’,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 86, no. 1 (1993); Marie-Dominique Chenu, “The Symbolist Mentality,” in *Nature, Man and Society in the Twelfth Century*, ed. M.D. Chenu (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

55 My paraphrasing of text A. (AM. 237 a fol. (1150)): “A þeffo bríóst þ | -ile ero mikil dýrr. fva at fía ma aðll/ tí | -þende í faóghúf ýr kirkio.” *Messuskýringar*: 1952, 93.

56 That is, after entering the church. Cf. Chapter 17 (Margrete Syrstad Andås), 340–70.

57 My paraphrase of text A. (AM. 619 4to (1200–1225): “at á pollom er funget iðola.” *Messuskýringar* 1952, 16. Cf. *Messuskýringar* 2014, 74.

58 My paraphrase of text A. (AM. 619 4to (1200–1225): “oc fiðan fer friðar koff allra manna á miðli til þeirrar.” *Messuskýringar* 1952, 23. Cf. *Messuskýringar* 2014, 75.

chancel arch, and retrieve back into the chancel through the chancel arch. In this way, the architectural commonplace-motif of the chancel arch becomes very much alive. It is actively taking part in the performance of the ritual.

As such, the visual framing and limited physical accessibility to the most holy performed by the chancel arch had both a rhetorical and mnemonic function. This claim seems supported also by the common choice of iconography for the wall paintings surrounding the chancel arch. Usually, the upper part of the east wall of the nave had elaborate wall paintings, as had the chancel arches' soffits and inner jambs, indicating that they were, in fact, meant to be seen in their entirety. The 19 preserved chancel arches with paintings dated between 1080 and 1175 all follow the same scheme: all but one has a roundel centrally placed on the soffit, and are framed by ornamental boarders. The roundels show the Virgin Mary, the Lamb of God, or Christ in Glory. The iconographical themes are either the vices and virtues, or the story of Cain and Abel. In one church, the biblical kings David and Solomon are depicted, otherwise rows of unidentified saints. 13 of the 19 churches with painted soffits have additionally wall paintings preserved on the eastern wall of nave. From what can be identified of these remnants it seems that scenes from the Passion of Christ and not least the tableau of the Final Judgement are typical subjects. The standard iconography clearly remembers the historical foundation for the celebration of the Eucharist (Christ's Passion) as well as the promised eschatological future (salvation and eternal life after the Last Judgement).

According to the mass expositions, the eastern wall of the nave symbolizes the Holy Spirit. The symbolism is explained by analogy: "just as the believer's entry into Christendom is through Christ's sacrifice, so too is the believer's entry into Heaven through the mercy-door of the Holy Spirit."⁵⁹ The description of the chancel arch as "the mercy-door of the Holy Spirit" resonate well with the preferred iconography of the Passion and Last Judgement on the eastern wall of the nave, as well as with the function of the commonplace-motif as an architectural cue. This is furthermore substantiated by the explanation of the purpose of that very same "door:"

it is there, so that everyone that may meet the mercy of the Holy Spirit may see a lot of heavenly things with the eye of the mind.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ See text A. (AM. 237 a fol. (1150)): "Bróst þile þat. ef a miþle | ef faónghúff oc kirkio. Merker helgan an | -da. Því at fva fem vér gaongom inn fýr tr | -ú / criftcs. í criftnena. fva gaongom vér oc in | -n í himna dýrþ / fýr mífunnar dýrr h | -eilagf anda " *Messuskýringar* 1952: 93–94. Cf. *Messuskýringar* 2014: 143.

⁶⁰ See text A. (AM. 237 a fol. (1150)): "A þeffo bróst þ | -ile ero mikl dýrr. fva at fía ma aóll/ tí | -þende í faónghúf ýr kirkio. Því at hv | -err ef fiþr míf / cunnar dýrr heilagf an | -da ma líta hug fctots augom marga / himnes | -ca hlute." *Messuskýringar* 1952: 93. Cf. *Messuskýringar* 2014, 143 and note 55.

Conclusion: Importing and Manifesting the Past, Present, and Future

Let me conclude by gathering the bits and pieces. The temporal flow of the commonplace-motif intends past, present, and future, as conditioned by the storyworld. Its stylistic connotations intend the cluster of biblical metaphors embedded in the Jerusalem code, which makes its rhetorical implications so powerful in the process of meaning making. Not only does the glory of Solomon's past temple manifest itself in the present. It actively translates and transforms the Old covenant into the New by inviting the worshipper to enter into Christ through the door opening, as such effectively instituting the promise of fulfilment. This is, as we recall, explicitly voiced by the Hunseby-portal itself (Fig. 15.1).

Inside the church, salvation history unfolds in time, as ritual, architecture, and practitioners interact. Meaning making can thus only arise in this dynamic interplay. As we saw to be the case of the monumental chancel arches, the unobstructed view would have allowed for a restricted access into the most holy, the promise of the future, essentially with the commonplace-motif mediating the ritual unfolding inside chancel area. The direct view through the chancel arch, however, was only effectuated, situated and thus semantically charged during the celebrations. As such, the ritual practice in interplay with the situating commonplace-motif and the worshipper create an affective space; a space in which the meaning making transpires. The architectural structure of the chancel arch thus seems to have been actively participating in this process of meaning making – its visual rhetoric is essentially materialized understanding – a structure on which to build associations over.

Ecclesia Romana and the heavenly metropolis were extraordinary present, in the present, during the liturgy – physically as well as conceptually. This interpretation, in my opinion, has implications for the many empty Romanesque arches and arcades found everywhere outside and inside the rural stone-churches. A lot of these arches and arcades are, in fact, constructed as actual cityscapes or triumphal arches; an example par excellence being the arch situating the Virgin in the heavenly Jerusalem on the Lisbjerg altar from c.1135, commented on in the introduction (Fig. 1.3).⁶¹ All in all, this allows me to suggest at least one possible association that could be spurred in the mind of the medieval worshipper; namely that of entering triumphantly into the Heavenly Jerusalem. This argument seems substantiated by Carruthers' discussion of the widespread use of puns as a mnemonic device:

The . . . syllable, *arc-*: *arc-a*, “ark” or “chest,” both of Noah and of the Covenant, where God's *arc-ana*, “secrets,” are hidden away; *arc-es*, “citadels,” the walled cities of Ezekiel's and

⁶¹ Chapter 1 (Kristin B. Aavitsland), 35–6.

John's visions; and also *arc-us*, "arches," the shape of each of the triple triumphal doorways in the walls [of the Heavenly Jerusalem].⁶²

As such the arcade – textual and visual – has the potential to *write* a "cluster of metaphorical" pictures in the mind. It remembers the Heavenly Jerusalem through these different stored biblical references.

62 Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 150.



Fig. 16.1: Resurrected Christ on the baptismal font of the Ottravad Church, twelfth century.

Kersti Markus

Chapter 16

The Holy City in the Wilderness: Interpreting the Round Churches in Västergötland, Sweden

Traditions of pre-Christian society persisted longer in Sweden than in any other Scandinavian country. This chapter explores how the idea of Jerusalem may have affected changes in the rational and emotional outlook of the recently Christianized population during the twelfth century. Sweden was indeed established as a separate ecclesiastical province with the foundation of the archsee Uppsala in 1164, but the essential ideas of Christianity were slow to take root in the depths of the vast Swedish forests. In the following, light is shed on some of the strategies used by Bishop Bengt of Skara (1150–90) to change the mentality of the leaders of Västergötland by referring to Jerusalem through visual representations and modulations of the landscape.

In the twelfth century Sweden was Christianized, but still held on to the ways of old traditional society.¹ The Christian imprint on the landscape consisted for the most part of wooden churches with portals and rooftops adorned with serpents, striding quadrupeds, and tendril patterns familiar from the visual world of the pre-Christian era. Even by the middle of the century, when many of the wooden churches were replaced by new churches built in stone, these images did not completely disappear. In this cultural landscape, round churches imitating the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem stood out conspicuously, as their form did not fit smoothly into the existing context, and their message seemed unfamiliar. An idea of the Holy City of Jerusalem might have existed at the time in the imagination of a king or a bishop, but for the majority of the population it must have remained distant and unfathomable. Inevitably, a question arises – why and by whom were the round churches built?

Round Churches in Scandinavia

When all of Scandinavia is viewed from a broad perspective, we can see both regional differences and superregional similarities. The current state of research offers verified information on about thirty-four round churches, yet literature and oral tradition testify

¹ See more in Tore Nyberg, *Monasticism in North-Western Europe, 800–1200* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2000).



Fig. 16.2: Round church of Skörstorp.

to the existence of many more – although several of those have remained unsupported by evidence when subjected to closer study. Of the known round churches, nineteen were situated in medieval Denmark and thirteen in Sweden. In Norway there were only two, one at the Premonstratensian monastery in Tønsberg (Fig. 7.1), the other situated in the far Orkney Islands near the coast of Scotland (Fig. 6.2).² The Danish round churches are situated either at the king's fortress (Hälsingborg, Søborg), at the king's or a nobleman's estate (Schleswig, Horne, Bjernede, Pedersborg), or at an old pagan burial complex (Himlingøje). Some of the churches have obviously been built with a consideration of local communication networks in mind, as they are situated close to a body of water that either gives access to a regional centre (Thorsager) or constitutes the main route of communication between the North Sea and the Baltic Sea (Hälsingborg). The round churches on the Isle of Bornholm form a separate group, remarkable for their positions in the landscape, well visible to everyone sailing to

² Jes Wienberg, "Conspicuous Architecture: Medieval Round Churches in Scandinavia," in *Sacred Monuments and Practices in the Baltic Sea Region: New Visits to Old Churches*, ed. Janne Harjula, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017).

Sweden through the Danish sounds (Ols, Nylars). They belong to Denmark's few military-purpose churches.

Differences can also be noted between the thirteen Swedish round churches. These are situated in different counties, although mostly in Götaland (Västergötland and Östergötland). Three of the churches are also found in the archipelago of Lake Mälaren, close to Stockholm. Compared to the situation around 1200, the land there has risen about 3.5 meters, so that at the time of the building of these churches, today's lake was still a cove in the Baltic Sea. Three more round churches can be found on the banks of the Kalmar Sound, where maritime traffic moved north and east of the Danish Sounds. When sailing along the coast it was possible to reach Svealand or Finland, or sail on to Livonia via the island of Gotland.³ Thus, even a brief glance at the distribution of the churches informs us about the reason why a certain location was chosen, and accordingly, a study of the round churches must include a close investigation of local circumstances. From these grounds we may proceed to more general conclusions.

The earliest comprehensive study of the Scandinavian round churches was published by Swedish art historian Hugo F. Frölén more than a century ago,⁴ while one of the most recent is by Jes Wienberg in 2017.⁵ The subject is of broad popular interest, so that scholars often find themselves debating with amateurs seeking vindication in the media.⁶ In his article "Conspicuous Architecture. Medieval Round Churches in Scandinavia," Wienberg revised the current state of research and presented his ideas about the causes and presumed time-frame for the building of round churches. The earlier prevalent position that round churches functioned as defence facilities has today largely been superseded by a vision of multifunctionality: these edifices alluding to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre may have functioned simultaneously as a defence facility and even as a warehouse, with many of these churches having several floors. Moreover, Wienberg also emphasized the self-representation of the church-builders – the kings, bishops, and aristocracy – as well as the context of the Baltic crusades.⁷ In fact, several of the churches are situated on crusade routes: on

3 Kersti Markus, "Kuidas propageerida ristisõda visuaalselt? Taanlaste ristisõjast Eestisse 12. sajandi lõpus ja 13. sajandi algul sakraalse ehituskunsti vahendusel [How to Propagate a Crusade Visually? The Danish Crusade in Estonia in the Late 12th Century and Early 13th Century in the Light of Sacral Architecture]," *Studies on Art and Architecture* 24, no. 3–4 (2015).

4 Hugo F. Frölén, *Nordens befästa rundkyrkor. En konst- och kulturhistorisk undersökning med 270 bilder*, 2 vols., (Stockholm: Lars Frölén, 1910–1911).

5 Wienberg, "Conspicuous Architecture".

6 Thus, the Danish journalist Jan Eskildsen published a book on the Bornholm round churches, with pretensions to research: Jan Eskildsen, *Bornholm og Østersøen 1060–1140. Nedslag i en historisk periode fra før den danske kirke organiserede sig, til der blev planlagt kirkebyggeri* (Rønne: Bornholms Tidendes Forlag, 2014).

7 The multi-functionality of the round churches, as well as the significance of the builder's self-representation in the construction of those churches, was first raised by Ing-Marie Nilsson in her

the Isle of Bornholm, South-Eastern Scania, and on the Kalmar Sound. Earlier scholarship dates the round churches to the period of 1120–1180, but Wienberg, proceeding from coin finds and results of dendrochronology, proposes a later period for the time of their construction, even as late as the first decades of the thirteenth century.⁸

When considering the Danish and Swedish round churches against a wider European background, both the dates and the external form of the churches provoke questions. To start with the latter, many of the Scandinavian churches have a common feature: an apse in the form of a semicircle or three quarters of a circle in the eastern part of the round building. This feature is not characteristic of Western European churches imitating the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, but are distinctive to those of Eastern and Central Europe.⁹ The Church of the Holy Sepulchre built during the reign of Constantine the Great consisted of a large rotunda surrounded by an ambulatory, with the Holy Sepulchre at its centre. Eight pillars and twelve columns bore the large, open dome. There were three apses respectively in the northern, western, and southern walls, while in the East there was the atrium with Mount Golgotha. After the destruction of the church by Caliph al-Hākim in 1009, the atrium was not restored, but rather replaced with an eastern apse with a choir. This ground plan, reminiscent of a cross, was often imitated in eleventh-century Germany and France, mostly in churches built in convents or on a bishop's initiative. Nevertheless, the round churches truly flourished in the period of Western control of Jerusalem, between the first crusade in 1099 and the Saladin's conquest of Jerusalem in 1187. This period was most favourable for Western pilgrims to visit the Holy Land.¹⁰ It is evident from travellers' records that the dimensions of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre were of utmost interest to visitors to Jerusalem, resulting in pilgrims building their own churches after returning

Master's thesis defended at Lund University: Ing-Marie Nilsson, "Rundkyrkor i Norden" (Lund University, 1994), 43. For the Baltic crusades, see William Urban, *The Baltic crusade* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1975); *The Livonian crusade* (Washington: University Press of America, 1981); Eric Christiansen, *The Northern Crusades: The Baltic and the Catholic Frontier, 1100–1525* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980); Alan V. Murray, ed. *Crusade and conversion on the Baltic Frontier, 1150–1500* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001); Iben Fonnesberg-Schmidt, *The Popes and the Baltic Crusades 1147–1254* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Alan V. Murray, ed. *The Clash of Cultures on the Medieval Baltic Frontier* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2009); Ane Bysted et al., eds., *Jerusalem in the North: Denmark and the Baltic Crusades, 1100–1522* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2012); Torben Kjersgaard Nielsen and Iben Fonnesberg-Schmidt, eds., *Crusading on the Edge: Ideas and Practice of Crusading in Iberia and the Baltic Region, 1100–1500* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016).

8 Wienberg, "Conspicuous Architecture".

9 Teresa Rodzińska-Choraży, *Zespoły rezydencjonalne i kościoły centralne na ziemiach polskich do połowy wieku XII* (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2009); Anežka Merhautová-Livorová, *Einfache mitteleuropäische Rundkirchen. Ihr Ursprung, Zweck und ihre Bedeutung* (Praha: Academia, 1970).

10 Matthias Untermann, *Der Zentralbau im Mittelalter. Form – Funktion – Verbreitung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989), 52–4. See also Chapter 11 (Denys Pringle), 198–217.

home.¹¹ Their intentions may have varied, but offering a substitute for those unable to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem is seen as one of the common factors. Yet, in the twelfth century the cross-shaped form was no longer topical. It tended to be replaced with a round ground plan surrounded by an ambulatory, or an octagon with a long chancel terminating in an apse in the east wall.¹² After the crusaders' loss of Jerusalem, the imitation of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre lost its actuality in the West. The number of new round churches was limited, known to be built on the initiative either of the participants of the abortive Fourth Crusade (Vera Cruz in Segovia, consecrated in 1208) or of the Knights Templar (Tomar c. 1200).¹³ Thus, both the form and the presumably late period of construction of the round churches in East Scandinavia are at variance with the mainstream construction of round churches in Europe. Following Jes Wienberg, we may relate the erection of round churches in Scandinavia to the Baltic rather than to the Levantine crusades, and the question arises: why were round churches built even in regions far from the crusade routes?

For whom were the churches intended? Was their purpose to enhance the self-representation of the church-building elites, hinting at their expeditions to Jerusalem or the Baltic, or did they have another function in the society of their time? The natural environment and the cultural landscape may prove to be the key factors in opening up the wider context of the construction of round churches. In the following, I shall consider the construction of round churches in one of Sweden's counties – Västergötland which, owing to its geographical location, cannot possibly have any direct connections to the Baltic crusades.

Round Churches in Västergötland

Västergötland is the earliest Christianized region in Sweden. According to Adam of Bremen, Olof Skötkonung (c. 980–1022), the first Christian king of Sweden, established the centre of the diocese in Skara in the early eleventh century.¹⁴ Skara was surrounded by Västergötland's best agricultural land, as well as the large sand- and limestone plateau of Billingen, where high-quality building material could be obtained. The highest concentration of early Romanesque churches can in fact be found on that very plateau. Another district rich in early churches is to be found north of Skara at Lake Vänern, connecting the region to Svealand and Norway. Architecturally, these single-nave

¹¹ Colin Morris, *The Sepulchre of Christ and the Medieval West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 204.

¹² The octagon erected around St Olav's shrine in Nidaros (Trondheim) is a prominent example. See Chapter 14 (Øystein Ekroll), 294–6.

¹³ Untermann 1989, *Der Zentralbau im Mittelalter*: 52, 71–76.

¹⁴ Adam of Bremen, *The History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, trans. Francis Joseph Tschan, New York: Columbia University Press, 1959.

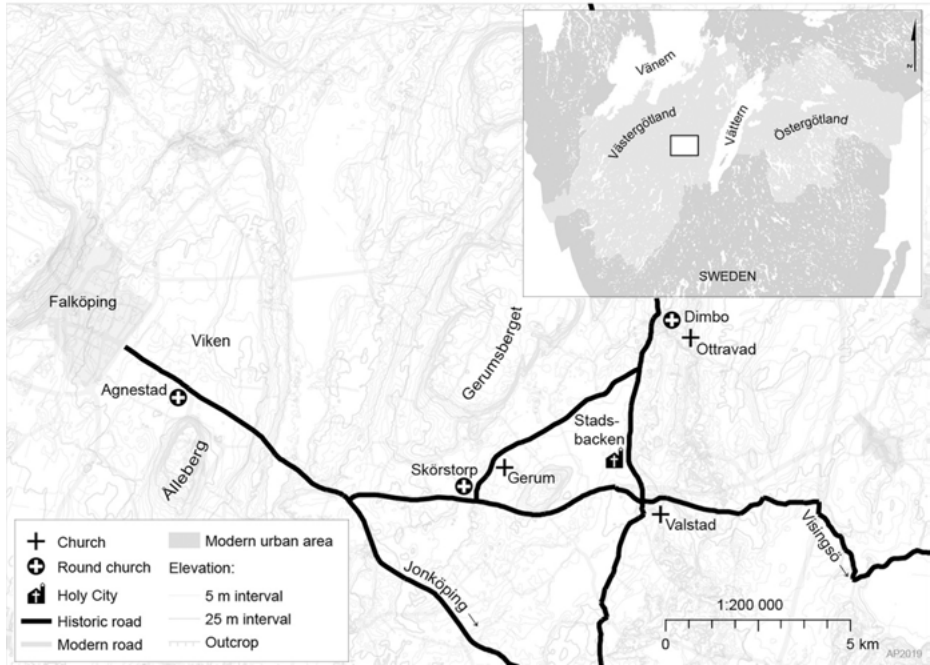


Fig. 16.3: Round churches and the place called the Holy City in the area between Falköping and Lake Vättern in Västergötland.

churches can be divided into two categories: having either a narrower rectangular chancel or a chancel with an apse. Most were built from the second half of the twelfth to the early thirteenth century. The towers are few, and secondary – all of them were erected in the thirteenth century. The rare exceptions are the Skara Cathedral and the Husaby Church. Husaby, originally a royal estate, was acquired by the bishop in the twelfth century (King Olof was baptized here).¹⁵ Thus, it can be said that in the mid-twelfth century, stone churches were still rare in Västergötland.¹⁶

The round churches of Västergötland can be found south of Skara, near the old trading centre of Falköping. This was the meeting point of several important roads. In the Middle Ages, one of the most important equestrian roads connecting Sweden to Denmark was Ätrastigen, starting from the Danish Halland and proceeding to

¹⁵ The towers of Skara Cathedral and Husaby Church may have been erected in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century. Skara Cathedral was probably a basilica. Markus Dahlberg, *Skaratraktens kyrkor under äldre medeltid*, Skrifter från Skaraborgs länsmuseum (Skara: Skaraborgs länsmuseum, 1998), 94–6, 131–2.

¹⁶ Dendrochronologically, the churches of Götene, Skälvum, Forshem, Marum, and Skalunda have been dated to the first half of the twelfth century. Dahlberg 1998, *Skaratraktens kyrkor*: 86–7.

Svealand over Varnhem. Another road led from Småland's trading centre Jönköping towards Skara via Falköping.

The ruins of Agnestad round church lie a few kilometres east of Falköping, close to the Ålleberga plateau, which has been called a holy mountain (Fig. 16.3). One of Sweden's most prominent archaeological finds was discovered here – a golden collar from the fifth–sixth century [*Ållebergskragen*]. To the north of the church there is a settlement site called Viken, which seems to indicate proximity to a body of water (*vik* is the modern Swedish word for a bay or gulf), although there has never been one in that particular location.

According to the archaeologist Lars Bägerfeldt, the name is derived from the same origin as the English word *wik*, meaning an assembly point. While Svealand had to provide a fleet to serve the King, the Västgöta men were to contribute cavalry, and one of the assembly points for the cavalry could have been on that spot. This would explain why the English Bishop Sigfrid, who had baptized King Olof, chose to consecrate the site of Agnestad church,¹⁷ and why the round church was later erected there. The church, in ruins today, consisted of a circular building (with an inner diameter 8.6 meters) and a small apse (Fig. 16.4). No remains of columns have been found, and we may therefore assume that the church had a wooden roof. A round stone bench follows the inner perimeter of the church wall.¹⁸

From Agnestad church, the road proceeded to Falköping and further to Lake Vättern, whence Östergötland could be reached via the island of Visingsö. In the twelfth century, Visingsö was an important administrative and political centre, playing a central role in the transport of iron from Jönköping to the regions of Östergötland and Mälardalen (the valley of Lake Mälaren).¹⁹ When proceeding from Agnestad towards Visingsö, we reach the Skörstorp round church after about ten kilometres. The church has survived, but has been subject to several reconstructions throughout the centuries (Fig. 16.2). The walls of the round church building, with masonry and a foundation profile similar to those of the Agnestad church, have been preserved in their

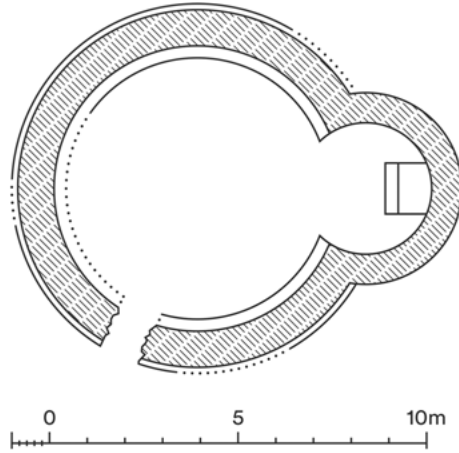


Fig. 16.4: Round church of Agnestad. After Frölén 1910: 106.

¹⁷ *Västgötalagen*, ed. H.S. Collin and C.J. Schlyter, *Corpus iuris Sueo-Gotorum antique*. Samling af Sveriges gamla lagar, 1, Stockholm: Haeggström, 1827.

¹⁸ Frölén, *Nordens befästa rundkyrkor*, I, 102–7.

¹⁹ Kristina Franzén, “Kyrkan i landskapet,” in *Småland. Landskapets kyrkor*, ed. Marian Ullén (Stockholm: Riksantikvarieämbetet, 2006), 24.

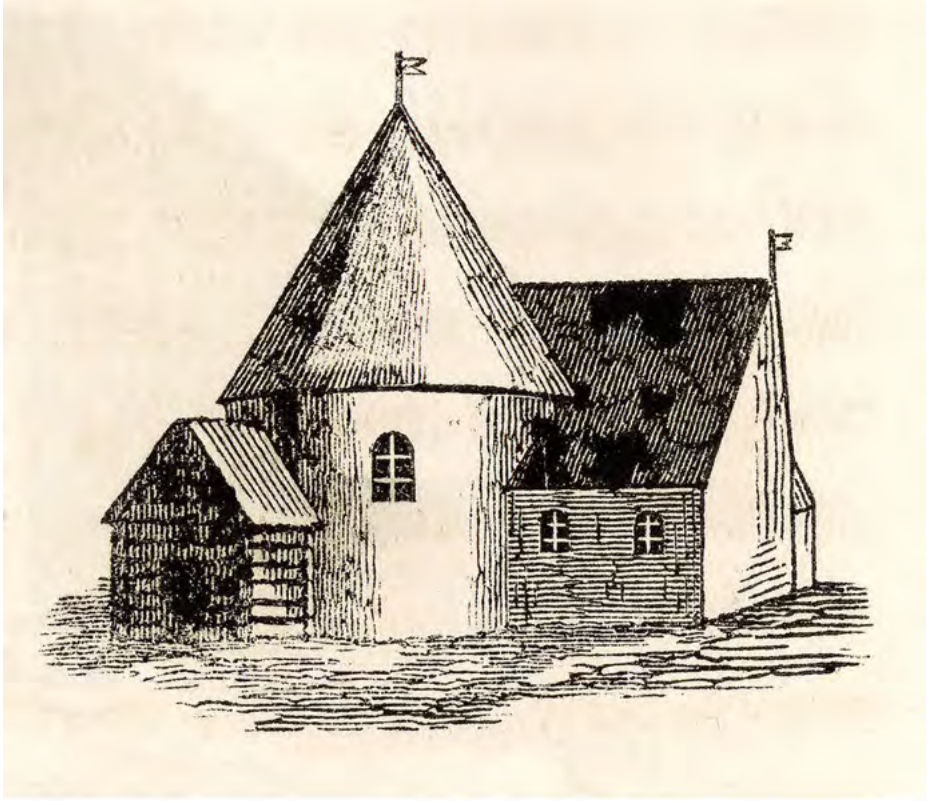


Fig. 16.5: Round church of Dimbo. After Hyltén-Cavallius 1864: 202.

original shape. Yet, the inner diameter of the Skörstorp church is longer – 10.2 meters. Columns have also not been found here during excavations,²⁰ so it may be assumed that this church, too, had a wooden roof. There is no information whatsoever about the appearance of the earliest eastern part of the church.

At Skörstorp, the road splits – one route proceeds to Östergötland, the other leads to the Dimbo round church situated about six kilometres to the north. Although this building no longer exists (it was used for construction material during the nineteenth century), the site and the preserved drawings give a satisfactory account of the church's past appearance and significance (Fig. 16.5).²¹ Just as in Skörstorp, the chancel in Dimbo was rebuilt in a later period, and its size, when compared to the round building, underpins the modest size of the original church.²² Thus, Dimbo round

²⁰ Frölén, *Nordens befästa rundkyrkor*, I, 97.

²¹ P. E. Lindskog, *Försök till en kortt beskrifning om Skara stift*, Häfte III (Skara 1814), 35.

²² Frölén, *Nordens befästa rundkyrkor*, I, 100–1.

church seems to have been quite similar to the Agnestad church. The church was situated on top of a hill about ten meters high, on the side of the important road proceeding to the north from Jönköping. Västergötland's largest burial site, consisting of c. 260 remains, including 214 burial mounds – the largest being 16 metres in diameter and 1.5 metres high – is to be found in the neighbourhood.²³ A burial site of this kind could not have been intended for local inhabitants, but must have been a collective burial site of a larger settlement area.²⁴

When comparing the location of the three churches in the landscape, the more unusual the position of the Skörstorp church becomes. While Agnestad church is situated on a wide plain and Dimbo church upon a hill, Skörstorp church stands in a shallow depression at the beginning of a valley road between two hills. After less than two kilometres, the road takes us to the Östra Gerum church, whose churchyard was consecrated by Bishop Sigfrid.²⁵ The location probably had an equal significance to Agnestad in pre-Christian society, and it was considered important to erect a Christian shrine here. What could have been the reason? Throughout the centuries, people have brought offerings to the Gerum church in the hope of fulfilment of their prayers.²⁶ Near the church, there is an ancient sacrificial well, suggesting that the ecclesiastical powers attempted to channel the prestige of older pagan cult sites into the new Christian sanctuaries. This was obviously a popular, much-visited site, with good prospects to become a pilgrim route. Can it then be a coincidence that there were churches – Skörstorp and Dimbo respectively – at each end of the road?

The Holy City of Bishop Bengt

There is yet another interesting place in the area. East of Östra Gerum – about four kilometres as the crow flies – there is a hill c. 40 meters high called *Stadsbacken* (The City Hill), which may have been the site of the Holy City [*Denn Heliga stadh*] mentioned in sixteenth-century sources.²⁷ There was a church there and fairs were held yearly at Pentecost. Although there are no traces left of the church itself, its size must have been remarkable considering the size and weight of the bell. In 1541, the bailiff Torsten Hendricson composed a list of the bells of forsaken churches in the area

²³ Swedish National Heritage Board: <http://www.fmis.raa.se> Dimbo 6:1.

²⁴ Johan Runer, *Från hav till land eller Kristus och Odalen: en studie av Sverige under äldre medeltid med utgångspunkt från de romanska kyrkorna* (Stockholm: Stockholms universitet, 2006), 328.

²⁵ *Västgötalagen* 1827, 304.

²⁶ Lindskog, *Försök till en kortt beskrifning om Skara stift*, 21–2.

²⁷ See more in: Bo Lundqvist, *Falköping genom tiderna. Del I. Falköpings historia. Från äldsta tid till omkring år 1620* (Falköping: Drätselkammaren, 1940), 231; Folke Högberg, "Gåtan om 'Den Heliga Staden' i Västergötland," *Medeltidsstudier i Västergötland. Västergötlands Fornminnesförenings Tidskrift* 6 (1971): 21.



Fig. 16.6: Tympanum of the southern portal of the church of Valstad.

between Falköping and Lake Vättern: their average weight was around 200 kg, but the bell of the *Hellige stad* weighed 561 kilos.²⁸ In the immediate vicinity of Stadsbacken there is Valstad, which – considering the local road network – must have been a regional centre. On the tympanum of the southern portal of the Romanesque church of Valstad there is a figure depicting a cross-section of a building, which according to several scholars may refer to St John’s vision from the Book of Revelation: “I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God” (Rev 21:2) (Fig. 16.6).²⁹ As no other similar relief is known from medieval Swedish art, parallels with the Holy City situated close by seem unambiguous here.

When considering the placement of the round churches, there can be no doubt that we are looking at a deliberate and elaborate geographical composition. Bishop Bengt of Skara built the Agnestad and Dimbo churches, as has been established by the list of the bishops of Skara diocese added as an appendix to the oldest manuscript of the Elder Westrogothic law.³⁰ In earlier historiography, Bengt’s tenure is usually dated to 1150–1190, deduced from mentions of the preceding and succeeding bishops in historical sources. St Erik Jedvardsson, King of Sweden (r. 1156–1160), was

²⁸ Högberg, “Gåtan om ‘Den Heliga Staden’,” 21, 27.

²⁹ Högberg, “Gåtan om ‘Den Heliga Staden’,” 27; Jan Svanberg, *Västergötlands medeltida stensulptur* (Stockholm: Signum, 2011), 49–50.

³⁰ *Västgötalagen* 1827, 306; Dahlberg, *Skaratraktens kyrkor*, 158.

Bengt's uncle, who was killed at an early age (hence, his short period of reign). It is, however, not realistic to assume that they would have occupied senior positions simultaneously. It is more probable that Bengt was a contemporary of his cousin King Knut Eriksson, who ruled Sweden 1167–1195. Nevertheless, the same list of bishops mentions that Bengt built the church of Götala, whose precise site remains unknown, although local tradition connects it to a place where a round wall with a 10-meter diameter has been preserved. Moreover, in the register of the Swedish National Heritage Board, this site is recorded as the location of Götala Church.³¹ It is possible that it may even have been a round church. Götala was the site where the All-thing of Götaland was held, some kilometres east of Skara,³² where decisions on both warfare and taxes were made, and cult ceremonies were held, as well as festivals and games.³³ The supposed church ruins lie only about 800 meters from the All-thing square.

To sum up: Agnestad Church was built for the greatest trade centre of Västergötland, where the assembly place of Västergötland's cavalry also may have been situated; while Götala Church stood close to the meeting place of all leaders, with the Dimbo church at the region's most important burial site. Hence, we may conclude that Bishop Bengt's round churches were components of a specific layout carrying a certain message to the people of Västergötland. What was that message? Swedish archaeologist Johan Runer gives one possible answer in his doctoral dissertation (defended in 2006), where he considers changes in land ownership in the last decades of the twelfth and the early thirteenth centuries. When previously important matters had been decided at Things, the old gods had been part of the human world, and the primary way of thinking had been collective. The Christian God – omnipotent and triumphant – transcended the human sphere, while his earthly powers were channelled through the offices of the Church and the divinely sanctioned right of the King. Earlier, the community authorized the kings to control the common property, but in the thirteenth century there was a change: the taxes and common land, previously owned collectively, were transferred into the sole ownership of the King and the Church. Runer dates the offset of this change to the rule of King Knut Eriksson, who promoted the sanctification of his father King Erik as part of the legitimation of the dynasty's divine right to the Swedish throne.³⁴ Moreover, the reliquary in

31 Swedish National Heritage Board: <http://www.fmis.raa.se>, Skara 38:2.

32 Gösta Börjesson, *Ödekyrkor i Västergötland* (Skara: Skaraborgs länsmuseum, 1994), 39; Ivar Lundahl, *Det medeltida Västergötland* (Uppsala: A.B. Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1961), 186–87.

33 For more about *thing*, see: Stefan Brink, “Legal Assemblies and Judicial Structure in Early Scandinavia,” in *Political Assemblies in the Earlier Middle Ages*, ed. Paul S. Barnwell and Marco Mostert, Studies in the Early Middle Ages (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003); Stefan Brink, “Legal Assembly Sites in Early Scandinavia,” in *Assembly Places and Practices in Medieval Europe*, ed. Alike Pantos and Sarah Semple (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004).

34 Runer 2006, *Från hav till land eller Kristus och Odalen*: 335–36. For royal saints and strategies of legitimation, see also Chapters 5 and 14 (Øystein Ekroll), 86–93 and 270–98, and Chapter 24 (Björn Tjällén), 520–33.

the family's private church at Eriksberg, 30 kilometres south-west of Skara, containing a piece of cloth from the Holy Sepulchre as well as a piece of the True Cross, fits into this context. The reliquary has been dated to the rule of Knut Eriksson, who died at the Eriksberg royal estate.³⁵ As the Erik dynasty resided in Västergötland, Bengt's actions can be seen as the building of an earthly Jerusalem, bringing the Holy City to Västergötland, and hence, a way of achieving a symbolic visualization of the incarnate God.

The New Elite Elected by God

This interpretation of the church buildings is underpinned by the sculptural ornaments of the churches in the region. Besides the aforementioned temple relief on the south portal of Valstad Church, there is an image of the resurrected Christ on the western portal, with a cross in one hand and a stone tablet with the inscription DNS IHS XRS (Dominus Ihesus Christus) in the other. A similar image of the resurrected Christ is found on the baptismal font of Ottravad Church, although with more space for the text, so the point becomes clearer: those who believe and are baptized will find salvation (Fig. 16.1).³⁶ The first face of the cylindrical baptismal font shows Jesus Christ on the cross, surrounded by curling tendrils (Fig. 16.7), and on the next face we can see a militant serpent in the Urnes style associated with the Viking era (Fig. 16.8). This is followed by the image of Christ holding a raised cross: Evil has been vanquished and Christ has risen from the dead. The next face depicts a man sitting on a throne in an attitude of benediction, holding a book. Although the figure lacks a halo (as does the figure of the resurrected Christ) and the gesture of benediction is made with all five fingers, he could still be assumed to represent Christ Pantocrator. On the next face, a man places a cross on a burial mound (Fig. 16.9). And finally, in proud solitude between the two ornamental tablets, we see the stone master himself. He has depicted himself in three-quarter view, carving a stone, with a dragon and a ram in the background, and a smiling lion in the foreground. This grandiose self-presentation speaks of the master's senior status (Fig. 16.10). As the handwriting of the Ottravad master can also be seen in the church of Södra Ving, another of the churches founded by Bishop Bengt, he may have been the bishop's stonemason.³⁷ Ottravad Church was

³⁵ Viola Hjärmfäll, *Medeltida kyrkmålningar i gamla Skara stift*, Skrifter från Skaraborgs länsmuseum (Skara: Skaraborgs länsmuseum, 1993), 29–42; Mereth Lindgren, "Metallskulpturen," in *Signums svenska konsthistoria. Den romanske konsten*, ed. Lennart Karlsson, et al. (Lund: Bokförlaget signum, 1995), 297; P. E. Lindskog, *Försök till en kort beskrifning om Skara stift*, Häfte V (Skara, 1816), 376.

³⁶ Svanberg, *Västergötlands medeltida stensulptur*, 43.

³⁷ In Jan Svanberg's opinion the work can be attributed to the King's master stonemason, as the royal estate of Ettak was situated only c.10 km from Valstad Church. Svanberg, *Västergötlands medeltida stensulptur*, 52.

less than two kilometres from Dimbo Church, and was demolished at the same time as the latter. According to descriptions, both the church and the tower were constructed from sandstone ashlar blocks,³⁸ and may therefore have been quite similar to those of Valstad Church. The church's proximity to the region's most important burial site also speaks for the senior position of the patron.

We may assume that round churches were erected on the bishop's initiative, but this could only have taken place with the consent of the local rulers. The Skara region has been considered the centre of both ecclesiastical and regal power, and the area between Falköping and Lake Vättern was the centre of the local elite.³⁹ The network of round churches with *Helliga Staden* (the Holy City) was erected in the vicinity of Falköping in order to create a sacred landscape, unique in the larger context of Scandinavia. As Skörstorp Church was not included in the list, it could not have been built by Bengt. Obviously, the bishop's initiative must have met with strong local support, yet this may have involved only a small part of the local elite. Drawing parallels with Denmark, where ecclesiastical power was very closely connected to the Hvide dynasty,⁴⁰ who wished to stand out among other families as rulers by divine right, thus acquiring more power, we could assume similar ambitions for the Erik dynasty in Västergötland. Even though the first



Fig. 16.7: Jesus Christ on the cross. The baptismal font of the Ottravad Church, twelfth century.

³⁸ Lindskog, *Försök till en kort beskrifning om Skara stift*, 37.

³⁹ Kristina Carlsson, *Var går gränsen? Arkeologiska uttryck för religiösa och politiska aktörer i nuvarande Västsverige under perioden 1000–1300*, Lunds Studies in Historical Archaeology (Uddevalla: Bohusläns museums förlag, 2007), 152.

⁴⁰ Lars Hermanson, *Släkt, vänner och makt. En studie av elitens politiska kultur i 1100-talets Danmark* (Gothenburg: Göteborgs universitet, 2000).



Fig. 16.8: Serpent in the Urnes style on the baptismal font of the Ottravad Church, twelfth century.

churches had already been built in the region in the early eleventh century, it seems that it was during Bishop Bengt's term of office that the Christian transformation of the landscape was completed.

Conclusion

In history and art history writing, twelfth-century Scandinavia is usually labelled as the Early Middle Ages. This designation may lead us to suppose that Christianity was already deeply rooted there by that time, and the social order characteristic of medieval Christendom fully established. This interpretation may be modified, at least with respect to parts of Sweden. The use of motives from Viking art in church decorations shows that the old, familiar visual world still continued to exist. It is likely that

the local mentality was still predominantly rooted in the old and traditional, and the new stone churches were an attempt to bring Christianity closer to the people by the use of familiar symbols. Therefore, the construction of round churches can be seen as a powerful step towards changing that mentality. The exterior form of the wooden churches was reminiscent of both Viking halls and ships. The first few stone churches in rural areas were remarkable for their new material, while their external form still preserved the visual resemblance to the wooden churches. The construction of western towers became significant only by the late twelfth century. Thus, the association with the death and resurrection of Christ in the form of references to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at locations with great symbolic value to the local community (e.g. the All-Thing grounds, burial sites, assembly points) must have had an immense spiritual impact. The builders of those churches wished to ensure their position in society, demonstrating their divinely sanctioned right to rule. Nevertheless, it is very important to consider the date



Fig. 16.9: Christ Pantocrator and a priest (?) placing a cross on a mound. The baptismal font of the Ottravad Church, twelfth century.



and location of each of the round churches, as the social context may have affected the content of the message. This is especially relevant for the thirteenth-century round churches, which without exception were situated at important communication routes, and can be regarded as having been built in the context of the Baltic Crusade.

Fig. 16.10: Self-presentation of the stone master on the baptismal font of the Ottravad Church, twelfth century.



Fig. 17.1: Presentation in the Temple. Detail of the Tresfjord altar panel, c.1325–1350, Tresfjord Church, Møre.

Margrete Syrstad Andås

Chapter 17

Entering the Temple of Jerusalem: Candlemas and Churching in the Lives of the Women of the North. A Study of Textual and Visual Sources

This chapter examines how Candlemas and Churching were celebrated in the North during the medieval period, and how these rituals and the biblical story of the Entry in the Temple of Jerusalem were depicted in the visual arts of the region. Bodily re-enactment, mnemonic objects, words and music constructed an inter-referentiality and served to dissolve the distance between the biblical stories and the medieval present. Throughout the cycle of the year, the Temple of Jerusalem was repeatedly brought into peoples' lives, and especially into the lives of women who had become mothers. Acting like Mary established a form of religious kinship between the mother of Christ and the new mother. Bridged by the Churching of her own foremothers, the purification of the medieval woman thus constructed a pseudo-genealogy from Mary to herself. On the threshold of the local church, there simply was no forgetting of Jerusalem.

On the feast of the purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, when lady Birgitta, the bride of Christ, was in Rome in the church called Santa Maria Maggiore, she was caught up in a spiritual vision and saw how everything in heaven was being made ready as though for a great feast. She saw then, as it were, a temple of wondrous beauty, and there was the venerable and righteous old man, Simeon, ready to receive the child Jesus in his arms with the utmost desire and joy. She also saw the Blessed Virgin approaching most honourably and carrying her little son in order to present him in the temple according to the law of the Lord. Then she saw a countless multitude of angels and the various ranks of God's saints and holy virgins and ladies walking before the Blessed Virgin Mother of God and surrounding her with all gladness and devotion. Ahead of her an angel was carrying a long sword, very broad and bloody, symbolizing the great sorrows that had befallen Mary on the death of her beloved son. These were pre-figured by the sword that the righteous Simeon had foretold would pierce her soul. Hence,

Note: The author is grateful to Mette Maria Ahlefeldt-Laurvig for generously sharing sources and texts concerning the Danish material, to Professor Lasse Hodne for insightful comments on the iconography, and to Elisabeth Andersen for bringing a number of depictions of the Presentation in the imagery of medieval Scandinavia to her attention.

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while the heavenly court exulted, it was said to the bride: “Behold how much honour and glory are rendered on this fest to the Queen of heaven in return for the sword of sorrows which she endured at the passion of her beloved son.” The vision then disappeared.¹

The revelation of St Birgitta (c.1303–1373) describes the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, also called Candlemas, which commemorates three central religious events of entry: (1) the offering of “a male opening the womb” to the temple of Jerusalem, (2) Mary’s post-partum re-entry into the Temple of Jerusalem, and (3) the reception of the Christ child by Simeon; the old man who had received a promise from God that he should not see death before he had seen Christ the Lord. All these aspects of Luke 2:22–38 are noted in St Birgitta’s vision, yet her revelation contains additional layers of meaning and information less obvious to the modern reader. St Birgitta goes on to describe a procession of virgins and ladies accompanying the blessed Virgin for her entry in the Temple. For a woman like St Birgitta, belonging to the higher stratum of society, and herself many times a mother, the description presumably also reflects her own Churchings, and the Churchings of other women of her standing. There might not have been angels present, but all the best women of her milieu would have been chosen to accompany her as she entered her own church, the local Temple of Jerusalem, and the earthly gate to the heavenly city.² Admittedly, Candlemas was only celebrated once a year, but Churching would have been amongst the more frequently celebrated of medieval rituals, following the birth of a child, whether this lived or died. And every time, the earthly and the heavenly Jerusalem were brought into play through the repetition and re-enactment of religious memories, an in the construction of personal ones.

The identification between the local church and the temple of Jerusalem was well established in medieval religiosity. From the twelfth to the fifteenth century, homilies for the Dedication fest are preserved from the Nidaros province that explains how the temple of Solomon was a model for the medieval church building, and some recall Solomon’s prayer to God wherein God reveals his presence in the temple.³ In liturgical prescriptive texts, the church is often referred to as the temple. The *Ordo Nidrosiense*, the ordinal for the Nidaros province with prescriptions for the cyclical fests, prescribes how certain outdoor processions shall continue until

¹ Birgitta of Sweden, *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*, 4 vols, trans. Denis Searby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006–2015. book VI, ch. 2, 206–07 I am grateful to Maria Husabø Oen for bringing this passage to my attention. For St Birgitta and Jerusalem, see Chapter 13 (Maria H. Oen), 245–67.

² On this, see also the Introduction, 35–6, and Chapter 15 (Line M. Bonde), 299–323.

³ For *Cod. AM. 619 4º*, see *Gammelnorsk homiliebok*, trans. Astrid Salvesen with an introduction by Erik Gunnes, (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1971), 12, 95–100, and 176. The basic structure of the “In dedicatione tempeli sermo” points back to Origines’ homily of the tabernacle. Another compilation of homiletic texts is published under the heading *Messuskýringar*. In this context ch. VII is relevant, *Messuskýringar*, trans. Elise Kleivane, ed. Sigurd Hareide, *et al.* (Oslo: St. Olav forlag, 2014), 85–6.

the door of the temple.⁴ Also in the priestly handbooks, the church is described as the temple. In the marriage rituals of the *Manuale Norwegicum*, dating from the twelfth to the fourteenth century, the rings shall be blessed “ante hostium temple,” before the door of the temple.⁵ The baptismal texts, on the other hand, applies the term *ecclesia* for what shall be done, whereas the text that the priest is to read out says *Ingredere in templum dei*, enter God’s temple.⁶ Applying *ecclesia* for descriptive purposes was not uncommon. This may for instance also be observed in the only pontifical fragment thought to actually have belonged to the archiepiscopal cathedral of Nidaros.⁷

In her discussion of the physical church as the Heavenly Jerusalem, Ann R. Meyer demonstrates how the liturgy identifies the building as “the location for a possibility of passage between the temporal and sacred realms.”⁸ She observes the same thing as we see in the texts from the North; the church is both the church building of the present, the Temple of Jerusalem, and the eternal Temple of God; the Jerusalem above. The “here and now” and the “there and then” are at the same time both separate and the same. It is acknowledged in words that to enter into the church is also to enter the eternal temple of God.

At the moment of entry, Candlemas brings Jerusalem and its temple into play; the door of the church, the door of the temple of Solomon, and the door of the temple of God melts together.⁹ Through constant repetition, the act of entry in itself evokes these associations. To understand these processes, a brief glance to the field of memory studies may be helpful.

4 In capite ieiunii: “. . . cantando antiphonas processionales usque ad ostium temple;” Dominica in octavis pasche: “Que si non suffecerint, cantetur Salve festa dies usque ad ostium templi et ibi finiatur. Ad introitum templi antiphona Sedit angelus imponatur vel Rex noster et fiat statio ante crucem.” Dominica prima post trinitatem: “Que si non suffecerit, addatur antiphona Cum uenerimus et ante hostium templi finiatur.” *Ordo Nidrosiensis ecclesiae*, ed. Lilli Gjerløw, Libri liturgici provinciae Nidrosiensis medii aevi, 2 (Oslo: Norsk Historisk Kjeldeskrift-Institut, 1968), 200, 243, 268-9

5 *Manuale Norwegicum*, ed. H. Fæhn, Libri liturgici Provinciae Nidrosiensis Medii Aevi, I (Oslo: Norsk Historisk Kjeldeskrift-institut, 1962), 19, 85-5, 152-3.

6 *Manuale Norwegicum* 152-3.

7 The fragments contain parts of the dedication ritual, and parts of the prescriptions for the reconciliation of a church. From the dedication, we recognise the ritual element where the church is to be marked in twelve places with *crismat*; “cum crismat ecclesiam signare in duodecim locis,” and throughout the consecration prescriptions, the church is repeatedly referred to as *ecclesia*, NRA lat. fragm.1054-1059 (unpublished).

8 “The liturgy itself identifies the building as the habitation of God; the location for a possibility of passage between the temporal and the sacred realms; a confirmation and celebration of the events of Christ’s life; a reminder and preparation of the Last judgment; and finally, a community of worshippers, whose individual members are the true temples, the living stones, the sacramental signa of the Church,” Ann R. Meyer, *Medieval Allegory and the Building of the New Jerusalem* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), 94. See also her “Introduction.”

9 Cf. Chapter 15 (Line M. Bonde), 299-301, including Fig. 15.1.

Communicative Memory, Communal Memory, and the Floating Gap

Maurice Halbwachs (1877–1945) demonstrated how memory depends on socialization and communication, and how it may thus be analysed as a function of our social life and our belonging to social groups. Halbwachs' term "collective memory" has since then been much used.¹⁰ Jan Assmann is one of those who have further developed his ideas. Assmann's writing sheds light upon the use of models in the development and construction of memory and identity, and his perspective may be productive in the analysis of the role of the theological motif of the Entry in the Temple as a model for the medieval worshiper.

Memory enables us to form an awareness of identity, both on the personal and on the collective level.¹¹ Assmann suggests that it would be helpful to separate not only between the inner neuro mental level and the social level, but also between the social and the cultural level. The latter two categories construct a productive framework in the distinction between Churching and Candlemas.

Assmann's term "cultural memory" describes memories that may be placed in historical, mythical and cultural time; memories that are based on fixed points in the past, and concerns cultural identity. Such memories are not about the past as it was, but the past as it is remembered:

[. . .] the past is not preserved as such, but is cast in symbols as they are represented in oral myths or in writings, performed in feasts, and as they are continually illuminating a changing present. In the context of cultural memory, the distinction between myth and history vanishes.¹²

Candlemas typically falls into the category of "cultural memory;" it concerns the distant past, which through commemoration is established in the individual worshiper's memory, it has a high degree of formation and ceremonial communication, it is mediated in texts and performed ritual, and it is led by specialized carriers of memory in a hierarchical structure.¹³

Churching falls into the category of "communicative memory." Communicative memory concerns that which is non-institutional, communicative, and developed in social time, as a carrier of social roles. Assmann associates communicative memory

¹⁰ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992). Originally published in Félix Alcan, ed. *Collection: Les travaux de l'Année sociologique* (Paris: Les Presses universitaires de France, 1925).

¹¹ Jan Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," in *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Eril and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin – New York: W. de Gruyter, 2008), 109–18.

¹² Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," 113.

¹³ Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," 117.

with the time structure of living memory. The participation structure is diffused. Its form is the informal tradition, and autobiographical memory. In the Scandinavian material prescriptions for this ritual are missing, even though it was certainly celebrated. Compared to the rituals of the annual cycle, or the Sacraments, Churching was of a very different nature in the sense that it was voluntary; the woman could choose – at least in theory – to have, or not have, this honourable ceremony of introduction. The memory of Churching would have belonged to the individual woman and her group (family, local community), and its memory would not have lasted longer than living memory. It was located and played out in “real” time, that is in social time, and related to the woman’s own social roles. Assmann’s communicative memory encompass memories, which are located in the recent past, in our case, memories, which concerns either the woman herself, her mother, grandmother or great grandmother.

Assmann points out how “groups, which, of course, do not “have” a memory tend to “make” themselves one by means of things meant as a reminder.”¹⁴ Memory consists only in relation to other human memories and “things,” and Assmann thus speaks of “the remembering mind” and “the reminding object.” In the present context, the church door constitutes such a locus of memory. The door is the physical element used in these rituals, and accordingly, a cluster of associations and memories may be revived there. The rituals fill the space of the door with religious histories. The church door may not be the actual door of the temple of Jerusalem, but it is framed as such in liturgical rituals, and through their actions, the worshipers submit to this idea, and reinforce and renew this mimesis of the temple door. Similarly, the candles are “mnemonic objects,” they are invested with memories and are made to play the role of the Christ child, they are held by the worshipper and carried across the threshold.

The informal generational memory refers to the recent past, whereas the formal, the cultural memory, refers to the remote past. The distance between the two events, the Purification of Mary in the temple of Jerusalem and the purification of any medieval mother in her own local church, is bridged by what in Jan Vansina’s term would be called “the floating gap.”¹⁵ Vansina’s observations primarily concerns oral societies, yet he argues that even in literary societies, living memory goes no further back than eighty years. Historical consciousness thus operates on two levels; the times of origins and the recent past. In this particular study, cultural memory and social memory is not only bridged by mnemonic elements such as candles and church doors, but also by the social memory of the foremothers of the new mother. Through these two rituals constant and continuant inter-referentiality, the idea of lineage is established: Acting like Mary constructs a form of religious kinship between Mary and the new mother. Mary is the root of the Christian lineage. The medieval woman’s Churching brought

¹⁴ Assmann, “Communicative and Cultural Memory,” 111.

¹⁵ Assmann, “Communicative and Cultural Memory,” 112–3, referring to Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

her into a long line of devout and honourable women; by the ritual acts of her own foremothers a pseudo-genealogy to Mary is established.

The Celebration of Candlemas and the Motif of the Presentation in the Visual Art of the North

Before we move on to consider the visual art and the ritual practices, we should for a moment look at the biblical story, as if looking at the script of a play with a scene, artefacts, and characters entering. In the Vulgate (Luke 2:24–38) we hear that they (Mary and Joseph) brought him (Jesus) to *Jerusalem*. As sacrifice they brought *a pair of turtledoves* or *two young pigeons*. There was a man in Jerusalem named *Simeon*. He was already waiting in *the temple*, because he had received a promise from *the Holy Ghost* that he should not see death until he had seen Christ the Lord. When his parents brought in the Child Jesus, Simeon took him in his arms and blessed God, and proclaimed his prophecy, where he saw *the sword* that would pierce Mary's soul. At the same hour, also *Anna* came in. Anna was "far advanced in years," since long a widow, and lived her life in fasting and prayer. Anna also spoke of him to all who looked for the redemption of Israel. *The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* (chapter 15) does not diverge much from this, it gives Anna the line "In Him is the redemption of the world," and it adds that Simeon, when Jesus was brought forth to him "took Him up into his *cloak* and kissed His feet."¹⁶

By the time the feast of Candlemas reached Scandinavia, the central ceremonial aspects of the celebration were already codified. The meeting between Christ and Simeon was the focal point of the earliest known Candlemas celebration called the *Hypapante*, the meeting, which is described by the late fourth-century pilgrim Egeria in her accounts from her visit to the Holy Land c.400.¹⁷ The feast was then celebrated with stationary liturgy and a procession through the townscape of Jerusalem. Before long, the feast reached Rome, and in the sixth century it was also adopted in the Byzantine Empire. The date of the feast was changed from 14. February to 2. February, so that it would follow forty days after The Feast of the Nativity.¹⁸ It was then established as a

¹⁶ *The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* was well-known throughout the Middle Ages, as this was amongst the «infancy gospels» that attempted to fill out the details of the life of Christ up until the age of 12. In the later Middle ages, the narrative from *Pseudo-Matthew* was included in the *Legenda Aurea*. See *The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, ed. Alexander Roberts, *et al.*, Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Twelve Patriarchs, Excerpts and Epistles, The Clementina, Apocrypha, Decretals, Memoirs of Edessa and Syriac Documents, Remains of the First Ages, VIII (New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886) 368–83.

¹⁷ John Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels to the Holy Land* (Warnminster: Aris & Phillips, 1982), 128.

¹⁸ Dorothy Shorr, "The Iconographic Development of the Presentation in the Temple," *The Art Bulletin* 28 (1946): 17.

Marian feast. In liturgical manuscripts it is therefore labelled *In purificatione beate marie*, or something similar, and it is not part of the *temporale*, which otherwise would be the place for the liturgical commemoration of events in the life of Christ. In non-liturgical sources, the feast is often labelled *Missa candelarum*; Candlemas. Comparative continental examples show that Candlemas varied in length and organization; but often the procession went outside to carry the “Christ Child” around the local landscape and to stage the entry in the temple. The procession was an important part of the celebration also when the feast went north, even though it did not always go out of church, but rather it utilized the full length of the interior. The Venerable Bede, writing in the eighth century, describes how clergy and laity went through the churches singing hymns and carrying candles.¹⁹ In Anglo-Saxon times, the Candlemas procession often went to a station church, like it did in Jerusalem, but the climax of the day was the procession’s return to its home church, and the moment of entry.²⁰

No processions are preserved from medieval Scandinavia. Our knowledge of the Candlemas celebration, with the ritual staging of the entry in the temple and the re-enactment played out by the laity, comes from ordinals, breviaries, missals or other liturgical prescriptions or commentaries.²¹ The earliest text giving the full order of the day is the Nidaros ordinal. We first hear of an ordinal serving as a model text for the liturgical life of this province, which covered mainland Norway and the North Sea islands down to Scotland, in 1308, but the core of the text might be a century older.²² In the following, I shall take this text as my point of departure.

In purificatione beate marie in the *Ordo Nidrosiense* explicitly refers to all the religious points of entry mentioned above.²³ The ritual movements and actions, and the chants throughout the day, explain, interpret and elaborate on Luke 2:22–38.²⁴ This is typical. Also from other parts of Scandinavia, prescriptions for the order of the day are fully or partly preserved. From medieval Sweden, the *Ordinarius Lincopensis*, the ordinal from Linköping, exists in two copies. Both are from Vadstena, of monastic origin and accordingly, they pay no attention to the laity. Nevertheless, they tell us quite a bit about the order for the Candlemas celebration in the diocese of Linköping in the late

¹⁹ Shorr, “The Iconographic Development of the Presentation in the Temple,” 18.

²⁰ M. Bradford Bedingfield, *The dramatic liturgy of Anglo Saxon England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2002), 54.

²¹ Alf Härdelin, *Världen som yta och fönster. Spiritualitet i medeltidens Sverige*, Scripta minora (Stockholm: Selskapet Runica et Mediævalia, 2005), 150, n.46; Hilding Johansson, “Bidrag til den svenska maualetraditionen,” in *Lunds universitets årsskrift*, N.F Avd. 1. Bd 47. Nr. 6 (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1951), 65–78.

²² The text has been dated to the late twelfth century by Lilly Gjerløw, whereas recent work by Astrid Marner places the edition as we have it in the late thirteenth century. *Ordo Nidrosiensis ecclesiae*, 29–30, 34–8, 72; Astrid Marner, *Liturgical Change and Liturgical Plurality in the Province of Nidaros. New light on the Odro Nidrosiensis Ecclesiae* ([Forthcoming]).

²³ *Ordo Nidrosiensis ecclesiae*, 314.

²⁴ *Ordo Nidrosiensis ecclesiae*, 312–5.

fourteenth century.²⁵ Under the rubric *In festo purificationis sancte Marie virginis*, we find much the same antiphons and responsories as in the *Ordo Nidrosiense*. These are standard Candlemas hymns quoting or elaborating upon the text from Luke. From Danish Lund is also much preserved, and from Skara, the formula for Mass is preserved both in a missal fragment and in the breviary.²⁶ In Skara, the *Purificatio beate Marie* has the highest grade. The importance of the feast is also mirrored in *Rituale Aboensis*, from now Finish Åbo, where the octave (February 9) was labelled *festum Simeonis*.²⁷

An important ritual element of this day was the blessing of the candles.²⁸ This took place before the procession. For their purification the candles were stented with blessed water and incensed. The worshipers all held on to their candles throughout the procession, until the *offertorium*, the section of Mass when bread and wine are placed upon the altar, when the candles were extinguished, and the best of them offered. *Manuale Norwegicum* contains two prayers for this ritual, and late medieval formulae are also preserved from the Swedish dioceses of Skara, Strängnäs, Uppsala, and now Finnish Åbo, as well then Danish Lund, and the Danish Notmark manual from the diocese of Odense.²⁹ Also here the texts interpret the narrative from Luke.³⁰ This is commonly found, and both the Presentation in the temple and the Meeting are often mentioned especially. In text and performance, layers of symbolism were ascribed to the candle. The candle played the role of Christ as saviour, “the light to the revelation of the gentiles,” but it was also the sacrificial lamb; the people’s offering. Essentially, the story of Christ was played out through the use of the candles in the short span of the celebration; from the entry in the church where the people re-enacted Simeon and recognized the Messiah, to the end of the celebration when they indeed sacrificed him. The prayer from Lund expands upon the theological paradoxes:

One God, given life by God, yet born by Mary, the one who is both before time and within time, both the dissolution of darkness and the light of faith, who drives away the darkness and sheds light upon the world, both physical external light, and spiritual internal light.³¹

²⁵ The first manuscript is dated just before 1400, whereas the latter is dated c.1450. Sven Helander’s edition is primarily based on the earliest of the two, Sven Helander, *Ordinariarius Lincopensis ca 1400 och dess liturgiske förebilder*, vol. 4, Bibliotheca Theologiae Practicae (Lund: Gleerup, 1957), 25, 407–24.

²⁶ Hilding Johansson, *Den medeltida liturgien i Skara stift- Studier i mässa och helgonkult*, Studia theologica lundensia. Skrifter utgivna av teologiska fakulteten i Lund (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1956), 36.

²⁷ Johansson, *Den medeltida liturgien i Skara stift- Studier i mässa och helgonkult*, 36.

²⁸ Translation by author based on Härdelin, *Världen som yta och fönster*, 288–9.

²⁹ *Manuale Norwegicum*, 176, 79; *Hemsjömanualet. En liturgi-historisk studie*, ed. Hilding Johansson, Samlingar och studier till svenska kyrkans historia, 24 (Stockholm: Svenska kyrkans diakonistyrelses bokförlag) 1950; Johansson, “Bidrag til den svenska maualstraditionen,” 65–70; *The Manual from Notmark: Gl. kgl. Saml. 3453, 8°*, ed. Ottosen, Bibliotheca Liturgica Danica, Series Latina 1 (Copenhagen: Gad, 1970) Härdelin, *Världen som yta och fönster*, 288–9.

³⁰ Johansson, “Bidrag til den svenska maualstraditionen,” 183–4.

³¹ Translation by author based on Härdelin, *Världen som yta och fönster*, 288–9.

The burning candles should thus symbolize the salvation of the human soul.³²

In the Nidaros Ordinal it is specified that the custodian shall distribute the burning candles to the clergy *and* the laity while they sing about Simeon's reception of the Messiah and the greeting of the Virgin. The phrasing may differ, continental texts may for instance prescribe that "each person" shall receive a candle, yet, the point is clear: all shall carry the light of Christ.³³ The antiphon *Lumen ad reuelationem gentium*, "the light to the revelation of the gentiles" (Luke 2: 32) is then to be sung after the candles are distributed, or when the candles are lit. The prescriptions in the *Missale Scarense* are here very similar to Nidaros.³⁴ However, not all churches were large and prominent. In small places like Hemsjö, an annex church to the somewhat larger Aligsås where the vicar lived, no procession was held, but the people were still given candles to hold during Mass, thus keeping the ritual re-enactment element, making the congregation not only hear with their ears what the day was about, but also acknowledge it bodily and see the light with their eyes, just like Simeon.³⁵

After the blessing and distribution of the candles followed the procession. Margot Fassler's discussion of the Candlemas procession from Chartres reveals that this was not very different from what is prescribed in the Nidaros ordinal. Chartres is however interesting as the procession makes a station before the Royal Portal prior to its re-entry.³⁶ The lintel of the Royal Portal features a depiction of the Presentation.³⁷ In Chartres, there is thus a certain correspondence between image and bodily re-enactment. From Scandinavia, no examples of this motif similarly placed in an architectural context are preserved.

According to the prescriptions of the *Ordo Nidrosiense*, the procession exits and walks around the atrium, while they sing processional antiphons typical for Candlemas.³⁸ In the Uppsala missals the Purificatio beate Maria is mentioned as a day

32 Härdelin, *Världen som yta och fönster*, 288–289; *Hemsjömanualet*, 106–11.

33 Quoting Gittos' translation of Robert of Jumièges, Helen Gittos, *Liturgy, Architecture, and Sacred Places in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 120.

34 Ann-Marie Nilsson, "Chants and Provenance of the Fragmentary 12th-century Missal of Skara, Sweden," in *Cantus Planus. Papers read at the 12th meeting of the ISM Study Group Lillafüred, Hungary, 2004, Aug. 23–24* (Budapest: Dobszay, László, 2006), 471–8.

35 *Hemsjömanualet*, 109–110; Härdelin, *Världen som yta och fönster*, 151 n.48.

36 Margot E. Fassler, "Adventus at Chartres. Ritual Models for Major Processions," in *Ceremonial Culture in PreModern Europe*, ed. Nicholas Howe (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre-Dame Press, 2007), 24–7, 57 n.51.

37 On the Marian iconography and liturgy at Chartres, see Margot E. Fassler, "Liturgy and Sacred History in the Twelfth-Century Tympana at Chartres," *The Art Bulletin* 75 (1993): 499–520.

38 *Ordo Nidrosiensis ecclesiae*, 314. The particular reference to a procession in the atrium, also found in the prescriptions for a couple of other feast in the same ordinal, might either be a relic of a model text, reflecting the local situation of the Nidaros cathedral which in its earliest times would have had a large west tower providing apt space for processional activity, or it may reflect the particular situation of Icelandic Skálhot where the preserved texts are from. Skálholt did have an ante structure, a steeple, in the thirteenth- and fourteenth centuries.

when a procession shall be held.³⁹ Little is however known about the route of the procession, but the general rule of the Uppsala Missal was that all the *detempore* processions should go around the church, “per circuitum ecclesie,” presumably then through the church yard.⁴⁰ This is also the case with the Strägnäs missal.⁴¹ In Lund, a station is even prescribed before the re-entry of the cathedral, while they sing the antiphon “Responsum accepit” (Luke 2:26) which announces the answer Simeon received from God confirming that the child was the Messiah.⁴²

Although processions into the townscape are rarely prescribed, outdoor processions were commonly performed on this day, effectively creating correspondence between the processional use of space, and the mnemonic use of the biblical narrative at the point of entry.⁴³ Olaus Magnus (1490–1557), a Swedish Catholic priest who writes about the customs of the people of the North at the time of the Lutheran Reformation, notes that on this day, blessed wax candles were carried through the churches and the churchyards in pious prayer and humility.⁴⁴ He describes this as an old rite that is still kept in high regard because it celebrates “the light to the revelation of the gentiles.” Notably, in these northern regions near the Arctic Circle the beginning of the month of February would not see much day light, and the symbolism of the feast must be assumed to have been particularly obvious.

At the moment of entry both the *Ordo Nidrosiense*, and the fifteenth-century *Ordinarius Lincopensis*, prescribe “Cum inducerent puerum;”

And when his parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law, he [Simeon] also took him into his arms and blessed God and said Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word in peace: because my eyes have seen thy salvation.
(Luke 2:27–29)

This antiphon was commonly prescribed in connection with the entry in the church on Candlemas. Thereafter, Mass was celebrated. According to Lund, a sermon should then be read *ad pulpito*, from the pulpit.⁴⁵ The reference to the pulpit is unusual, but otherwise this follows the norm. The sermons were held in the vernacular, and expanded upon the narrative of Luke. Two virtually identical sermons for

³⁹ Johansson, “Bidrag til den svenska maualetraditionen,” 69.

⁴⁰ Johansson, “Bidrag til den svenska maualetraditionen,” 69.

⁴¹ Johansson, “Bidrag til den svenska maualetraditionen,” 69–70.

⁴² Johansson, “Bidrag til den svenska maualetraditionen,” 70. The other hymns prescribed in the Swedish sources for the Candlemas procession are “Ave gratia plena, dei genitrix,” and “Adorna thalamum.” Gittos mentions the chants to be sung at the point of entry listed in the *Regularis Concordia*, which also includes “Responsum accepit,” Gittos, *Liturgy, Architecture, and Sacred Places*, 121.

⁴³ Gittos, *Liturgy, Architecture, and Sacred Places*, 121, Bedingfield, *The dramatic liturgy of Anglo Saxon England*, 59.

⁴⁴ XVI: 6–7, Olaus Magnus. *Description of the northern People, Rome 1555*, trans. Peter Fischer and Humphrey Higgins, ed. Peter Foote, Hakluyt Society, Second Series, I (New York: Routledge, 1998).

⁴⁵ Johansson, “Bidrag til den svenska maualetraditionen,” 70.

this feast survive from the Nidaros province.⁴⁶ These are mainly based on Bede and Ambrosius Audbertus, and explicitly points out how Jesus was carried into the temple to be held by Simeon.⁴⁷ The biblical theme of those who cannot see or hear, even though the truth has been revealed before them, is contrasted with the just and devoted Simeon, who *saw* the Messiah. The vernacular sermons quote Matthew “So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). Also the homilies speak about “the light to the revelation of the gentiles,” as noted above a biblical quote and one of the most commonly found Candlemas chants.⁴⁸ The sermons then explain the presence of Anna the prophetess; for Christ was sent to save both men and women, and therefore both Simeon and Anna received him in the temple.⁴⁹ The homilies also bring in other themes commonly found in continental texts, and points to Mary as a model of humility and piety.⁵⁰ These homiletic topics should be kept in mind when the imagery is later examined, for this is what the men and women heard in their local temples in the darkness of February while they held on to their own candles.

At the *offertorium* of the Mass, when bread and wine were placed upon the altar, the candles were extinguished, and with much ceremony presented as the offering. Olaus Magnus describes that when the procession had gone through the churches and the cemeteries, the blessed candles were placed upon the altar, chopped into pieces, and then distributed to the families after Mass.⁵¹ Also other sources confirm that each household were allowed to keep one, or rather pieces of, the blessed candles from the Candlemas procession.⁵²

The ritual thus ends in quite a powerful way. Through the course of the celebration the salvation history is played out. First the people, clergy and laity alike, greet their Messiah; they carry him like his mother did, and they recognize him as the true Messiah, like Simeon and Anna did. But at the end of the ceremony, at Mass, the lights are offered upon the altar like the sacrificial lamb.

⁴⁶ *Gammelnorsk Homiliebok*, 66, 171.

⁴⁷ *Gammelnorsk Homiliebok*, 66–9. For a discussion of the textual models, see *Gammelnorsk Homiliebok*, 170–1.

⁴⁸ Matt. 5:16; *Gammelnorsk Homiliebok*, 66–9.

⁴⁹ *Ordo Nidrosiensis ecclesiae*, 315. When the candles are distributed, the ordinal only refers to *populum*, the people, but after the procession, it is explained in great detail that the clergy and the laity go into the chancel to extinguish the candles in water, and the procession ends.

⁵⁰ *Gammelnorsk Homiliebok*, 169–70.

⁵¹ He then goes on to tell that on the following day the children appear at church, fasting. They kneel with their candles lit, and their father blesses them (Numbers 6). Every child is blessed. Then their hair is arranged in a cross, and the candle extinguished. If the smoke rises to the skies, like the just Able, then this is a good sign, but if it sinks to the floor, then it is a bad sign, and the child must look out for bad influences, XVI: 6–7, *Olaus*, III, 777.

⁵² This candle might for instance be lit during the performance of the last rites, and it was considered powerful against foul weather, illness and accidents. In medical texts the same candle is suggested used to heal wounds, Johansson, “Bidrag til den svenska maualetraditionen,” 68.

The motif of the Presentation in the Temple is common in the arts of medieval Scandinavia, and it must be viewed in light of the Candlemas celebration. The culmination of the ceremony, with the offering of the candles upon the altar helps explain a variety of iconographical elements found in the visual depictions, but it also serves as means to understand the significance of the ever-present *altar* in the depictions of this motif. The altar does not play a part in the biblical script, which only tells us that Simeon was waiting in the temple, still, it becomes something of a fixture in the visual conventions, and figures as a “shorthand” both for the temple of Jerusalem, and as demonstrated above, for the Passion of Christ.

In the North, the motif of the Presentation is mostly preserved on baptismal fonts, in altar panels, in Marian tabernacles, stained glass and murals. How the many versions of the motif reached the North, before the fifteenth- and sixteenth century’s large scale import of retables from Germany and the Low Countries, may not be discussed here, but it should be remembered that it might have travelled lightly, as it would have appeared in manuscripts, jewellery, textiles, and embroideries, and that it was not necessarily linked to the space of the church building, even though this is where it has survived. In my survey of the Scandinavian material, I have come across approximately eighty examples of the motif from the medieval period, but surely, there are many more to be found, and only a few of the cases may be discussed below. The motif features a number of minor variations, of which some are of major theological significance, but these were in all likelihood not local inventions. Rather, they reflect that a multitude of iconographical models were available.

With the possible exception of the murals of Torpa, the earliest preserved Scandinavian depictions of the Presentation are found on Scanian and Gotlandic baptismal fonts.⁵³ The Kropp font is dated to the first half of the twelfth century.⁵⁴ In *Signumns svenska konsthistoria* the motif on the Kropp font is described as

53 In the Torpa murals, the temple of Jerusalem is represented by a ciborium, carried upon four columns, just like we often see in the late medieval southern European tradition. Torpa is dated to the mid- or late twelfth century, however recent dendrochronology points towards the 1120s as building period for the church, and Byzantine elements surface both in style, iconography, and through the use of the pigment ultramarine. For the latest references to this discussion, with references to previous contributions, see Anders G. Nord *et al.*, “Pigmentanalys av 1100-talsmålningarna i Torpa kyrka, Kungsör,” *Fornvännen. Journal of Swedish Antiquarian Research* (2017): 73–9. The most recent contribution to the discussion of the Gotlandic fonts are Evert Lindkvist, *Gotlands romanska stensulptur: Visuella budskap i sten* (Stockholm: Gotlandsboken AB, 2015); Harriet Sonne de Torrens, “De fontibus salvatoris: A Liturgical and Ecclesiological Reading of the Representation of the Childhood of Christ on the Medieval Fonts from Scandinavia” (PhD Thesis, University of Copenhagen, 2003), and Folke Nordström, *Medieval Baptismal Fonts – an Iconographical Study*, Acta Universitatis Umensis (Umeå – Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1984). The study of Roosval from 1918 is also still important. Roosval ascribed the Sanda font to the “Byzantio workshop,” and the Väskinde font to the “Majestatis workshop.” Jonny Roosval, *Die Steinmeister Gotlands* (Stockholm: Fritze, 1918).

54 Monica Rydbeck, *Skånes stensmästare före 1200* (Lund: Arkiv för dekorativ konst, 1936), 296.



Fig. 17.2: Presentation in the Temple. The Kropp baptismal font, 1100–1150. The National Historical Museum, Stockholm.

baptism, but at this point in time and in this medium, the depiction of contemporary ritual would be almost unthinkable, and moreover, the composition follows the typical arrangement of the Presentation (Fig. 17.2).⁵⁵ On the Kropp font, the scenes are set beneath arcades, which is the typical arrangement of the baptismal fonts of this date, but for the Presentation scene spanning across two arches, the column is omitted allowing room for the significant iconographic and theological element of the altar.⁵⁶ Simeon wears a pointed hat signifying his Jewish identity, and his hands appear to be covered with cloth, as described in the *Pseudo-Matthew*. Mary presents

⁵⁵ Jan Svanberg, “Stensulpturen,” in *Signums svenska konsthistoria. Den romanska konsten*, ed. Lennart Karlsson, et al. (Lund: Bokförlaget signum, 1995), 126. The baptism of Christ is not unusual on Scandinavian Romanesque fonts, but never the actual ritual. On the Kropp font, Mary and Simeon have switched places, but his is not uncommon in the early Scandinavian material.

⁵⁶ Also von Erffa notes that the Temple is depicted in various ways, but the altar is mostly there, and in the later Middle Ages this is often covered by a ciborium. Objects (like the offerings) are sometimes placed upon it, Hans Martin von Erffa, “Darbringung im Tempel,” in *Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte*, ed. Otto Schmit (Stuttgart: Alfred Druckenmüller Verlag, 1954), 1063.



Fig. 17.3: Presentation in the Temple. The Gumlösa baptismal font, c.1190, Gumlösa Church, Scania.

the child to Simeon.⁵⁷ In Kropp Joseph is not present. Only the theologically most significant characters are depicted; the biblical script is thus cut short in order to make a theological point, a strategy that is not unique to Kropp.

On the Gumlösa font (c.1190) the important iconographical element are the offerings (Fig. 17.3). Mary brings her sacrifice, the child, and holds him out to Simeon above the altar. The child is paralleled in Joseph's three-branched candle, and his basket of three doves. Simeon is portrayed with a mitre; an early example of a European convention popular in German areas, again demonstrating that a number of continental models were by then available to the southern Scandinavian artists.⁵⁸

The Gotlandic font from Vall (c.1200) is ascribed to the "Majestatis-workshop" (Fig. 17.4), and with its remains of original paint it gives a vivid impression of the original appearance of these fonts.⁵⁹ Vall introduces yet another significant theological

⁵⁷ Svanberg, "Stenskulpturen," 126.

⁵⁸ Sonne de Torrens, "De fontibus salvatoris," II, 37. Sonne de Torrens dates the font to 1191. See also Nordström, *Medieval Baptismal Fonts*, 109; Roosval, *Die Steinmeister Gotlands*, 124; Rydbeck, *Skånes stenmästare före 1200*, 308. On the comparative perspective of Simon as bishop or high priest, see von Erffa, "Darbringung im Tempel," 1063. According to von Erffa, this is a convention which do not appear until the thirteenth century.

⁵⁹ In the case of Väskinde, like Kropp, Mary and Simeon have switched places, but later paint has wrongfully put them in their usual place, but the person reaching out for the Christ child is certainly veiled and must be identified as Mary.



Fig. 17.4: Presentation in the Temple. The Vall baptismal font, c.1200, Vall Church, Gotland.



Fig. 17.5: Childhood of Christ scenes, the Hopperstad Ciborium, c.1300, Hopperstad Church, Sogn.

motif. Down towards the altar dives the dove; the Holy Ghost who had promised Simeon he would see the Messiah. Another interesting element in the Presentation scenes from the “Majestatis-workshop” is the chalice. Placed upon the altar the chalice points towards the sacrifice of Christ and to the transubstantiation of the blood of Christ in communion. Albeit never a common fixture, this element is later frequently found in the Scandinavian material. The Norwegian Hopperstad ciborium (c.1300) (Fig. 17.5) even shows Mary gesturing towards the chalice, which is placed upon the otherwise bare altar, and in the ill-preserved murals of the chapter house of St Birgitta’s Vadstena (c.1370–1380), we see not the sword of her vision, but the chalice.⁶⁰

The sword does however appear also in the Scandinavian material. Although they are much damaged, the murals of Kumlaby in Småland (c.1475–1500) show the sword of Simeon’s prophecy and St Birgitta’s vision, piercing Mary’s heart.⁶¹ The reference to the offering she will have to make, is enforced by the Christ Child who stands upon the altar. Hans Martin von Erffa describes this type as *Schmerzenmutter*, and associates the convention as such to the Dominicans, who attached great mysticism to the sword.⁶² To my knowledge, Kumlaby is the only example of a Presentation with a *Schmerzenmutter* in Scandinavia.

To the storyworld of the Presentation belongs also “the other woman.” Already in the works of the above mentioned Majestatis-workshop, we see a woman accompanying Mary. This accompanying woman becomes something of a fixture. In fact, like in St Birgitta’s vision, Joseph is often simply omitted. The woman who takes his place, or is added, is sometimes nimbed, and sometimes not, she sometimes holds the offering of the doves and/or a candle. The question is who this woman is; or rather, what her role is. Does she reflect the contemporary situation of medieval women, who would not come to their churching without an accompanying woman, or does she belong within the biblical narrative, or within theological commentary?

In the late medieval tradition south of the Alps we find Anna the prophetess placed beside Simeon, compositionally balancing Joseph. She has the appearance of an older woman, and holds the tablets of the law. The offering of the doves might however very well have been considered a suitable attribute for Anna the prophetess, who was a widow, and who had only had the one husband (Luke 2:36–37). In medieval theological texts, the turtledove was a well-known symbol of chastity.⁶³ According to

⁶⁰ Mereth Lindgren, “Kalkmålningarna” in *Signums svenska konsthistoria. Den romanske konsten*, ed. Lennart Karlsson, et al. (Lund: Bokförlaget signum, 1995), 358–60. Nisbeth interprets the object upon the altar as a candle. Åke Nisbeth, *Ordet som bild. Östgötskt kalkmåleri vid slutet av 1300-talet och början av 1400-talet*, Scripta maiora (Stockholm: Runica et mediævali, 1995), 16, 18, 223.

⁶¹ Bengt Söderberg, *De gotländska passionsmålningarna och deras stilfränder. Studier i birgittinskt muralmåleri* (Stockholm: Akademisk avhandling vid Stockholms högskola, 1942), 334–344; see also English summary in V. Hernfjell, *Medeltida kyrkmålningar i gamla Skara stift* (Skara: Skaraborgs länsmuseum, 1993), 220. Hernfjell dates Kumlaby to c.1480.

⁶² von Erffa, “Darbringung im Tempel,” 1068.

⁶³ Lasse Hodne, “The Turtledove: A Symbol of Chastity and Sacrifice,” *IKON* 2 (2009): 159–66.

the bestiaris, the turtledove is a bird which at the loss of his mate never ceases to mourn for him and never seeks a new companion, and in the Middle Ages, the turtledove figures as an allegory both for virginity, widowhood, and chastity.⁶⁴

When the additional woman holds a candle, the identification is somewhat less obvious, but given Anna's proclamation of Christ as the redeemer, the candle might still be a suitable attribute. Notwithstanding, the contemporary ritual situation should also be considered.⁶⁵ It is tempting to simply conclude that when the accompanying woman has a halo, she is to be identified as Anna the prophetess; but when she is not nimbed, she is a maid, midwife, or another accompanying woman known to have been present at women's churching many places in Europe.⁶⁶ Still, only Christ is always nimbed (with the exception of the Hopperstad ciborium, cf. Fig. 17.5), all the other characters in the biblical script, may or may not wear a halo. To complicate things further, haloes were often amongst the details added to the work by the painter, and since the original polychrome is often missing, this may lead to erroneous conclusions. In his discussion of the German material, Hans Martin von Erffa notes that from the twelfth century on, Mary is often accompanied by a nimbed young woman, carrying a cross or the offering, and because she is nimbed, he interprets this as a female saint.⁶⁷ If he is right, then an eschatological dimension is added to the scene: it certainly becomes one of a "heavenly feast," and not one located in an, albeit distant, yet historical past.

From Norway, six altar panels are preserved which include the motif of the Presentation (dating from 1250–1350).⁶⁸ These are particularly interesting as they actually once adorned physical altars set within the local churches. In the Scandinavian versions of the Presentation, the temple is constituted by the presence of the altar. There are, however, cases in which more attention is given to the temple of Jerusalem, as it was imagined by the medieval artist. In the Skaun frontal (c.1250), there is, in addition to the traditional centrally placed altar, a baldachin hovering in the air behind Simeon (Fig. 17.6). Its roof is like the roof of a church, but the corners are not carried

⁶⁴ Hodne, "The Turtledove," 159–66, and in particular n.19.

⁶⁵ Gertrud Schiller does not note the presence of the candle in the iconography of the Presentation until the twelfth-century, and in the German material, presumably influential in the Swedish realms, it is not commonly found until the later Middle Ages, Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art*, vol. 1 (New York: New York Graphic Society, 1971), 90–1.

⁶⁶ Susan K. Roll, "The Old Rite of the Churching of Women after Childbirth," in *Wholly Woman, Holy Blood: A Feminist Critique of Purity and Impurity, Studies in Antiquity and Christianity*, ed. Kristin de Troyer (Harrisburg – London – New York: Trinity Press International, 2003), 127.

⁶⁷ von Erffa, "Darbringung im Tempel," 1067–1068. Von Erffa moreover suggests that when the accompanying woman is older looking, yet nimbed, this might be Elizabeth, which is common in the Baroque period.

⁶⁸ These are Skaun (c.1250), Tingelstad (c.1275–1300), Hamre (c.1300), Dale I (c.1325), Filefjell (c.1325), and Tresfjord (c.1325–1350); see Margrethe C. Stang, "Paintings, patronage and popular piety. Medieval altar frontals and society c.1250–1350" (PhD Thesis, 2009), 81.



Fig. 17.6: Presentation in the Temple. Detail of the Skaun altar panel, c.1250, Skaun Church, Trøndelag.

by columns, rather, curtains are hanging from them. This would probably be rather typical for canopies of the thirteenth- and fourteenth centuries; in the local churches holy objects connected to Mass and Last Supper were often protected by such altar curtains. Thus, not surprisingly, the canopy in the Skaun frontal seems to be a projection of the contemporary situation upon the biblical one. As in the liturgy, the here and now merge with the distant past.

The altar panel from Tresfjord (c.1325–1350) features the Christ child standing upon the altar, which is a very common iconographical type in late medieval Scandinavia (Fig. 17.1). Like the chalice, the standing Christ child clearly points forward towards his sacrifice, and to the transubstantiation, making his *presence* explicit. Moreover, the Tresfjord Christ child holds up his hand to bless Simeon, an element also found in the Filefjell panel (c.1325), and in the above-mentioned vault of the Hopperstad ciborium (Fig. 17.5). In Hopperstad, the scene is found under the heading *In Purificatio beate maria*, the name of the liturgical feast.⁶⁹ Of course, the blessing is not as such part of the biblical script; rather, it belongs

⁶⁹ The hands of Simeon are here not covered, indicating the heritage of the *Vulgate* text rather than the much more common form from the *Pseudo-Matthew*, nor are any of the characters nimbed.

within theological commentary making clear what is in fact happening; for Christ's reception in the temple foresees the redemption of mankind.

The blessing Christ Child is however a type which appears in the arts from the ninth century on, as seen in the Drogo Sacramentary and in the Anglo-Saxon Benedictional of St Æthelwold, where it accompanies the prayer for the blessing of the candles.⁷⁰ In several of the altar panels, the virgin holds a candle. Discussing the Norwegian panels, Nigel Morgan interprets this element as an allusion to the blessing of the candles on Candlemas.⁷¹ We may not know at which altar the blessing of the candles took place, but where this was depicted on the altar panel, the image may well have functioned as it did in St Æthelwold's Benedictional; as a visual commentary to the rite. The early fourteenth-century door to the Sacramental niche from Gotlandic Bunge (Fig. 17.7) for instance features the scene of the Presentation, and above it, two angels hold a candle, crowned by the head of Christ.⁷² Again, the iconography and the compositional choices made, the medium, and the ritual, constitutes a liturgical whole. The imagery works together with the ritual in bridging the distant past with the present. Equally important to bridge this temporal gap, was the ritual of Churching, which offered another way for the medieval worshiper to engage with the past.



Fig. 17.7: Door for sacramental niche, early fourteenth century, Bunge Church, Gotland.

Albeit of rather poor artistic quality and inaccurate Latin, the level of theological commentary is high. For a discussion of the Hopperstad ciborium, see Tone Sofie Gjesdahl, "Hopperstadciboriet" (Master Thesis, University of Oslo, 1968).

70 St Æthelwold's Benedictional, BL Add 49598, f. 33 and 34.

71 Unn Plahter et al., *Painted altar frontals of Norway 1250–1350: An Art-historical and Technical Study of the 31 Painted Panels Preserved*, 3 vols. (London: Archetype Publishers, 2004), I, 46.

72 Justin Kroesen and Peter Tångeberg, *Die mittelalterliche Sakramentsniche auf Gotland (Schweden). Kunst und Liturgie* (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2014), 134–5. For a general overview, see *Medeltidens bildvärld*, Historiska museet, Stockholm, <http://medeltidbild.historiska.se>, "Bunge."

The Ritual of Churching and Its Impact on the Motif of the Presentation in the Visual Art

It is presumably no accident that no prescription for this often-performed ritual has been preserved from medieval Scandinavia, although documentary evidence in the form of charters, laws, letters, and murals testify to its common practice. Churching was not a sacrament, it did not concern the souls' salvation, it did not commemorate a moment of Revelation, nor a significant moment in the Life of Christ; in fact, it was theologically marginal. Rather, it was important in a social context, and it lived on in Scandinavia for almost a millennium, well beyond the Protestant Reformation, as we shall see below. The Candlemas sermon in the Norwegian Homily Book points out that even though Mary and her son were never impure, and no offering was needed, Mary still honoured the Law, thus the sermon encourages the ritual of churching.⁷³ This was no invention of the local scribe, but a theme that may be recognized in earlier sermons, as for instance in the Anglo-Saxon sources.⁷⁴

The origin for the ritual of the Purification of women is found in the Old Testament custom described in Leviticus, Lev 12:1–8. Here, it is decreed that if a woman bears a boy child, then she shall be unclean for thirty-three days, and for this period of time, she shall touch no holy thing, nor enter into the sanctuary, until the days of her purification are fulfilled, but if the child is a girl, she shall be unclean for sixty-six days. The number of days a woman was considered impure differed in medieval practices.⁷⁵ Although early medieval customs of separation may have been influenced by Mosaic law, they were not merely an adoption of such.⁷⁶ The first official document which dates from c.600, is a letter discussing the matter, from Gregory the Great to St Augustine of Canterbury.⁷⁷ Gregory here expresses a notion also later met with in medieval writing, namely that the new mother first and foremost is impure from the sin of lust related to intercourse, and not primarily from blood. Gregory also notes that a woman who enters the sacred space before her time of exclusion is over, in order to

73 *Gamal norsk homilebok: Cod. AM. 619 4º*, ed. Gustav Indrebø, Oslo: Kjeldeskriftfondet, 1966.

74 Bedingfield, *The dramatic liturgy of Anglo Saxon England*, 60.

75 Roll, "The Old Rite of the Churching of Women," 124. The Norse biblical compilation *Stjórn* II says that the woman is not to enter the church for thirty-seven days if she has given birth to a girl, and for fifty-four days if she has born a boy. During this time, she shall first stay in bed, but for the last thirty days she must stand outside, but not enter the church, Reidar Astås, "Spor av teologisk tenkning og refleksjon i norsk og islandsk høymiddelalder," *Collegium Medievale. Interdisciplinary Journal of Medieval Research* 6 (1993): 156 n.97.

76 Paula M. Rieder, *On the Purification of Women. Churching in Northern France, 1100–1500*, The New Middle Age (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 14–37. For a critical survey of the ritual up until the twentieth century, see Roll, "The Old Rite of the Churching of Women," 117–42.

77 Rieder, *On the Purification of Women*, 21–2; Roll, "The Old Rite of the Churching of Women," 122–30.

offer her thanks, does not pollute the sacred space.⁷⁸ Such prescriptions for a woman's conduct in relation to the sacred following the birth of a child is also advocated in Honorius' *Gemma Animae*, in his book one, chapter CXL VI, under the section *De mulieribus*.⁷⁹ Honorius lists several reasons why a woman is impure, including being impure from original sin, and clearly reflects the writing of Gregory when he says that a woman must not enter the temple unless it is to give thanks. Honorius' *Gemma anima* was widely used in Scandinavia from the late twelfth century on.

The first Scandinavian references to the ritual of Churching are found in the Norse laws, put into writing in the twelfth century, but sections of these laws are certainly older. The ritual is mentioned in relation to spiritual kinship.⁸⁰ Apart from indicating that the ritual might have been commonly practiced in the twelfth century or even earlier, these laws confirm that it was a ritual element to lead the woman in, and that this was not necessarily done by the priest. The Church section of *Upplandslagen* (the Uppland law) from late thirteenth-century Sweden also concerns Churching.⁸¹ The law states that the woman should pay a fee or give the priest a wax candle on the occasion of her Churching. The ritual moreover appears in other legal sources, such as the town law of Gotland, attempting to regulate the number of accompanying women.⁸²

Numerous sources from the time of the Lutheran reformation mention the ritual of Churching, letting us know how it was then performed and perceived. Representing the Catholic perspective, Olaus Magnus writes that forty days after giving birth, women must go to be purified at the church door, carrying candles, and that this shall be done by example and resemblance.⁸³ Educated from Wittenberg, the Danish reformer Peder Palladius (1503–1560) who returned to Denmark in 1537, took quite a different view. Palladius became the first Lutheran bishop of Zealand, and from his visits to his

78 “For if she enters the church even at the very hour of her delivery, for the purpose of giving thanks, she is not guilty of any sin: it is the pleasure of the flesh, not its pain, which is at fault.” Bede the Venerable, *Bede's Ecclesiastical history of the English people*, trans. R.A.B. Mynors, ed. B. Colgrave, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969.

79 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma Animae*, PL, 172, cols 541–738, Liber I, cap. CXL VI: “De mulieribus.”

80 Old Gulathing mentions the one who “. . . leads the mother into the church,” as someone one may not marry, whereas Old Eidsivating states that the one who one leads into church, one may marry. *The Earliest Norwegian Law: Being the Gulathing Law and the Frostathing Law*, trans. Laurence Marcellus Larson, New York: Columbia University Press, 1935; *Eidsivating's eldre kristenrett*, ed. E.F. Halvorsen and M. Rindal, *De eldste østnorske kristenrettene, Norrøne tekster*, 7, Oslo: Riksarkivet, 2008. For a survey of the sources and the practice in the northern countries, see M. M. Larússon, “Kyrktagningen,” in *KLNM*, 21–5.

81 *Upplandslagen enligt Codex Esplunda*, ed. Samuel Henning, Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1935, s.v. “Kyrktagningsbalken”.

82 *Uplands-lagen*, ed. H.S. Collin and C.J. Schlyter, *Corpus iuris Sueo-Gotorum antiqui = Samling af Sveriges gamla Lagar*, 3, Stockholm: Haeggström, 1834, section 4, ch. 18.

83 *Olaus Magnus*, III, 77.

diocese, steams his Visitation book. Under the section “Women’s offering,” Palladius writes that when women were in bed after childbirth, people used the expression “she laid a heathen” [*hun laa hienske*], because the monks had taught them that such women belonged to the devil, and accordingly, she needed light and water.⁸⁴

The decrees of a Lutheran bishops’ synod held in Copenhagen in 1540 states that a woman may choose to have her Churching, but she may not carry the candle, nor may she be introduced by the hand of the priest.⁸⁵ In 1542 Churching was in theory abolished.⁸⁶ Nonetheless, the 1573 Stavanger synod disapprovingly notes the continuous use of candles, but also that after the entry, the practice varied. Some places women returned to their bench, whereas other places, the women should stay near “a heathen altar” [*et affgudisk altere*], presumably (side) altars remnant from before the Reformation, like a Marian altar.⁸⁷ In 1580, Jens Nilssøn, bishop of the diocese of Oslo and Hamar, complained that some places women still carried candles, and knelt in the church door before their entry.⁸⁸

To attain a better understanding of the actual ceremony, we shall however have to turn to comparative European material. In his study of medieval benedictions, Adolph Franz reproduces seven text fragments of the ritual from the eleventh and the twelfth centuries.⁸⁹ One of Franz’s cases is found in a Pontifical now in Trinity College, Cambridge.⁹⁰ Here, the bishop is vested in his cope, with mitre and staff, as he proceeds to the church door, with his ministers, reminding us of the pictorial convention seen in the Gumlösa font, with Simeon as bishop (Fig. 17.3). After psalms, prayers, and benedictions, the woman is aspersed and led by the right hand into the church, they approach the altar and Mass is sung. Another of the texts reproduced in Franz’s study is from Salzburg, from the eleventh or twelfth century.⁹¹ The ceremony starts with the woman standing outside, while psalms are sung (Pss 112, 127). Then benedictions are said, before the woman is led by the right hand into church. The text prescribes that she shall prostrate, while they sing *Cor mundum* (Ps 50/51), which is part of the seven penitential psalms which concerns the repentance from grave sin, and one which was commonly used for rogation processions, and for the expulsion and reconciliation of the public penitents. In the latter case, prostration would also accompany this psalm,

84 Peder Palladius, *Visitatsbog*, ed. A.C.L. Heiberg, Copenhagen: Samfundet for den danske Litteratur Fremme, 1867: “Om Kvindeoffer” and “Hvorledes det skal gaa til med Kirkegang.” Palladius recommends that when the woman arrives at the church door, she shall not ask for “water and candle,” but merely ask that the minister pray for her. Afterwards, while inside the church, the mother and the women accompanying her may approach the alter with their offerings, and thank God.

85 H. Fæhn, *Gudstjenestelivet i den norske kirke* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1994), 117–8.

86 Fæhn, *Gudstjenestelivet*, 117.

87 Fæhn, *Gudstjenestelivet*, 118.

88 Fæhn, *Gudstjenestelivet*, 118–20.

89 *Die kirchlichen Benediktionen im Mittelalter*, ed. A. Franz, II, Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1909.

90 *Die kirchlichen Benediktionen*, 228 n.3.

91 *Die kirchlichen Benediktionen*, 224, listing his sources as CVP 2090, BL. 95.

thus the reference to penance would not only happen through music and lyrics, but also through physical performance. Of course, impurity and penance were bound together in medieval Christianity, but only three of the texts reproduced in Franz specifically refer to Leviticus.⁹²

Most of the texts however carry a reference to the Purification of Mary, and most have the Collects from Candlemas.⁹³ Other texts, like the twelfth-century benedictions from Wessobrunn, prescribes the Prologue to John, which speaks about Christ as “. . . the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world” (John 1:9), quite directly making a reference to “a light to the revelation of the Gentiles” (Luke 2:32), and the light the woman herself carried as she entered her local temple.

In Churching, the candles served both as offerings and as signifiers of the women’s social and religious status. A Norwegian charter from 1303 mentions the going rate for women’s Churching, where they are to bring offerings of candles and cloth.⁹⁴ Carrying the light of Christ was not for those who had not honoured the Law. An Icelandic statute issued by Magnús Gissursson, bishop of Skálholt in 1224, states that only those who had conceived the child within wedlock were allowed to enter the church with their candle burning, the others might enter, but not with a candle.⁹⁵ In the same manner, a woman holding a burning candle led the funeral procession of an honourable woman dying in child birth, but had the child not been conceived by the husband, the law forbade a burning candle.⁹⁶ In the early fourteenth-century statutes of Archbishop Eiliv of Nidaros (d. 1332), women who had conceived either outside wedlock or by men in forbidden relations were simply not to receive Churching; a view which was upheld also after the Lutheran Reformation.⁹⁷ Similarly, one of the preserved Norwegian marriage rituals prescribes that after their union is blessed by God, the couple shall carry burning candles as they enter the church, and in the Nidaros province, excommunication might even be proclaimed with candles turned upside down.⁹⁸ No doubt, the lit candle was the sign of a soul who had received Christ and lived by his words; the extinguished candle signified the opposite, and embodied a reference to future judgement.⁹⁹

⁹² Roll, “The Old Rite of the Churching of Women,” 126–7.

⁹³ *Die kirchlichen Benediktionen*, 229.

⁹⁴ DN, vol. 3, no. 65 (dates 1306); DN, vol. 5, no. 43 (dated 1303).

⁹⁵ DN, vol. 1, 117.

⁹⁶ *Árna saga biskups*, ed. Þ. Hauksson, Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 1972.

⁹⁷ “Archbishop Eiliv’s third statue,” in *Norges Gamle Love indtil 1387*, ed. E. Hertzberg, *et al.*, vol. III, Lovgivningen efter Kong Magnus Haakonssøns Død 1280 indtil 1387 (Christiania: Chr. Grøndahl, 1849), 261. See also Larússon, “Kyrktagningen,” 21–5.

⁹⁸ *Laurentius saga Hólarbiskups. Eptif sira Einar Hafliðason*, ed. Jón Sigurðsson, *et al.*, Biskupa Sögur, 1, Kaupmannahöfn: Hinu Íslenzka Bókmentafélagi, 1858, 787–914; *Manuale Norwegicum*, 22.

⁹⁹ With the reformers, the custom of introducing the deceased mother was abolished. In the thirteenth-century Icelandic ones the coffin was introduced to the church, preceded by a person

The Norwegian homily book explains that the use of candles in the Candlemas celebration signify how the just through their good deeds will come to heaven.¹⁰⁰ The author links the ritual here and now with the biblical message, by pointing out that today they stand in church with their candles burning, for the gospel says that they shall be dressed ready for service, and “keep their lamps burning,” and that they shall “let their light shine before others,” that they may see their good deeds and glorify the Lord (Luke 12:35; Matt 5:16). With such reference, the parable of the wise and foolish virgins (Matt 25:1–13), and the idea of the woman as bride, are brought into the cluster of metaphors utilized both in the ritual of Churching and in the Candlemas celebration. In the well-known story of the wise and foolish virgins, the maidens may not know when the groom will arrive, but the wise virgins stay prepared, so that when he comes, they go to greet him with their lamps lit. They go in with him for the wedding, and the door is shut. The foolish virgins have no oil for their lamps, they go out to buy it, and hence they are not there to greet their bridegroom at the hour of his arrival. The symbolism is not hard to make out, and the allusion between the narrative from Luke (2:22–38) and the parable of the wise and the foolish virgins is also made in medieval theological commentary, as for instance by the French theologian Guillaume Durand (c.1230–1296), another liturgist whose books could be found in the library of the Nidaros’ archbishop.

There is thus a high degree of inter-referentiality in the rituals for Candlemas and the reconciliation of woman after childbirth. This web of references would presumably not have been lost on the women; the entry in the temple of Jerusalem was simultaneously created and re-created, and the reference to her own salvation explicit and obvious. The participant would recognize the music, the offering, the use of candles, and the act of entry.

There were also social aspects to the ritual of Churching. St Birgitta’s vision, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, opens with the image of a great feast, very possibly influenced by the feast hosted by herself and other women of her standing on the event of their Churching, allowing the woman to be the centre of attention. Discussing Churching in late medieval England, Gail McMurray Gibson argues that Churching afforded women a sense of empowerment; the woman, and her body, were the symbolic and ritual centre of this drama, together with the women who had served as childbed attendants in the exclusive female space of the childbirth room.¹⁰¹ The feast connected to this ritual is also mentioned in the textual sources

carrying an extinguished candle, and the mother was dressed in grey garments, Bjarne Stoklund, “Kyrktagning,” in KLNLM, 21–4.

100 *Gamal norsk homilebok*, 66–9.

101 Gail McMurray Gibson, “Blessing from Sun and Moon: Churching as Women’s Theater,” in *Bodies and Disciplines: Intersections of Literature and History in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. Barbara Hanawalt and David Wallace, Medieval Cultures (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 149.

from the later Middle Ages and the time of the Lutheran Reformation.¹⁰² Attempts were made to regulate both the feast and the lavishness of the ritual. The celebration of the reconciliation of women would certainly have been an indicator of social status, for instance through the number of women accompanying the new mother, the lavishness of their dress, the use of candles, and through the level of festivity that followed the ecclesiastical ceremony.¹⁰³ In 1336 the town council of Slesvig set the limit to a maximum of six accompanying women, something that was later echoed in the legislation of Husum.¹⁰⁴ The fourteenth-century laws of the wealthy merchant town of Visby, capital of the Swedish island Gotland in the Baltic sea, however goes much further. In the Visby legislation, it is forbidden for a woman to bring more than 24 accompanying women.¹⁰⁵

A few late medieval Scandinavian depictions of the Presentation stand out, also compared to the continental material. In these cases, we do not only see a group of women behind Mary, as is often the case in late medieval psalters, but rather a full procession of accompanying women, and the story unfolds over two or more scenes.

The wooden church Södra Råda in Swedish Värmland burned down in 2001, and the many paintings in the interior are now only known from photographs and Mandelgren's drawings from 1849.¹⁰⁶ The work was signed by Master Amund, and dated 1494.¹⁰⁷ In the first of two medallions (Fig. 17.8), two nimbed women approach the temple; the main character is the crowned maiden, who holds a lit candle. The older-looking woman in the back carries the traditional basket of doves. Again, there is no Joseph, nor is there a Christ Child. In the next medallion, the fully vested priest awaits the small procession. He is standing in the open door of the stepped gabled west façade of his little church, holding a Mass book and an *aspergillum*, to sprinkle the woman for her cleansing. Merete Lindgren describes

102 Grethe Jacobsen, *Kvinder, køn og købstadslovgivning 1400–1600: lovfaste Mænd og ærlige Kvinder* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanums Forlag, 1995), 114–5, 46–7; Anders Gustavsson, *Kyrktagningsleden i Sverige*, Skrifter från Folkklivsarkivet i Lund (Lund: Folkklivsarkivet, 1972), 123–5.

103 Churching as social display is also brought up in Rieder, *On the Purification of Women*, 130–2, 65; Roll, “The Old Rite of the Churching of Women,” 127. In the same manner, documents from medieval Norway speak of the number of candles, see DN, vol. 3, no. 65; DN, vol. 5, no. 43; DN, vol. 9, no. 186; DN, vol. 9 no. 558.

104 Jacobsen, *Kvinder, køn og købstadslovgivning*, 146–7.

105 *Wisby Stadslag och Sjöritt*, ed. H.S. Collin and C.J. Schlyter, *Corpus iuris Sueo-Gotorum antiqui = Samling af Sveriges gamla lagar*, VIII, Stockholm: Haeggström, 1852, section 4, ch. 18.

106 Hernfjell, *Medeltida kyrkmålningar i gamla Skara stift*, 104–9; see also Söderberg, *De gotländska passionsmålningarna* and *Svenska Kyrkomålningar från Medeltiden* (Stockholm: Natur & Kultur, 1951); Åke Nisbeth, *Mäster Amund och långhusmålningarna i Södra Råda* (Karlstad: Värmlands Museum, 1963) and *Bildernas predikan: Medeltida kalkmålningar i Sverige* (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhetsakademien, 1986).

107 Lindgren, “Kalkmålningarna,” 366–9; Hernfjell, *Medeltida kyrkmålningar i gamla Skara stift*, 166. For the paintings of Södra Råda in general, see also Nisbeth, *Mäster Amund och långhusmålningarna i Södra Råda*.



Fig. 17.8: Purification of Mary, Södra Råda Church, 1494, Västra Götaland.

this depiction of Mary's Purification as a medieval Churching.¹⁰⁸ Mary consistently wears a blue robe in the other medallions of Södra Råda, but the crowned maiden approaching church wears a red robe, yet the sequence within which the motif appears, confirms that this must indeed be Mary's purification. In the murals of Kumlabý in Swedish Småland, attributed to the same workshop, the maiden wears a green robe, not a red as the crown maiden of the previous scene.¹⁰⁹ It is known from the time of the Lutheran Reformation in Denmark that special robes were worn by the women of the parish for their churching, in some places the robe was even kept in the church and lent to the women and at this point in time the colour

¹⁰⁸ Lindgren, "Kalkmålningarna," 370. A third medallion has been described as "the Presentation." Here, we see three nimbed figures; what appears to be the woman of the previous medallion, the Christ Child who stands upon the altar, and a Jewish man behind the altar. With the earlier alter panels in mind, this iconography is unusual. The man is very different from the priest in the door of the previous scene. He wears a beard, a short tunic instead of the vestments of a priest, his hair is longer, and around his shoulders is the *tallit*, the distinctive Jewish black striped white scarf. It should therefore be considered that this is the Circumcision which is otherwise missing for the sequence, but if so, Christ should not be dressed, and there appears possibly to be some motif-confusion on behalf of the artist, for illustration, see: *Medeltidens bildvärld*, Historiska museet, Stockholm, <http://medeltidbild.historiska.se/medeltidbild/visa/foto.asp?imageId=9417105>.

¹⁰⁹ Söderberg, *De gotländska passionsmålningarna*, 334–44. See also English summary in Hernfjell, *Medeltida kyrkmålningar i gamla Skara stift*, 220.



Fig. 17.9: Presentation in the Temple, c.1450–1475. Norra Strö Church, Scania.

specified is sometimes green, thus, the element of the red robe, or a particular robe for this ritual, may possibly reflect contemporary ritual practices.¹¹⁰

The murals of the vaults of Norra Strö are dated to c.1450–1475, and are assigned to the Scanian Vittskövle-group (Figs. 14.0 and 17.9).¹¹¹ The Purification of Mary is narrated across three sections of the vault, followed by the Presentation and the Circumcision. The Purification of Mary shows a smallish, un-veiled woman, who holds a burning candle. She is accompanied by two veiled women, one of which holds an open basket with three birds. All three women are nimbed. The three women are followed by a procession of another thirteen veiled women (Fig. 14.0). A tonsured, bearded and nimbed “priest” receives the woman and her procession at the door of his stepped-gabled church. He holds a book in one hand, but with the

¹¹⁰ *Nye Danske Magazin, indeholdende Allehaande Smaa-Stykker og Anmerkninger til Historiens og Sporgets Oplysning* (Copenhagen: B. Brünich, 1806), 273. For post Reformation practices in Sweden, see Gustavsson, *Kyrktagningsleden i Sverige*, 124.

¹¹¹ One of the murals associated with the group is in Ysane, and is signed “Nils Håkansson,” “1459.” More hands are traceable within the workshop; however, the date is a welcome point of reference. The most recent summary on the Scanian churches is found Ann-Marie Nilsson, “Det medeltida kyrkorummets utsmyckning och utrustning,” in *Skåne. Landskapets kyrkor*, ed. Markus Dahlberg and Ingrid Sjöström, *Forskningsprojektet Sockenkyrkorna. Kulturarv och bebyggelsehistoria* (Stockholm: Riksantikvarieämbetet, 2015), 138–64.

other, he takes the woman's hand to lead her into the sacred space. There are no Joseph and no Christ Child present. In front of the door, behind the priest, we see the priest's attendant, who holds the censer in one hand, and the blessed water in the other. The next scene depicts the Presentation in the temple (Fig. 17.9). Here we see the accompanying woman without attribute from the Purification scene, Mary, Simeon and Christ; all nimbed. Simeon is tonsured and wears a cloak, rather like the priest in the previous scene. A central element in this composition is the altar upon which Christ stands, echoed in the following scene of the Circumcision.

The Purification scene of Norra Strö has also been described as "Mary's Churching."¹¹² The many accompanying women presumably reflects the high status of the woman who is to be introduced, and the town law of Gotland drawing the line at 24 accompanying women should here be remembered. In these images, Mary is in a sense miming the contemporary ritual situation.¹¹³ In Kumlabý, Södra Råda and Norra Strö, the imagery shows an interest in its own time and place, placing, or displacing, the biblical characters and the religious setting to medieval and local reality.¹¹⁴ This perception is even extended to the physical realm. The events appear to take place both outside and within the medieval parish church. The ambiguity seen in Södra Råda is even more apparent in Norra Strö. The door may be that of the temple, dressed as a medieval church, or it may be that of the medieval church dressed as the temple. It is simply hard to tell, as the whole scene takes place in a world that is both solid and elusive. The figures walk on the ground and the sacred building is there, but at the same time, they are surrounded by patterns of stars and flowers. There is a temporal ambiguity in these images that appears puzzling to the modern spectator, but that seemingly was quite unproblematic from a medieval perspective, for the imagery, like the rituals, bridged the "floating gap." This should probably not be perceived as a visual strategy, but rather as a cultural mode.

The Purification of Norra Strö with its long procession may also reflect other contemporary ritual situations. Liturgical plays composed for the feasts of the Virgin had by the later Middle Ages become increasingly popular.¹¹⁵ The standard themes of the Presentation-Purification plays were the fulfilment of God's promise to Simeon, and the offering of the first-born child according to the Law of Moses.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Nilsson, "Det medeltida kyrkorummets utsmyckning och utrustning," 142.

¹¹³ A parallel to this phenomenon is found in late medieval expulsion iconography. For this, see Margarete Syrstad Andås, "Art and Ritual in the Liminal Zone," in *The Medieval Cathedral of Trondheim. Architectural and Ritual Constructions in their European Context*, ed. Margarete Syrstad Andås, et al., Ritus et Artes (Brepols: Turnhout, 2007), 119.

¹¹⁴ Lindgren, "Kalkmålningarna," 379–81; Knud Banning, *A Catalogue of Wall Paintings in the Churches of Medieval Denmark 1100–1600*, 4 vol. I–IV (Copenhagen: Akademisk forlag, 1966–1982), III: 8; IV: 62.

¹¹⁵ Lynette R. Muir, *The Biblical Drama of Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 19.

¹¹⁶ Muir, *The Biblical Drama of Medieval Europe*, 108–09, 230 ns 49–51.

The Candlemas antiphon *Nunc dimittis*, “Lord let thy servant depart” (Luke 2: 29–32), also found in the ordinals of Nidaros and Linköping, was often included, whether it was sung or merely read out loud, in Latin or in the vernacular. Only rarely did the playwright present the audience with additions to the biblical narrative, but in the Digby *Candlemas*, a chorus of temple virgins dance at the beginning and at the end.¹¹⁷ The temple virgins hold candles and are assembled by Anna the prophetess for a procession to worship the child. This takes place to the sound of *Nunc dimittis*, and is followed by Simeon explaining the symbolism of the candles: The wax is Christ’s humanity, the wick is his soul, and the flame signify his Godhead. A play from Paris also includes this element, but here the candle signifies the Holy Trinity. In the Eger play, Mary gives a candle as part of the offering for the Child, whereas in the Chester play, and in the Cangé Nativity play, the candles are there as a symbol of Mary’s own purity.¹¹⁸ In the play tradition, Anna the prophetess and Anna the mother often figure, as do other family members.¹¹⁹ The two nimbed women included in the same picture frame as Mary in Norra Strö may thus possibly be the two Annas, and the procession may be inspired by temple virgins.

In addition to the Presentation storyworld core group, the Valö retable imported from Antwerp in the 1520s shows five men and four women (Fig. 17.10). An elderly looking Joseph carrying the cage with the birds is placed to the far left in the scene, flanking Mary. As the anti-theses of the old Joseph and his humble offering, a beautiful young shepherd boy stands to the far right flanking Simeon, holding a lamb. The lamb finds no explanation in the narrative from Luke, but might do so in Lev 12:1–8, as quoted above. This motif figures in sermons, as in the Norwegian Homily book, where it is explained that the Law demanded that a lamb and a bird should be offered to temple.¹²⁰ However, also this picture convention finds its counterpart in medieval drama. The play of The Presentation from Florence begins with a series of prophets appearing to Simeon to tell him of the arrival of the Messiah. Then the shepherds return, to bring better gifts, including doves and food. The presence of additional men is a common feature in these late Gothic retables, whether they were imported from the north of Germany and the Low countries, or produced locally. The men might be biblical characters like prophets, although such a theory cannot be further substantiated, but it should also be considered

¹¹⁷ Muir, *The Biblical Drama of Medieval Europe*, 108–9.

¹¹⁸ Muir, *The Biblical Drama of Medieval Europe*, 108–9, 230 n.50. Some of the late medieval plays on the Presentation of Mary in the temple, a story belonging to her infancy cycle, feature Mary holding a candle followed by a procession of women. The women are temple virgins. These also appear in the visual arts, but there they mostly await Mary in the temple, while Mary arriving, is accompanied by her parents, Anna and Joachim.

¹¹⁹ Muir, *The Biblical Drama of Medieval Europe*, 109. Muir for instance mentions that the above-mentioned Paris play includes Anna the mother.

¹²⁰ *Gamal norsk homilebok*, 66–7.



Fig. 17.10: Presentation in the Temple. Detail of retable, ca 1520, in Valö Church, Uppland.

that the extended holy family was in itself popular in this period, and they may therefore also be the ancestors and relatives of Mary. To the medieval audience, it might have been obvious that other family members should also be present on such an occasion.¹²¹

If these elements reflect the influence of medieval performativity on the visual arts, they may have made their way into the iconographic convention further south, but it may also reflect the local situation. Leif Søndergaard has studied the performative activities of some of the late medieval Danish guilds.¹²² Søndergaard looks particularly at the period of Lent and Pentecost, as well as the Corpus Christi feast, where strictly religious plays of saints' lives were combined with other plays and comedy, as well as religious processions. It was for instance the duty of the black smiths at Roskilde, the barbers at Flensburg, and the tailors of Odense and

¹²¹ David Cressy, "Purification, Thanksgiving and the Churching of Women in Post-Reformation England," *Past and Present Society* 141 (1993): 106–46; Natalie Knödel, "Reconsidering an Obsolete Rite: The Churching of Women and Feminist Liturgical Theology," *Feminist Theology* 5, no. 14 (1997): 123; McMurray Gibson, "Blessing from Sun and," 139–54.

¹²² Leif Søndergaard, "Kulturelle aktiviteter i gilder og lav," in *Gilder lav og broderskaber i middelalderens Danmark*, ed. Leif Bisgaard and Leif Søndergaard, *Studies in History and Social Sciences* (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2002). I am grateful to Line M. Bonde for bringing Søndergaard's study to my attention.

Copenhagen, to hold processions at the feasts of Corpus Christi and Holy Trinity, carrying the lit guild-candle through towns and cemeteries. With the liturgical Candlemas procession fresh in mind, the “intertextual” aspect of medieval rituals is obvious. The Rosenkrans guild’s legislations from Schleswig (1484) even prescribe processions around the guild hall on all the Marian feasts, in some cases it is specified that both men and women are to attend. A baldachin of green silk is then to be carried around (possibly to protect a Marian sculpture). This reference to the green silk recalls the green robe used at Churching, as mentioned above. The cases mentioned by Søndergaard offer a glimpse of a performative context that is otherwise rare in Scandinavia. Looking across the North Sea to Aberdeen, it was the obligation of the craft guilds to contribute to the Candlemas procession in 1442 and to the play on the same day.¹²³ A generation later, the York mystery cycle stages Jerusalem more than once, putting on both scenes from the infancy of Christ, and Holy Week. We may not know much about the performative tasks the guilds in Scandinavian towns, but it is certainly likely that Jerusalem also through performance was brought into the townscapes of the episcopal sites, just like it was further south. The significant changes witnessed in the late medieval iconography of the Presentation may thus reflect a variety of contemporary ritual situations.

Conclusion

The ritual celebrations discussed above allowed medieval women to engage with the biblical narrative and the over-time added layers of pseudo-narrative that existed in the Christian storyworld centred on Jerusalem. Through the movements of the participants who entered their temple, Jerusalem was commemorated and made present in the smallest and most remote of churches. The preserved ritual texts and the imagery from medieval Scandinavia give us a peek into this storyworld. Mary is the key character, the pious and humble woman; an ideal for ordinary women to follow, and a role to be cast in. She came to honour the law and she lived without sin. These elements came to be linked to women’s entry in their local temple.

As opposed to the biblical story, Candlemas and Churching were located in real time. Within this ritual framework, generations of women made new, but interconnected, memories; within this framework pseudo-genealogies were created and social connections made. Late medieval imagery however demonstrates how the model also worked the other way round. In the imagery discussed above, Mary is accompanied by a fluent group of people who might be everyone from Anna the prophetess, or Anna the mother, to her midwife, or other women and men of her

¹²³ Muir, *The Biblical Drama of Medieval Europe*, 37. Play 19. At the end of “The Purification” the text is dated to 1468.



Fig. 17.11: Presentation in the Temple. Early fifth-century mosaic in S. Maria Maggiore, Rome. After *I mosaici della patriacale basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore in Roma*, 1967.

family. These images tell us little of the Purification of Mary, but quite a lot about medieval life and religiosity. A part from Joseph, Simeon, and Anna, some of these additional characters may of course have been identifiable from legends and liturgical plays, and they may thus have been “members of the remote past,” still, medieval textual sources indicate that these visual conventions also mirrors late medieval ritual reality. The depiction of Mary’s Purification was altered, remodelled, and created in the image of the medieval woman: Mary would not have come alone, nor would she have been followed by a procession of poor women, she would have been accompanied by the best and the finest of women. Anything else would simply be unthinkable. And the threshold of the Temple was the threshold of the parish church, for this was the locus where every family stored their stack of memories of their own, their aunts,’ their cousins’ and their neighbours’ churching.

At the end of this survey, it is time to return once again to the vision of St Birgitta. She would have interpreted her revelation through the filter of her own experiences; through her own memories. Notwithstanding, she would also have seen two rather different visual representations of the Entry in the temple within the space of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, both offering a glimpse of the wider

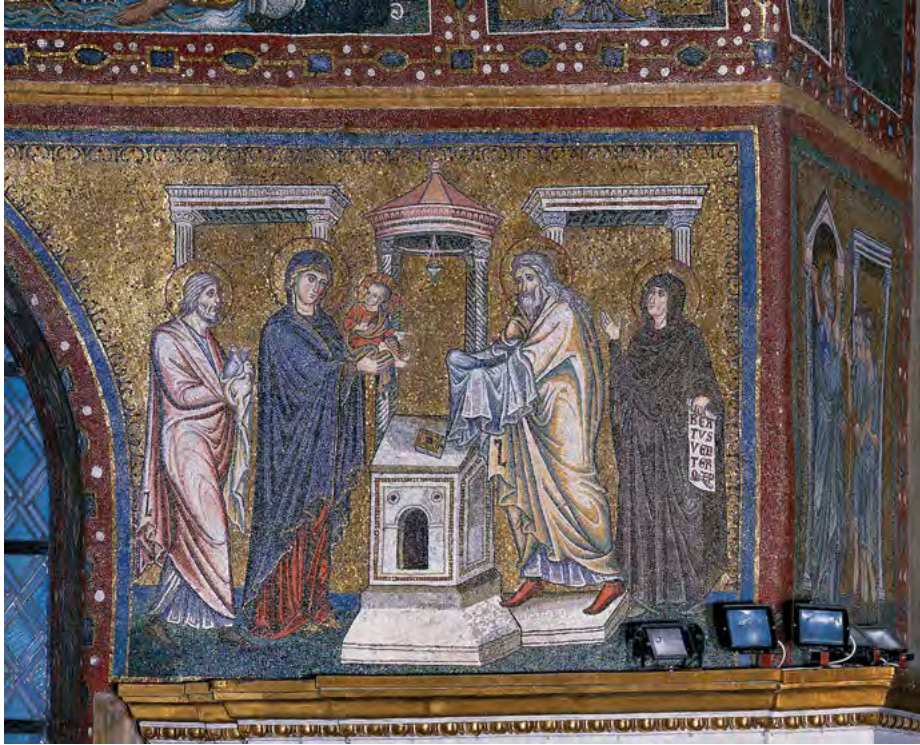


Fig. 17.12: Jacopo Torriti, Presentation in the Temple, 1296. Apse mosaic in S. Maria Maggiore, Rome.

context and perspective of this motif.¹²⁴ The triumphal arch features what is generally considered the oldest known depiction of the Presentation in the Temple, dated to the reign of Pope Sixtus III (432–440) (Fig. 17.11).¹²⁵ The mosaic shows the actual Meeting taking place outside the temple, and includes Virgin and Child, Simeon and Anna, angels, and a multitude of men, very possibly the “countless multitude of angels and the various ranks of God’s saints,” mentioned in St Birgitta’s vision.¹²⁶

In the same church we also find an apse mosaic by Torriti completed in 1296, where the motif is organized around the altar (Fig. 17.12). The scene appears to simultaneously take place both outside and inside, just like in the Scandinavian material. In depictions of the Presentation from the North, the main feature to indicate the temple is almost without exception the altar; creating a link

¹²⁴ I am grateful to Lasse Hodne for discussing the mosaics of Santa Maria Maggiore with me.

¹²⁵ Shorr, “The Iconographic Development of the Presentation in the Temple,” 19.

¹²⁶ These are also interpreted as Joseph and Anna. A figure with covered hands, who leaps forwards towards them, has been interpreted both as St. Peter and Simeon, for references to this debate, see Hodne, “The Turtledove,” 160, 65 n.3.

between the temple of Jerusalem and the temple of the parish church, in which these representations are found. In a sense, it is just as much a depiction of the altar on the floor below the mosaic, behind the altar panel, or near the font, where Mass was celebrated every day, and where the offering made was that of the Eucharist. In many depictions of the Presentation, the Christ child stands upon the altar, or is held out above it as if enthroned, reminding the worshiper of His presence.

The significance of the construction of likeness should not be underestimated. In creating likeness between the mythical past and the reality of the present, time is in a sense eliminated. To explain medieval liturgy, Margot Fassler points to the importance of concepts of time.¹²⁷ Time is both events and eternity. As said in the Lund text for the blessing of the candles on Candlemas; God is both before time and within time.¹²⁸ This is part of the great mystery. The Liturgy serves a means to narrate history, and events carry meaning as distinct episodes in time. Liturgy of course depends upon time, and is impossible outside of time, but it also aims to transcend time. Fassler writes about repetition as both memory and sacrament. Her focus is on the repetition of music and sound, but the physical movements of the worshipers are equally relevant.¹²⁹ Alf Härdelin has voiced similar ideas. He argues that a procession like the Candlemas procession should be understood as sacramental.¹³⁰ What takes place is not merely re-enactment. The physical acts, the entry in the Temple (church) with the Messiah (candle) constructs presence – and presence eliminates time. For the individual soul, the procession mimes a spiritual likeness, thus making his performance a preparation for the final processional entry into the heavenly Jerusalem.

127 Margot E. Fassler, “The Liturgical Framework of Time and the Representation of History,” in *Representing History, 900–1300: Art, Music, History*, ed. Robert Maxwell (University Park PA: Penn State University Press, 2010), 150–3.

128 Härdelin, *Världen som yta och fönster*, 288–9.

129 On the significance of repetition, see Chapter 15 (Line M. Bonde), 310–7.

130 Härdelin, *Världen som yta och fönster*, 156.

Kaja M. H. Hagen

Chapter 18

Heavenly Agent and Divine Disclosure: The Holy Cross at Borre

During the Late Middle Ages, there were reports across Western Christianity of miraculous, wonderworking crosses, and crucifixes that moved, spoke, bled, and wept or interacted with the worshipper. In medieval Norway, several crosses were treated as animate objects possessing power, will or agency. In the small village of Borre in southeastern Norway, a wooden cross is known to have received gifts and to own land and livestock. Also, in two late medieval wills, “the Holy Cross” at Borre is referred to as a site of pilgrimage, mentioned together with Jerusalem and the holiest places in Christendom. This chapter will explore the material aspects of the Borre cross as well as its potential of agency, in search of answers that can explain why this cross, in the periphery of the Christian world, was included in a holy topography that had Jerusalem at its centre.

Pilgrimage to the Holy Cross from Borre

At the beginning of the fifteenth century, the Borre cross was a renowned pilgrimage site (Fig. 18.1).¹ The cross owns much of its fame to two preserved diplomas from 1405 and 1411. In 1405, Queen Margrethe of Denmark and Norway lent 1000 *nobler* to the Cistercian monasteries in Sorø and Esrom. If the queen was to die before the loan was repaid, the above-mentioned amount was to fund pilgrimage. The first pilgrim destinations the queen mentions are Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and other *loca sancta* in the Holy Land, where six men were to travel. Additionally, seven would visit the holy graves in Rome. Nine would go to the shrine of the Virgin in Aachen, three to Santiago de Compostela, three to St Louis in France, and yet another three would go to the tomb of St Thomas in Canterbury. The list continues thus: the shrine of St Magnus in Orkney, the shrine of the three magi in Cologne, the graves of

¹ The Borre cross is kept at the Museum of Cultural History in Oslo, inventory number C.6130. M. Blindheim dates the cross to 1240–1255, while A. Anderson and E. Hohler date the cross to 1275–1300, see Martin Blindheim, *Gothic painted wooden sculpture in Norway 1220–1350* (Oslo: Messel Forlag, 2004b), 130; Aron Andersson, “English Influence in Norwegian and Swedish figuresculpture in wood 1220–1270” (Doctoral Thesis, University of Stockholm, 1949), 200; Erla B. Hohler, “Borrekorset,” in *Fra hammer til kors. 1100 år med kristendom* (Borre: Borre historielag, 1994).

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Fig. 18.1: The Borre cross, c.1250–1300. 301cm x 214cm. Museum of Cultural History, Oslo.

St Francis in Assisi, St Lawrence, St Nicholas in Bari and St George, the relics of St Christopher in addition to a range of other saints. Furthermore, five men were to travel to the holy blood in Wilsnack, seven to the churches dedicated to Our Lady in

Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, and one man to St Michael's Church in Tønsberg. At the end of the document, we find that pilgrims were also to visit five *holy crosses* in the north: Solna in Sweden, Hattula in Finland, Randers and Kiplew in Denmark, and Borre in Norway, "Thet hæghe koors i Borræ hoos Twnsbergh."²

The places mentioned in the diplomas can be regarded as a map of holy topography in late medieval Europe. As the list starts with distant Jerusalem and the Holy Land and ends with local sanctuaries; it indicates a movement from the far to the near, and suggests a hierarchy of sanctity from the *axis mundi* of Jerusalem to the more modest position of Scandinavian *holy crosses*. Nonetheless, the document links

2 DD, 1405. 12. April, Sorø. "Wy abbot Salomon i Esrom oc abbot Niels i Soræ oc bothe conuent i the samme stædher kænnes meth thettæ wort opne breff foræ alle the nw æræ oc the komme scule/ at wy aff mæchtich førstinnæ war nadheghe frue drotning Margretæ anamet oc vntfonget hae thusænde nobele i ræt tro oc i swa dan made som her æfter følgher/ swa at nar hwn thøm i gen kræfuer oc hae wil/ tha scal hwn thisse forscrefne thusænde nobele genist i gen fongæ i swa dan made oc tro som hwn os thøm nw fongit oc til trot hauer frii oc wbeorne wtæn længer tøfring Schedhe thet oc swa/ at fornempde war frue drotning Margrete dõthe oc aff ginge før æn hwn thisse forscrefne nobele kræfthe oc i gen finge tha scule wy oc woræ æfterkomeræ schifte the samme thusænde nobele til pelegriums færther i alle made som heræfter følgher/ oc at the pelegriums færther worther alle fulkompe oc ænde innen tw aar næst æfter forde war frues drotning dõth swo som ær først siæx mæn til Iherusalem oc til Bethleem/ oc til the hæghe stadher ther vm kring ligge oc til sanctæ Katherinæ Item siw mæn til Rom at ga vm kring the kirker ther æræ. oc søghe the hæghe mæntz grafuer ther ligge. bathæ apostole oc andræ Item ni mæn til Var frue til Aken item thre mæn til sanctæ Iacop/ itemthre mæn til sanctæ Lothwic i Franckarike item thre mæn til sanctæ Thomes aff Cantelbergh i Ængland item een man til sanctæ Magnus i Orkanø item thre mæn til the hæghe thre konunge i Kolne item thre mæn til sanctæ Iwold i Danen/ oc thre mæn til sanctæ Fransciscus i Assies item een man thiit som sanctæ Laurens ligger item een man thiit som sanctæ Niclawes ligger i Baor item een man thiit som sanctæ Iurghen ligger/ oc en man thiit som sanctæ Cristoffer ligger item een man thiit som sanctæ Iohannes baptistæ ligger/ oc een man thiit som sanctæ Iohannes ewangeliste ligger item thre mæn til sanctæ Mathies item een man thiit som sanctæ Pæther ligger/ oc een man thiit som sanctæ Pael ligger/ oc een man thiit som sanctæ Andreas ligger item een man thiit som sanctæ Maria Magdalena ligger/ oc een man thiit som sanctæ Elsebe ligger item een man thiit som sanctæ Dorothea ligger/ oc een man thiit som sanctæ Barbaræ ligger/ oc een man thiit som sanctæ Margaretæ ligger/ Item fæm mæn til thet hæghe blodh i Wilsnak item een man til sanctæ Vincencium/ oc een til sanctæ Antonium/ oc een man til sanctæ Fabianum oc Sebastianum item een man til sanctæ Gerthrudh/ oc een til sanctæ Seuerin i Kolne/ oc een man til sanctæ Birgittæ/ oc een man til sanctæ Olaff/ oc een man til sanctæ Erik/ oc een man til sanctæ Knwt Item syw stæther ther som war frue kirker æræ i Danmark Swerighe oc Norghe item een man til sanctæ Mikels bergh i Tunsbergh item fem stæther til thethelghe kørs i thisse righe swosom til thet hæghe kors i Solnæ with Stokholm. til thet hæghe kors i Borræ hoos Tunsbergh/ til thet hæghe kors i Hattil i Fintland/ til thethæghe kors i Randers/ oc til thet hæghe kors sanctæ Hiælp Item wy forde abbate/ oc conuent bindæ os oc woræ æfterkomeræ til/ meth thettæ breff/ at wy oc woræ æfterkomeræ with. thisse forscrefne thusænde nobele swo gøræ wele. oc meth thøm alle thisse forscrefne pelegriums reyser i alle made swo fulkomme lata wele som herforescreuet star wten all forsy-melse swo som wy welæ antware for gudh oc forde war frue drotningen os til tror Oc til meræ bewaring alle thisse forscrefne stickes tha hae wy forde abb[ate]1 oc bothæ conuent woræ incigle methwilghe oc witscap hængt for thættæ breff/ Oc til witnesbyrdh ærlich fathers biscop Pæther i Roskilde incigle."

the cross of Borre, at the outskirts of Western Christianity, to the religious epicentre of the world, Jerusalem.

Six years later, in 1411, another diploma confirms that the queen's loan was repaid. This document shows that the queen still wanted the pilgrimages to be carried out, and that she at this point donated money to the abbots of Sorø and Esrom. The same holy places are listed in both diplomas, and *the holy cross* from Borre was still to receive pilgrims on behalf of the queen.³ In both sources, the cross is referred to as a *holy cross*, but the two diplomas contain no information that can help us understand *why* this cross was considered to be a *holy cross* and a pilgrimage destination.

From the fifth century onwards, the cross emerged as the prime Christian symbol. Crosses and crucifixes were consecrated and placed in churches and on altars, omnipresent in Western Christianity. A depiction of a cross incorporated the whole history of salvation; the past was visualized in the present with a promise of future salvation. The cross was a kind of rhetorical "distillate," in which a large amount of content was compressed.⁴

Today, 170 Norwegian medieval wooden polychrome crosses, crucifixes, and Calvary groups are preserved.⁵ All crosses were at some level considered to be holy. However, in medieval wills, listings of ecclesiastical properties, in vernacular saga literature as well as post-reformation sources, we find more than 40 references to *holy crosses*. The holy crosses mentioned in the sources seem to have been elevated above or holier than other similar depictions as they were pilgrimage sites, received gifts, were bestowed in wills, and owned land and livestock.⁶ According to Hans Belting, some images "were lifted by an aura of the sacred out of the material world to which they otherwise belonged" and could take on real power.⁷ No matter how much medieval theologians and intellectuals insisted on venerating not the image but that to which it pointed, images were sought out, revered, and had offerings made to them. Based on

3 DD, 1411. 8. December, Kalundborg. The cross from Borre is also mentioned in two separate wills, from c.1350 and 1398. See DN, vol. 11, no. 41; DN, vol. 11 no 82. The cross is also listed under *Borra kirki* in Bishop Eystein's annals from around the same period. *Biskop Eysteins Jordebog (Den røde Bog). Fortegnelse over det geistlige Gods i Oslo Bispedømme omkring Aar 1400*, ed. H.J. Huitfeldt, Christiania: J. Chr. Bogtrykkeri, 1879. This source places the cross in Borre Church.

4 Henning Laugerud, "Memory: The Sensory Materiality of Belief and Understanding in Late Medieval Europe," in *The Saturated Sensorium: Principles of Perception and Mediation in the Middle Ages*, ed. Hans Henrik Lohfert Jørgensen, et al. (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2015), 248.

5 Erla B. Hohler, "Medieval Wooden Sculpture in Norway," *Collegium Medievale. Interdisciplinary Journal of Medieval Research* 30 (2017): 47–55. In addition there are crosses or crucifixes in present-day Sweden that once formed a part of the medieval Norwegian territory. Ninety of these crosses are kept in churches, while eighty are found in national and international museums.

6 A complete survey of *holy crosses* mentioned in medieval and post-Reformation sources will be included in my forthcoming PhD thesis.

7 Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 7.



Fig. 18.2: Detail of the Borre cross: a square-shaped convex panel beneath the carved quatrefoil in the intersection of the cross arms.

Queen Margrethe's diplomas and other surviving medieval documents, the Borre cross can be understood as a divine manifestation in the late medieval material world.⁸

Form, Iconography, and Missing Relics

The cross from Borre has an unusual iconography with no marks left by nails or other means of fixings for a Christ figure. This bare-cross iconography has no preserved parallels in Scandinavian wooden sculpture. Measuring 301 cm in height and 214 cm in width, the cross is also one of the largest surviving wooden crosses from medieval Norway. It consists of two horizontal beams joined at half wood fastened to the larger vertical beam. The red-painted rims of the cross are flat, while the middle part, that today has traces of blue-green paint, is slightly convex.⁹ A central tendril of a golden

⁸ DN, vol. 11, no. 41; DN: 11 no 82; *Biskop Eysteins Jordebog*: 1879, 79.

⁹ Examinations show that the cross has been over-painted.



Fig. 18.3: X-ray of the convex panel in the intersection of the cross arms.

colour dominates the apex. From the tendril, shorter stems rhythmically spread out to both sides before curling and ending in three or five pointed leaves. In the intersection where the cross arms meet, is a carved quatrefoil from where the tendrils form a large X (Fig. 18.2).

At the outermost part of each cross arm are carved trefoils. Three of four trefoils carry carved Evangelists' symbols; the ox, the eagle, and the lion. At the foot of the cross, we would expect to find the symbol of Matthew, but instead of Matthew's conventional symbol, a (winged) man, the fourth cross arm has a depiction of *Christ Harrowing Hell*.¹⁰ Although unusual, neither the lack of a corpus, nor the missing evangelist symbol of Matthew can explain why the cross was referred to as a *holy cross*.

Scholars have previously wondered if the cross from Borre contains, or at one point did contain, a relic.¹¹ There are indeed several examples of medieval sculptures containing remains of saints or other forms of *holy matter*, and the inclusion of a relic

¹⁰ At the Horg II crucifix in Vitenskapsmuseet in Trondheim are fragments of what is most likely a depiction of *Christ Harrowing Hell* at the foot of the cross. All cross arms have been cut off leaving only parts of the bottommost motive. It is thus impossible to determine if this depiction is an addition or replaces an evangelist symbol as found on the cross from Borre.

¹¹ See, for example, Hohler, "Borre-korset".

could have shed light on the extraordinary sanctity of the Borre cross.¹² However, an x-ray examination of the cross performed in January 2018 showed that the Borre cross neither contains a relic nor holds a cavity that could have contained one in the past (Fig. 18.3).¹³ However, the square-shaped convex panel beneath the carved quatrefoil at the junction of the four cross arms is unsymmetrically and crudely cut compared to the other carvings of the cross. This might suggest that something at one point was fastened to the cross, and that a removal of such an attachment might have affected its present design. The sources are regrettably silent on this issue and the material traces are difficult to interpret.

Made in the Shape of the True Cross

As Kristin B. Aavitsland and others have convincingly argued, divine measurements mattered for medieval Christians.¹⁴ Renderings of the footprints from the ascension of Christ, the height of the Virgin, and accurate measurements of the length of Christ's body were displayed in churches throughout Christendom.¹⁵ But how could a measurement be regarded as a divine disclosure? What was believed to be accurate renderings of the size or shape of divine objects contributed to an understanding of the Holy Land reflected and represented, perhaps even present, in local objects, serving as what the German art historian Anna Boroffka has labelled *metric relics*.¹⁶ Such relics served as proof or reliable witness of truth, and were tangible evidence of the sacred drama that had once unfolded in the Holy Land. Presented to the local worshipper, these objects ensured a sacred connection between past and present, centre and periphery.

¹² An example of relics being inserted into medieval sculpture is the Gero crucifix, see Robin M. Jensen, *The Cross: History, Art and Controversy* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 163. For the crucifix in Sorø Abby church, see DK Sorø: 68. For the Virgin from Viklau, see Håkan Lindberg, "Some Notes regarding the Conservation of the Viklau Madonna (Gotland, Sweden)," in *From Conservation to Interpretation: Studies in Religious Art (c.1100–c.1800) in Northern and Central Europe in Honour of Peter Tångeberg*, ed. Justin E.A. Kroesen, et al. (Leuven: Peeters Verlag, 2017), 11–22; Lena Liepe, "The Presence of the Sacred: Relics in Medieval Wooden Statues in Scandinavia," in *Paint and Piety*, ed. Noëlle L.W. Streeton and Kaja Kollandsrud (London: Archetype Publications, 2014).

¹³ A complete report of the x-ray examination of the Borre cross will be included in my forthcoming PhD thesis.

¹⁴ Kristin B. Aavitsland, "Jerusalemkoden i nordisk middelalder: Det helliges målestokk," *Årbok / Det norske videnskaps-akademi* (2016).

¹⁵ For numerous examples of such depictions, see Anna Boroffka, *Die "Laenge Christi" in der Malerei: Codifizierung von Authentizität im intermedialen Diskurs* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2017). Well-known Scandinavian examples are the renderings of the height of the Virgin found in the churches at Ringsted, Vigersted, and Køge.

¹⁶ For the term "metrisch Reliquie", see Boroffka, *Die "Laenge Christi,"* 11.

There are several medieval testimonies of crosses revered as *metric relics*. One example is found in an Icelandic manuscript from the end of the thirteenth century.¹⁷ Among travel descriptions from twelfth-century Scandinavian pilgrims is a list of relics present in Hagia Sophia. The church housed many relics: fragments of the True Cross, relics associated with the passion of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the apostles, as well as a silver cross measuring the exact height of Christ.¹⁸ The relic was, in other words, not a bodily remain or a contact relic, but a cross regarded as holy matter by virtue of its measurement. This reflects a cultic devotional practice labelled by Boroffka as “Körperspurensuche,” a search for bodily traces.¹⁹

Not only the measurement of Christ, but also the measurement of the True Cross could serve as a devotional object and *metric relic*. In a fourteenth-century *Arma Christi* illumination in the National Library in Prague, the cross and other instruments of the passion are depicted, accompanied by a measuring stick, offering the viewer a ratio of Christ, the cross, and the passion instruments (Fig. 18.4). There are several other examples of how an exact rendering of what was believed to be the appearance of the True Cross seems to have been valuable and significant for the medieval worshipper: According to Snorri Sturluson, King Sigurd the Crusader brought home a splinter of the Holy Wood from Jerusalem and kept it in his newly built church at Kungahälla.²⁰ In his survey on Scandinavian crusades to the Holy Land, Paul Riant states that Sigurd placed the cross relic in a reliquary shaped like the True Cross: “(. . .) dans un grand reliquaire de la forme même de la Vraie Croix.”²¹

The same form of metric devotion is found in several late medieval amulets that a worshipper would carry on his or her body for healing or protection. The length or height of Christ or the cross was represented graphically as a line or bar. The length of the line would be multiplied by a given number, often fifteen or twenty, in order to gain what was believed to be the true length of Christ or cross. In an amuletic context, these holy measurements were not only devotional tools, they also had an apotropaic or healing potential.²² During the Middle Ages, the

17 Carl Christian Rafn et al., *Antiquités russes d’après monuments historiques de islandais et des anciens scandinaves*: 2 (Copenhagen: Brdr. Berling, 1852), XIV.

18 “silfrkross jafnlängri líkama Crists,” Rafn et al. 1852, *Antiquités*: 416.

19 Boroffka 2017, *Die “Laenge Christi.”* 11.

20 Pål B. Svenungsen, “Norge og korstogene: En studie av forbindelsene mellom det norske riket og den europeiske korstogsbevegelsen, ca. 1050–1380” (PhD Thesis, University of Bergen, 2016), 70. See also Chapter 8 (Lukas Raupp), 156–65; Chapter 11 (Denys Pringle), 201–2; and Chapter 14 (Øystein Ekroll), 287.

21 Paul Riant, *Expéditions et pèlerinages des Scandinaves en Terre Sainte au temps des croisades*, 2 vols. (Paris: impr. de A. Lainé et J. Havaud, 1865–1869), 209. Riant does not disclose which version of Snorri’s saga he employs for his account of the design of the reliquary, and there is a possibility that this is Riant’s own interpretation.

22 Don C. Skemer, *Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006,) 142–3.

popularity of the cult of St Olav lead to a wide distribution of the legends about his wonders and miracles. In Harald Hardrada's saga is a story of a chieftain named Guttorm, who invoked St Olav for help and protection when facing a battle where his own forces were outnumbered. The saint came to Guttorm's rescue, and as a sign of his gratitude, Guttorm erected a silver *róða*, a cross or a crucifix.²³ This votive offering was made "of the same height as himself or his forecandle man, and that image is seven ells high."²⁴ Depending on whether the ell or *alen* refers to *alensstikke* (47.4 cm) or *tommelalen* (55.3 cm), both commonly used measures in medieval Norway, the sculpture measured between 331.8 cm and 373.1 cm. A plausible interpretation of Guttorm's votive offering is that this was a crucifix: a large silver cross carrying a Christ figure with what was believed to be an accurate rendering of His height. The story of Guttorm also appears in an Old Norse homily. In this version, the *róða* that Guttorm erects is explicitly a great cross, "in all ways larger and taller than the height of a man."²⁵

As mentioned above, with a height of 301 cm, the Borre cross is one of the largest surviving wooden crosses from medieval Norway. It is thus possible that the sanctity of the Borre cross is related to its size, reflecting what was believed to be an exact rendering of the True Cross.

Several of the preserved wooden crucifixes in Norway are significantly smaller than the Borre cross, measuring between 150 cm and 180 cm, leaving the Christ figure considerably smaller than life size. Another *holy cross* from Norway is the famous Røldal crucifix. This is a representative example of the smaller crucifixes, the cross measuring 157 cm and the Christ figure only 89 cm. The smaller *holy crosses* could thus have rendered the height of Christ like the relic in Hagia Sofia. Another cross referred to in written medieval sources as *a holy cross* is the crucifix from Norderhov Church.²⁶ A cross from this church still exists, and although the cross arms have been sawn off leaving its current height at 255 cm, it is clear that this must have been a monumental cross that, like the Borre cross, may have mirrored what was believed to be the size of the True Cross, a cross capable of carrying a man.

Not only the size, but also the design might have affected the medieval worshipper's understanding of the Borre cross as a representation of the True Cross. The design of the Borre cross, where flat rims and a convex middle are covered in stems and

²³ See Johan Fritzner, *Ordbog over Det gamle norske Sprog*, second ed., 3 vols. (Kristiania: Den norske Forlagsforening, 1886–1896), 521, s.v. *róða*. *Róða* could also refer to a sculpture of a saint.

²⁴ Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, 3 vols, trans. Alison Finlay and Anthony Faulkes, London: Viking Society for Northern Research, University College London, 2016, vol. 3, *Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar*, chs 54 and 55: "eptir vexti sínum eða stafnbua síns"; "ok er þat líkneski víi alna hátt."

²⁵ "alls costar er hon lengri oc mæiri en manzvaxtar", *Acta et processus canonizationis b. Birgitte*, ed. Isak Collijn, Samlingar utgivna av Svenska forskriftsällskapet, Ser. 2, Latinska skrifter, Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell boktryckeri, 1924–1931, 113.

²⁶ DN vol. 23, 69.

leaves, may have connotations for the cluster of legends and beliefs surrounding the cross of Christ during the Middle Ages. In this volume, Kristin B. Aavitsland refers to some of the topological legends and interpretations of the wood of the True Cross that circulated in the North during the High Middle Ages. The wood was believed to have originated from the garden of Eden, made from three different species: cedar, cypress, and pine.²⁷ The Borre cross is cut from pine, but formed so as to resemble three different joining components: the rims, the middle, and the living tendrils as described above. This may be an attempt to allude to the three types of wood joined together, as a reference to the wood of the True Cross. Similar carvings with a rim, a convex middle, and tendrils are indeed found on several other crosses from medieval Norway.²⁸

Based on this brief discussion, there is reason to assume that the cross from Borre was regarded as an authentic representation of the True Cross. The size of the cross was most likely not based on a random measurement, but may have reflected what was believed to be the size of the cross of Christ. The tripartite wooden carvings of the cross, cut to allude to the trees from Eden, also contributed to an understanding of the cross as a visual testimony, an authoritative argument, or even a reality transported from Jerusalem to the local church in Borre.

***Lignum Vitae* – the Living Tree in Borre**

The stems and leaves carved on the Borre cross makes it not only a convincing representation of the True cross, as seen above, it also alludes to the Tree of Life, mentioned in Genesis 2:9 together with the forbidden Tree of Knowledge. Eve and Adam eating from the latter caused the Fall of Man and hence necessitated salvation, whereas the Tree of Life was commonly interpreted as a prefiguration of the cross. Hence, it became a symbol of resurrection and eternal life. In the Book of Revelation, the Tree of Life is mentioned again, and its fruits are often interpreted to represent the body and blood of Christ present in the Eucharistic species, bringing “healing to the nations” [*ad sanitatem gentium*] (Rev 22:2). Several of the preserved medieval wooden crosses from Norway are indeed carved and painted to resemble a living tree, thereby conforming to an iconographical trait which became increasingly popular in western Christianity during the thirteenth and fourteenth century.²⁹

The perhaps most famous example of crosses depicted as the Tree of Life is Taddeo Gaddi’s fresco in Santa Croce in Florence. Here, the fusion between tree and crucifix is complete. The vertical beam of the cross is at the same time the trunk of

²⁷ See Chapter 20 (Kristin B. Aavitsland), 443–8.

²⁸ See, for example, the crucifix from Nesland in Telemark, Hedalen in Oppland, Hof in Vestfold, or Tretten I in the Museum of Cultural History, Oslo, inventory number C3014.

²⁹ Jensen, *The Cross*, 130.

the Tree of Life upon which Christ is crucified. St. Bonaventure is depicted at the foot of the cross with a scroll which reads *O crux, fructex salvi(ficus)*,³⁰ words from his *Lignum Vitae*, meditations of the life of Christ.³¹ In this work, Bonaventura seeks to immerse the sufferings of Christ by contemplating each step of the Passion, hoping that God will let him be “fixed with my beloved to the yoke of the cross.”³² The cross is addressed directly in vocative, *O cross*, both in Bonaventure’s text and in Gaddi’s fresco, emphasizing the intermediality and intertextuality of text and image.³³ The devotion encompasses both Christ and cross, expressing a belief that not only Christ – but also the cross – has the capacity to bring healing to the devout.

As mentioned above, the Borre cross’ bare-cross iconography is the only one of its kind in the extant corpus of Scandinavian medieval art. Understood as the *Lignum Vitae*, the absence of a Christ figure contributes to an accentuation of the cross itself. In Borre, the Tree of Life leads the faithful to salvation and healing. As seen in devotional meditations, the cross could be addressed directly, indicating that the cross was believed to be an object of immanence with its own power or agency.

The Animated Cross

From the many legends about *holy crosses* in Norway as well as on the Continent, we learn that numerous crosses could be perceived as wonder-working or miraculous. In the later Middle Ages, stories of animated crosses and crucifixes abound, reporting them to be moving, speaking, bleeding, weeping, and sweating.³⁴ In his book *The Power of Images*, David Freedberg employs the concept “cognitive reality” to explain the countless medieval reports of people experiencing images that seemingly came alive.³⁵ According to Freedberg, explaining these phenomena as literary exaggerations or psychological projections of the viewer is inadequate.³⁶ Rather, Freedberg suggests that a supernatural potential for animation is part of the images’ ontology, a potential that can be fulfilled under given circumstances. In these cases, “[. . .] the sign has become the living embodiment of what it signifies. [. . .] what is

30 For a thorough examination of Taddeo Gaddi’s *Lignum Vitae* fresco in Santa Croce in light of Bonaventure and memory, see Laugerud, “Memory”.

31 Laugerud, “Memory,” 254.

32 Jensen, *The Cross*, 150.

33 Laugerud, “Memory,” 256.

34 See, for example, Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2011), 12.

35 David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 291.

36 Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, 303.

represented becomes present.”³⁷ In other words, the worshipper in Borre church could have experienced his or her meeting with the cross as a meeting with the prototype, the True Cross.

Theories of agency of things were first introduced in the humanities in the late 1970s.³⁸ Agency or animation as an approach to the study of medieval art is an attempt to remedy the inadequacy of merely aesthetic or iconographical perspectives. During the Middle Ages, miraculous and wonder-working crosses and crucifixes were treated as though they were alive. Such crosses or crucifixes were not merely illustrations of a biblical event, or tools to fulfill human intention or liturgical purposes.³⁹ A cross could potentially shape the reality of the beholder, serving as a mediator between God and humans. Studying the *holy crosses*’ potential for animation or agency is not limited to discussing movable heads, limbs, or other mechanical devices inserted to make the sculptures move. The approach of agency or animation also considers the impact that the cross or crucifix has on the beholder and the interaction between beholder and object.

Based on Freedberg’s ideas, Hans Henrik Lohfert Jørgensen focuses on the principles behind the animation of images and draws up a taxonomy of three not mutually exclusive types of animation: *mechanical animation*, *magical animation*, and *phenomenological animation*.⁴⁰ In the case of the Borre cross, the last two categories could be useful concepts for exploring a possible understanding of the cross as an animated object. Both *magical* and *phenomenological animation* recognize the cult image as potentially alive. The difference between the two categories can be traced by searching for *where* the power is believed to stem from: magical animation is considered to stem from the image itself, as a force within or an inherent property of the image, making it act on the basis of its own agency. Phenomenological animation is seen as a result of the believers’ perception, projection, and interaction

37 Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, 28 and Hans Henrik Lohfert Jørgensen, “‘Toys that ask for love’. En animationsteori for teknobilleder, biobilleder og kultbilleder,” *Kunst og Kultur* 3 (2016): 171.

38 See, for example, W.J.T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Freedberg, *The Power of Images*; Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Bjørnar Olsen, *In Defence of Things: Archeology and the Ontology of Objects* (Lanham MD: AltaMira Press, 2010); Hans Belting, *An Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2013); Caroline van Eck, *Art Agency and Living Presence: From the Animated Image to the Excessive Object* (Berlin – Boston: De Gruyter, 2015); Grażyna Jurkowlaniec, Ika Matyjaszkiewicz, and Zuzanna Sarnecka, *The Agency of Things in Medieval and Early Modern Art: Materials, Power and Manipulation*, Routledge Research in Art History (London: Routledge, 2017); Jørgensen, “‘Toys that ask for love’” and Hans Henrik Lohfert Jørgensen, “Live Matter and Living Images: Towards a Theory of Animation in Material Media,” *Konsthistorisk Tidsskrift / Journal of Art History* 86, no. 3 (2017).

39 Jurkowlaniec, Matyjaszkiewicz, and Sarnecka, *The Agency of Things*, 5.

40 Jørgensen, “Live Matter and Living Images,” 261.



Fig. 18.5: Detail of the Borre cross: *Christ Harrowing Hell*. When the cross was included in the collection of the Museum of Cultural History at the end of the nineteenth century, a small medieval coin was found wedged in between the carved figures.

with the object. The animation in the latter case is understood as the experienced reality of the medieval worshipper.

When examining the possible phenomenological animation of the cross, there is a possibility that the Borre cross was connected to cult legends passing on stories of the worshippers' experiences of movement or other miracles, but no such legends have survived. Although no written sources remain, material traces in the object may reveal information regarding the medieval usage of the cross. When the cross was included in the collection of the Museum of Cultural History at the end of the nineteenth century, a medieval coin was discovered, wedged into the carving depicting *Christ Harrowing Hell* at the foot of the cross (Fig. 18.5). The insertion of the coin offers a glimpse into a likely medieval perception of the cross. Presumably, the coin was given as a votive offering. This action may testify to a medieval practice in which the cross was considered a living, animated object. The money was not inserted into a money block, placed on an altar, or given to the priest. This was an offering to the object itself. The Borre cross was not a mere representation of Christ's cross – the cross could be understood as a mediator bestowed with life. The donation was given to Christ's intercessor on earth as an expression of gratitude or in hope of help or salvation.

An attempt to place the Borre cross in both a local and a wider European context may shed light on its possible agency interpreted as what Jørgensen has termed *magical animation*. Below, two different written sources, a poem and a prayer, will be examined in order to shed light on the potential embedded in medieval crosses to act as active agents in medieval society.

The famous poem *The Dream of the Rood* was written in the late tenth or early eleventh century.⁴¹ The poem is divided into three parts. In the first part, a narrator recounts a dream or a vision he has had about the cross of Christ. Suddenly, the narrator sees that the cross starts to bleed on its right side and he hears the cross speak. In the second part, the cross speaks to us in the first person. The cross tells its tale of how it was once as a tree in the woods, and was made into a cross that Christ later climbed onto and embraced. The tree was trembling, as Christ was trembling, but it did not dare to bow to the earth. As Christ's fate was to die on the cross, so the fate of cross was to stand erected and to carry the Saviour.

After the death of Christ, the cross declares in triumph:

(. . .) Now the time has come
when far and wide over the earth
and all this splendid creation, men do me honour;
they worship this sign. On me the Son of God
suffered for a space; wherefore now
I rise glorious beneath the heavens and I can heal
all who fear me.⁴²

In the third and last part, the narrator from the first part awakens, urging the reader to seek the tree and to honour it well. The narrator longs for the resurrection:

(. . .) and each day I look
for the time when the Lord's cross,
which erstwhile I saw here on earth,
will fetch me from this fleeting life,
and bring me then where there is great gladness.⁴³

According to the narrator, it is not Christ or God who will lead him to resurrection on the Last Day, it is *the cross* that will fetch him. Throughout the poem, there is a fusion between Christ and the cross: the cross is also pierced with nails and drenched in blood. They even share the same side wound. The Cross, as Christ, understands its role in the salvation of humankind and despite the pain, it must not bend or break. The cross

⁴¹ A larger part of this poem is inscribed in runes on the Ruthwell stone cross from the eighth century in Northumbria in present-day Scotland.

⁴² Martin Lehnert, ed. *Poetry and prose of the Anglo-Saxons 1: Texts* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1960), 125f. (80–6).

⁴³ Lehnert, *Poetry and prose of the Anglo-Saxons*, 128 (135–8).

promises to heal the faithful. In the absence of Christ's relics on earth, God has left us the cross, as a substitute, deputy, or perhaps ambassador for Christ himself. According to the poem, the cross is *the living cross*, with its own power and capacity to act.⁴⁴

This famous insular poem expresses a belief in the inherent power and hence the animation and agency of the cross, a similar conception expressed in a prayer found in Torpo in the valley of Hallingdal in Norway, written down during the last half of the fifteenth century.⁴⁵ The prayer was written on a small piece of paper and used as an amulet. The text consists of two prayers, one to St Dorothy and one to the cross. The latter prayer, called the cross-prayer, was known throughout Western medieval Europe. Despite the chronological and geographical distance between the cross-prayer from Torpo and *The Dream of the Rood*, both texts express the same perception of the cross as a living object:

Crux Christi sit mecum et ecclesia nostra
 crux Christi est enim quam[. . .] adoro
 crux Christi est vita salus
 May the Cross of Christ be with me and our church
 for the Cross of Christ is that which I (always) honour
 The Cross of Christ is life salvation (. . .)

This part is followed by the pious addressing the cross directly:

*Crux Christi auferat a me omne [. . .] [l. . .] um crux Christi saluet me
 se et hodie super me ante me post [...] ante me et post
 me et vbique me
 May the cross of Christ take all evil away from me.
 The Cross of Christ saves me [. . .] and today over me before me behind [. . .] before me and
 behind me and everywhere [. . .]*⁴⁶

⁴⁴ See also Mary Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 35f.

⁴⁵ DN vol. 12, 266: "Crux Christi sit mecum et ecclesia nostra crux Christi est enim quam [. . .] adoro crux Christi est vita salus crux Christi superat gladium crux Christi [. . .] nt vincula mortis crux Christi admirabile signum crux Christi sit mihi [. . .] crux Christi sit mihi via virtutum cuper cruciem Christi aggrediar omne [...]r crux Christi expandit omne bonum crux Christi auferat a me omne [. . .] [l. . .] um crux Christi saluet me se et hodie super me ante me post [. . .] ante me et post me et vbique me viderit antiquus hostis [. . .] [fu]giat a me jn nomine domini nostri Iesv Christi benedicat me Ihesus [. . .] [sem-] piternus rex Judeorum [. . .] per medium illorum ibat [. . .] s Ihesus Christus crucifixus et filius dei viui benedicat me erigat. [. . .] studiat Christus defendat me et dominus auertat a me omne [. . .] um jn nomine patris et filii et spiritus sanctus amen."

I wish to thank Halfdan Bådsvik and Vemund Blomkvist for assistance with the translation from Latin. See also Kaja M. H. Hagen, "Crux Christi Sit Mecum: Devotion to the Apotropaic Cross," *Religions* 10(11) (2019): 603.

⁴⁶ In comparison, the Celtic prayer *Patrick's breastplate* includes a strikingly similar phrasing, but instead of addressing the cross, the prayer is directed to Christ: "Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ within me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me." Oliver Davies and

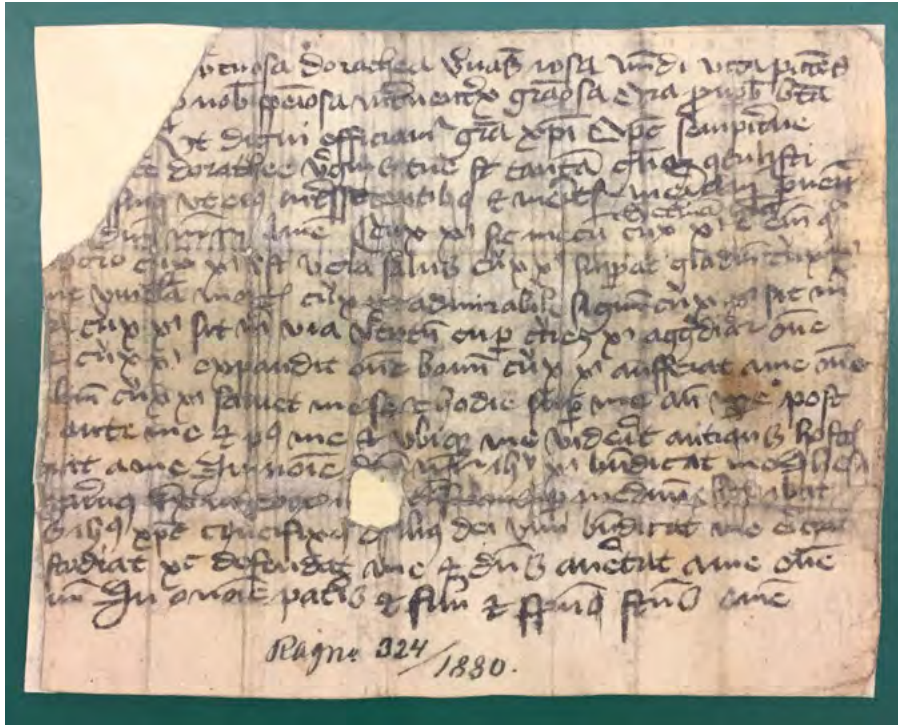


Fig. 18.6: Parchment with a prayer to St Dorothy, the Holy Cross, and Christ, from Torpo church in Hallingdal. 1450–1500. DN vol. 12, 266. National Archives of Norway (Arkiverket).

The prayer indicates that not only God, Christ, or the saints, but also the cross has the ability to protect and keep the faithful. Interpreted in this sense, the cross serves as a living and active object and a mediator between man and God (Fig. 18.6).

There are several sources testifying to the belief in the cross as an animated object, in addition to several cult legends of crosses and crucifixes that came alive, and offered healing or expressed will or power. Such legends are found both in European and Norwegian material. One type of animation are present in legends of *holy crosses* addressing the pious in dreams or visions. The most famous example is perhaps St Francis vision when Christ spoke to him from the cross he was praying in front of. A more local example is the vision of Jón Ögmundsson (1052–1121), bishop of Hólar in Iceland. According to *Jóns saga*, the bishop had, after reading a story of Jews torturing an image of Christ on the cross, a vision of a bleeding

Thomas O’Loughlin, *Celtic Spirituality*, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 120. This indicates an understanding that the cross’s protective powers could be seen as analogous to that of Christ.

crucifix.⁴⁷ Another type of animation are crosses or crucifixes with healing or miraculous capabilities. The above-mentioned crucifix from Røldal is perhaps the most famous Norwegian example, renowned for emitting healing liquid once a year on midsummer's eve.⁴⁸ *Sverris saga* offers yet another example of a miraculous cross and mentions a *holy rood* placed in what is referred to as the Stone church, the now lost Columba church in Bergen, serving as an intercessor between God and the righteous, capable of helping the supplicant, to ward off evil, and to miraculously staying flames (*Sverris saga*, chapters 102 and 150).⁴⁹ A third type of animated crosses and crucifixes are found in preserved legends of crosses, often of supernatural origin, expressing a distinct will, such as the two crucifixes from Røldal and Fana who demanded to be placed in their respective churches.⁵⁰

These cult legends testify to a potential miraculous animation or agency of a cross. In spite of no records of similar stories in either category being preserved in the case of Borre, these examples show that during the Middle Ages, a cross could be treated as if it was alive with some form of personhood. It seems reasonable to suggest that the cross from Borre, venerated and bestowed with gifts and land, was also believed to be an animated object. But, was the animation a part of the cross's own agency, that is *magical animation*, or was it based on the worshippers' projections, that is *phenomenological animation*? The distinction between the two categories can be difficult to differentiate. The taxonomy is based on an analytic approach to the study of agency, useful for the modern scholar, but not relevant for the devout medieval worshipper. For the faithful, there would be no difference between magical and phenomenological animation; the power would in both cases stem from God. Miracles, wonders, or healings performed by the cross were of divine character, not understood as experiences projected upon the object by the onlooker. This brief discussion makes it clear that current research is in need of a more precise and nuanced vocabulary when examining the different categories of medieval animated sculptures.

⁴⁷ *Saga of Jón of Hólar*, trans. Margaret Cormack, ed. Thomas Head, *Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology*, New York: Routledge, 2001, 595–626. This story has parallels in a wider European context, see, for example, Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 158.

⁴⁸ Jacob T. Larsen, *Fana bygdebok: 1: Fra de eldste tider til 1665* (Bergen: Fana bygdeboknemnd, 1980), 175.

⁴⁹ *Sverris saga etter Cod. Am 327 4°*, ed. Gustav Indrebø, Kristiania: Den Norske historiske kilde-skriftkommission, 1920, chapters 102 and 150.

⁵⁰ Larsen, *Fana bygdebok*, 175; Knut Dalen and Alma Dalen, *Røldal Bygdebok* (Røldal: Røldal kommune, 1960), 74. For examples of cult legends where Byzantine images express the will to be placed in specific Roman churches, see Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 63.

Conclusion: The Holiness of the Cross from Borre

The holiness of the Borre cross may be due to its measurement and shape: its vast size, the alluding tripartite wooden construction, and lack of a Christ figure could imply that the cross was believed to be an accurate rendering of the True Cross. This accuracy in depiction and measurement could have facilitated a sliding from representation to presence, the thing that was represented became the thing itself, expanding the boundaries between relic and image, between archetype and reproduction. As a *metric relic*, the cross offered the worshipper a visual testimony of accuracy and truth, transported all the way from Jerusalem to Borre.

When studying devotional literature, prayers and poems it seems clear that a cross was considered to be more than a symbol. A cross had the potential of being an animated object, Christ's intercessor on earth, bringing healing and salvation to those who prayed in front of it. Regrettably, no cultic legends connected to the Borre cross have survived through the centuries. However, we know that the cross was sought out, that it received gifts and owned land. We also have a material trace, a coin, a votive gift offered directly to the cross. In Borre, pilgrims could interact with a sacred cross believed to be a powerful agent, potentially influencing on his or her life and salvation. Perhaps the dichotomy between center and periphery is best understood as a modern construction. Medieval Europe consisted of multiple *loca sancta*, and one was to be found in the small village of Borre.



Fig. 19.1: Inside Sanderum Church, Funen, looking east.

Martin Wangsgaard Jürgensen

Chapter 19

The Heavenly Jerusalem and the Late Medieval Church Interior

It might easily be supposed that the notion of the Heavenly Jerusalem in particular was an early medieval or Romanesque phenomenon in both the visual arts and in theological thinking. Indeed, it is striking that the representation of Jerusalem is so massively present in Romanesque churches and in Romanesque art, while a cursory glance at Gothic art quickly reveals that this presence no longer appears at the same level of intensity. This chapter explores how Heavenly Jerusalem is manifested within what seems to be two distinct epistemological systems of thought which came to influence respectively the Romanesque and the Gothic regime of representation.

Liturgical Space Representing Jerusalem

Through anagogical readings, everything in the church, along with the building itself, could and was understood as a reference to the Heavenly Jerusalem, into which humankind was to enter after Judgement Day.¹ Everything in and about the church building conceptually pointed towards the Heavenly Jerusalem as the place which humanity should strive towards and long for, no matter if this was made explicit or not. The connection between the church building and the celestial home of humankind was visualized in liturgical objects and pictorial art. Romanesque art certainly was an artistic high point for such visual allusions. In the imagery of the late Middle Ages we also see symbolic architecture used as reference to Jerusalem: censers were still produced in the shape of micro-architecture, and architectural representations of everything from bench-ends to altarpieces could be fashioned in ways which can hardly be understood as alluding to anything other than the celestial

¹ The literature on this subject is vast, but important seminal insights and further references can be found in Robert Konrad, “Das himmlische und das irdische Jerusalem im mittelalterlichen Denken,” in *Speculum Historiale: Geschichte im Spiegel von Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichtsdeutung*, ed. Clemens Bauer, et al. (Munich: Verlag Karl Albert Freiburg, 1965). See also William Alexander McClung, *The Architecture of Paradise: Survivals of Eden and Jerusalem* (Berkeley: University of

city.² Depictions of the Day of Judgement, with the Heavenly Jerusalem and the Mouth of Hell flanking the enthroned Christ is one of the most common motifs from the period, along with the frequent use of Jerusalem, the terrestrial city, as a scenic backdrop for visualizations of the Passion narrative. Yet there seems to be a shift in the visual culture taking place from the Romanesque to the Gothic paradigm which invites further exploration. This is particularly evident in the late Middle Ages. New motifs sprang up from the late fourteenth century which gradually came to dominate the representations up until the Reformations of the sixteenth century, while other motifs fell away.

The first premise of the following is that a shift in the iconographic content of what we could call Romanesque and Gothic art reflects a change in the religious imagination of the late Middle Ages. The second premise is that any medieval representation of holiness somehow reflects the idea of the heavenly Jerusalem. This shift in the visual culture of the period has already, at a fundamental level, been discussed by Erwin Panofsky in his still evocative volume *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (1951–1957), but the specific changes relating to the showing of the Heavenly Jerusalem seem to be in need of further examination and discussion.³ This chapter therefore explores the shift from Romanesque to Gothic imagery in church interiors and how the Heavenly Jerusalem came to be represented by the late Middle Ages. The material on which it draws is found among Danish village churches in which the number of extant Romanesque murals and sculptural pieces, along with richly preserved late Gothic material, allows for comparison and exploration of this shift.

From Romanesque to Gothic: Near but Far – Distant but Close

As was stated at the outset the basic premise here is that two distinct, different epistemological systems of thought characterized respectively the Romanesque and the Gothic regime of representation. The early system, the high medieval Romanesque

California Press, 1983). See also Chapter 1 (Kristin B. Aavitsland), 33–40; Chapter 15 (Line M. Bonde), 299–323; and Chapter 16 (Kersti Markus), 324–39.

² See for instance François Bucher, “Micro-Architecture as the ‘Idea’ of Gothic Theory and Style,” *Gesta* 15 (1976).

³ Others have, of course, worked with these topics before within a Danish context. Note for instance the important contributions of: Hans Jørgen Frederiksen, “Det himmelske Jerusalem i arkitektur og billedkunst,” in *Det ny Jerusalem: Guds by og de skiftende forventninger*, ed. Anne Marie Aagaard (Copenhagen: Anis, 1989); Otto Norn, *The House of Wisdom* (Copenhagen: Christian Ejlers’ Forlag, 1990).

system, I tentatively call “Near but Far”, while the late medieval, or Gothic, system might be termed “Distant but Close”. Both may seem to be cryptic oxymorons, but hopefully the ensuing elucidation will make the meaning clearer. Both notions first and foremost represent analytical categories, enabling us to understand the shifts in the representation of eschatological as well as soteriological notions in medieval church art, particularly in the church decoration found in Scandinavia. What is going to be represented over these next pages is thus an idealized version of what was actually to be seen in the churches, since such firm categorizations as those presented here serve primarily as a mapping of general trends, which specific case studies can challenge or nuance at a later stage. Along the same vein it should be stressed that the imagery discussed in the article is relatively late when compared to the written sources discussed. A pronounced dissonance is accordingly discernible in the materials collected here. This could lead to reflections about centre and periphery, but this I think would be misleading. First of all, the Gothic mode of showing never did replace the Romanesque mode completely, and secondly the routes by which the ideas fostering the changes travelled would have been indirect and chaotic in nature, making specific questions of chronology and dating less relevant or pressing. One further has to consider the Scandinavian tradition of periodization which dates terms like “high medieval” and “late medieval” later than most scholarship concerning the European continent in general.

Our exploration of the shift from one paradigmatic system of thinking about and representing the Heavenly Jerusalem to another can conveniently be illustrated through the church of Sanderum on the Danish island of Funen, where a number of preserved Romanesque and late Gothic wall-paintings revolve around the same themes in strikingly different ways.⁴ The apse of this rather large rural parish church, as well as the walls of the chancel and nave, were decorated with paintings probably soon after the building was erected in the middle of the twelfth century.⁵ These wall-paintings, executed in late Romanesque style, in all likelihood remained visible in the church for a long time and were only replaced around 1525 when the building received vaults and the whole interior was redecorated with new images (Fig. 19.1). The murals have been known for a long time and have gained some notoriety within Danish research on medieval art. The late Gothic decoration was uncovered and restored for the first time in 1882 under the leadership of conservator Julius Bentley Løffler of the National Museum in Copenhagen. A large part of the paintings discovered by him were at that point promptly covered again, as they were deemed ugly and without value. When, a few years later in 1895–96, the conservator Jacob Kornerup worked on the images again, he by chance revealed a large Romanesque decoration

4 Some initial thoughts on this subject have previously been published in Martin Wangsgaard Jürgensen, “Åbenbaringer,” *Skalk* 1 (2014).

5 The building history is elucidated in DK Odense: 2916–30.

in the chancel, which at the time was considered a sensation. Nevertheless, it was only in 2009–10 that the parts of the Late Gothic murals whitewashed in 1882 were once again uncovered and left visible to be seen today.⁶ A number of the now visible murals are in a fragmented state of preservation and incomplete, but the extant motifs from both the Romanesque and Gothic series of paintings are still enough, through their selection of images, to give us a sense of what these two different iconographic programmes aimed to convey to their beholders. There are thus preserved enough decisive motifs from both periods to allow us to identify the overall meaning of the images. The same kind of reading can be achieved in many other churches, but Sanderum is special in that we have here two comprehensive, visible programmes of images in the same church in two chronologically separated and distinct styles. Most importantly, both groups of images delve into the same theme; the epiphany of the holy conflated with the revealing of the Heavenly Jerusalem. However, the decorations clearly arrive at widely different messages to their audience. Furthermore, the difference in what is communicated to the beholder in the early and late programmes is strikingly clear and enables us to approach the question of what the changes in the representation of the Heavenly Jerusalem by the late Middle Ages had come to mean.

The visual heart of the late Romanesque decoration, dating from c.1225–1250, is a large, poorly preserved representation in the apse of Christ in Majesty (*Majestas Domini*), following the well-established scheme of Christ enthroned in an almond-shaped mandorla, sitting on the rainbow with his hand raised in a gesture of blessing (Fig. 19.2). Around him the evangelists are placed, represented by their symbols; the lion, the human figure, the bull and the eagle. Crowds of holy men and women along with angels also flock around the sitting Christ and worship their ruler. In the register below Christ we see seated Old Testament prophets who hold out their written prophecies towards the enthroned son of God. The importance of this decoration in the apse as focal point of the whole programme can be difficult to understand today, as in the late Middle Ages the apse was separated from the chancel by a wall, whereby the apse came to serve as a sacristy and from then on, it was no longer part of the church space as such.⁷ On the northern side of the chancel, Romanesque paintings are also preserved. The motifs are here, as usual, arranged in two wide tiers over which there is a band of small painted niches (Fig. 19.3). In these niches, prophets stand with outstretched arms and proclaim the biblical episodes we find depicted in the tiers below.⁸ Right below the prophets, we find scenes from the New Testament: the Annunciation, the Nativity and the angel's proclamation to the shepherds in the field. The images in the lower tier are in a bad state of preservation, but the motifs clearly belong to the Old Testament. We see Aaron with the repentant Miriam, who

⁶ A formal description of the murals can be found in DK Odense: 2931–49.

⁷ DK Odense: 2926–28.

⁸ Concerning the arch as a motif in Romanesque art, see Chapter 15 (Line M. Bonde), 305–17.



Fig. 19.2: The Romanesque decoration in the apse of Sanderum Church as seen when uncovered in 1895. Watercolour by J. Kornerup, National Museum of Denmark.



Fig. 19.3: The Romanesque decoration on the north wall of the chancel in Sanderum Church.

confesses her sins, and the scouts who return from Canaan carrying grapes. In the window in the north wall decorations are also still visible. The Holy Spirit represented as a dove is here painted in the top of the window, while Cain's and Abel's offerings to God are shown in a somewhat fragmented state on the west side. On the east side of the window, Abraham appears almost complete, shown with the souls of the dead in his lap and thus serving as an allusion to the souls in waiting for Judgement (Fig. 19.4).⁹ This covers more or less the Romanesque images at Sanderum, but before we go into an interpretation of them, we shall briefly introduce the Late Gothic paintings.

The late medieval murals, painted c.1525, were, as we have said, executed after vaults were built into the chancel and nave and, as is often the case with wall paintings, are mostly preserved in the vaults. However, these images without a doubt originally covered the entire interior of the church and came to replace the Romanesque paintings, which by then had been visible in the church for approximately 300 years.

⁹ Find this motif unfolded in relation to ideas about Purgatory in Paradise and the Heavenly Jerusalem in Jérôme Baschet, *Le Sein du père. Abraham et la paternité dans l'Occident médiéval, Le temps des images* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000).



Fig. 19.4: Abraham with souls in his lap, depicted in the north window of the chancel in Sanderum Church.

In the chancel vault, we find scenes from the Passion. We see Christ being robed in scarlet, whipped, mocked and presented to Herod (Fig. 19.5). All of these episodes in the narrative lead to the Crucifixion, a scene which is missing in the murals, but is the main scene on the high altar, constructed at about the same time as the paintings. It is highly possible that the carved images on the altar thereby interacted with the wall-paintings and supplied the missing scene.¹⁰ Moving down westward through

¹⁰ Art historian Ulla Haastrup has pointed towards such relations in several places and the results of these considerations can be found in Ulla Haastrup, "Altertavler og kalkmalerier 1475–1525: Eksempler på samspil," in *Billeder i middelalderen: Kalkmaleri og altertavler*, ed. Lars Bisgaard, et al. (Odense: Odense Universitetsforlag, 1999). Art historian Lena Liepe reached almost the same conclusions in a survey of the relation between medieval murals and wooden images in Scania, Lena Liepe, "On the Connection between Medieval Wooden Sculpture and Murals in Scanian Churches," in *Liturgy and the Arts in the Middle Ages: Studies in Honour of C. Clifford Flanigan*, ed. Eva Louise Lillie and Nils Holger Petersen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 1996). See also Martin Wangsgaard Jürgensen, *Ritual and Art Across the Danish Reformation: Changing Interiors of Village Churches, 1450–1600*, *Artes et Ritus (RITUS)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), 288–96.



Fig. 19.5: Scenes from the Passion of Christ, c.1525, in the chancel vault of Sanderum Church.

the church we find two almost life-size figures portrayed in the chancel arch. St Michael or St George is shown on the south side, thrusting a spear into the jaw of the dragon, while St Christopher, the giant, carries the Jesus child on his shoulder on the north side arch.¹¹ In the first or easternmost vault of the nave, the artists painted a large representation of Judgement Day. Sitting on the rainbow, Christ is judging the world with raised arms. His wounds from the crucifixion are visible, while the sword of justice and the lily of mercy shoot forth from his mouth (Fig. 19.6). Mary kneels on the right side and shows her naked breast to remind Christ that he is also human, while John the Baptist to the left calls for mercy for humanity. Below we see the dead rising from their graves to meet their judgement. This scene stretches out into the adjacent vault compartments, where St Peter receives the souls of the blessed at the gates of the Heavenly Jerusalem on the north side while hordes of devils pull the damned into the Mouth of Hell to the south. Opposite the judgement scene, the Holy Family is portrayed (Fig. 19.7). St Anne, the mother of Mary, sits with her daughter, who holds the little child Jesus in her lap. Further members of the family are gathered

¹¹ Concerning whether this is George or Michael and the late medieval conflation of these two saintly figures see Martin Wangsgaard Jürgensen, “Imagining St George before and after the Reformation,” in *Ora Pro Nobis: Space, Place and the Practice of Saints’ Cults in Medieval and Early-Modern Scandinavia*, ed. Nils Holger Petersen, *et al.* (Odense: University of Southern Denmark Press, 2019).



Fig. 19.6: Last Judgement painted c.1525 in the nave of Sanderum Church.

around the seated women performing everyday tasks and engaging in playful activities. Under these large images, we find smaller images painted in the spandrels of the vault, showing the Annunciation, the Nativity and the Adoration of the Magi.

Despite a fragmented state of preservation, these two mural suites clearly share certain motifs, but there are also salient differences, and these differences illustrate a fundamental shift in the way the Heavenly Jerusalem was alluded to in church art. The pictures at Sanderum give us what could be called a Romanesque and a Gothic expression of the encounter with holiness, with all its eschatological and soteriological implications. The two styles show two different views on how the Heavenly Jerusalem emerges and reveals itself to the beholder. In the Romanesque images we meet an unobscured deity that reveals itself in the world to mankind. The celestial Majesty is surrounded by the community of saints and is a representation of the communion of the Heavenly Jerusalem. From this seat in the Holy of Holies in the east of the building, we can – albeit now fragmentedly – follow the way the holy is making itself manifest in the church and thus, in transposed meaning, is incarnated into the world as a whole. The upper tier of Romanesque images on the north wall of the chancel show Jesus' own way into the world through Mary; how his arrival is proclaimed in both the Annunciation and the angel's words to the shepherds, and not least through the depiction of the actual incarnation and birth. Underneath these scenes, in the lower tier, we also see the divine working itself into the world – here in a soteriological perspective, shown through ancient testimonies of the Old Testament. Miriam



Fig. 19.7: The Holy Family painted c.1525 opposite the Last Judgement in the nave of Sanderum Church.

recognizes her sin and is miraculously cured of sickness after Moses and Aaron have prayed for her, and the scouts return home with material evidence of the land of Canaan. The decorations in the window express the same. Here are both Cain and Abel to the west and Abraham to the east exposed to the Holy Spirit, shown as hovering above their heads, floating on the light from the window which in this context without a doubt is a part of the illustration of how divinity filters into the world.

The Romanesque paintings tell of a holiness which manifests itself across time and space in salvation history. The enthroned Christ reaches out to mankind from heaven, and the images show how he is to be worshipped and praised, just as in the apse the prophets and the holy men, women and angels do in the Heavenly Jerusalem above. The aspect of revelation is important here because it is through the allusions to tangible presence and form that the human being – or perhaps in our context we might say the congregation – can recognize the holy when gathering in front of the entrance to the chancel. During the celebration of the Mass, the congregation thus catches a glimpse of the *pacis visio* as a form of assurance of things to come: a fleeting view of the blessed house of peace promised in the Bible and mentioned in one of the hymns sung during church dedications since the seventh century, with the opening lines *Urbs beata*

Jerusalem, dicta pacis visio (“Blessed city of Jerusalem, called Vision of Peace”).¹² Upon entering the church and facing east, the congregation found themselves embedded in an apocalyptic narrative of better things to come; a vision of peace and consolation flowing towards the community from heaven. The style of the Romanesque paintings is dense and almost lavish in its use of colour, matching the saturated display of richness in the altar retables and frontals from the same period, where gilded metal studded with gemstones conveys the biblical descriptions of the shining Heavenly Jerusalem (Figs 1.3 and 20.1).¹³ The evocation of the holy and the state of the soul in the afterlife through the rhetoric of material richness was very much a part of the way the early and high medieval church communicated impressions of the Heavenly Jerusalem to the congregation, and sought to spur them into devotion and longing for the next life. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) famously stated in part one of his *Summa Theologica*, dating from the 1270s, that the soul cannot rise to behold the things invisible if it is not guided by reflections on the visible things.¹⁴ More than one century earlier, abbot of Cluny Peter the Venerable (1092–1156) expressed the same, if somewhat differently, in his treatise *Contra Petrobrusianos hereticos* (Against the Petrobrusian heretics), composed between 1139 and 1141. Peter states that the soul of man is moved more by presence than by absence, and is moved more by having seen Christ than by having heard him.¹⁵ A further and final example could be the opening lines from Alain of Lille’s famous poem *De planctu naturae*, probably written somewhere between 1167 and 1173:

Omnis mundi creatura / Quasi liber et pictura / Nobis est, et speculum.
Nostrae vitae, nostrae mortis/Nostri status, nostrae sortis / Fidele signaculum

(Every creature in the world /is like a book and a picture/ to us, and a mirror.
A faithful representation/ of our life, our death/ our condition, our end)¹⁶

This is, I would argue, the mindset behind the Romanesque decoration at Sanderum. By showing how Christ, God or the Holy Spirit was manifested in the world throughout history, the congregation was made to sense and understand the divine presence around them and to be moved to praise God and prepare themselves for their travels

¹² See Thomas Forrest Kelly, ed., *Chant and its Origins* (London: Routledge, 2016), 106–112.

¹³ Cf. the introduction, Chapter 1 (Kristin B. Aavitsland), 35–6. This aspect of Romanesque altar decoration is discussed in volumes such as Søren Kaspersen and Erik Thunø, eds., *Decorating the Lord’s Table: On the Dynamics between Image and Altar in the Early and High Middle Ages* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2006); Grønder-Hansen, ed. *Image and Altar 800–1300: Papers from an International Conference in Copenhagen 24 October–27 October 2007*, Publications from the National Museum (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2014).

¹⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Questio 84, article 7*, 5 vols, *Summa Theologica* (Notre Dame IN, 1981).

¹⁵ Peter the Venerable, *Contra Petrobrusianos hereticos*, ed. James Fearn, *Corpus christianorum: Continuatio mediaevalis*, 10 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1968).

¹⁶ Alain de Lile, *De planctu naturae*, PL, 210, col. 579A. English translation in Alain de Lile, *De planctu naturae*, trans. G.R. Evans, Alan of Lille: *The Frontiers of Theology in the Later Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

towards the celestial home. The murals are informed by the liturgy of the Eucharist, which they frame. Thus, when we see the celebration of Christ in Majesty depicted in the apse, it is a reflection of the celebration taking place already in heaven.

Moving to the Gothic images at Sanderum, the exact same rhetoric is employed here; however, the message has shifted. It is the humanity of Christ that occupies the chancel. The focus is on human suffering and not so much on the impact of the holy on the world, as we saw it in the Romanesque images. The passion history recounted in the chancel vault has the dual purpose of both referring to the Eucharist and showing the congregation the price paid for man by Christ in being born into flesh and blood. Hence, the pictures do not attempt to move the congregation through the direct representation of the miraculous as the older images do. Rather, revelation is now meant to occur through an internalization of the humiliating, indeed grotesque suffering that Christ had to go through for the sake of humanity (Fig. 19.8). The crucial thing here was to inspire the congregation into sincere piety and devotion, as this was the only route leading to salvation on Judgement Day and accordingly also into the Heavenly Jerusalem. We find exactly this illustrated at Sanderum in the eastern vault of the nave, painted in the place where the congregation would be gathering during Mass in the moments prior to the Elevation of the Host.¹⁷ The vault is, of course, first and foremost dominated by Christ, who appears to the world as the judge, separating the blessed from the damned, but the pictures explain more than just the end of times. The doomsday scene is, as we have seen, set against a representation of the Holy Family. When the congregation gathered at the east end of the nave, it would be under the portrayal of Jesus' kin as a representation of the ideal Christian family, a depiction which can hardly be anything other than an indicator of the ideal to be followed. By associating the Holy Family and the Day of Judgement, the paintings of the vault together show the congregation that the way of salvation goes through the pious life – not just through what is happening inside the church, but in the life that is lived outside as well. The juxtaposition of family and judgement accordingly shows the viewer how the road to Jerusalem runs through the life of the individual, and rather than pointing outwards, these things point to the inner conduct of each member in the congregation. Where the Romanesque images revolved around the *adventus Christi* as something external, the Gothic images tone down this element of the miraculous joining of humankind with God and instead focus on the judgement and self-scrutiny of the individual. These guiding visual statements of the images about the right path to salvation are further

¹⁷ Josef Andreas Jungmann, *Missarum Sollemnia: Eine genetische Erklärung der römischen Messe*, vol. 2 (Vienna: Verlag Herder, 1952), 331–40; Peter Browe, “Die Elevation in der Messe,” *Jahrbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft* 9 (1929); Peter Browe, *Die Eucharistischen Wunder des Mittelalters* (Breslau: Verlag Müller & Seiffert, 1938). See also Michal Kobialka, *This Is My Body: Representational Practices in the Early Middle Ages* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999) and Jürgensen, *Ritual and Art*, 257–60.



Fig. 19.8: The Scourging at the Pillar in the chancel vault of Sanderum Church, c.1525.

enhanced in another subtle way. In the Late Gothic depiction of the saved who are met by St Peter at the gates of the heavenly city, the souls are led by a bishop and a cardinal – that is, the highest-ranking clergy after the pope, and thus representatives of the Church as an institution (Fig. 19.9). The significance seems clear: salvation is found through pious living, and only via the Church which paves the way from this life and into posterity. It is noteworthy that this strong expression of both pastoral care and church authority was painted in a time when critical voices were starting to be heard and the reformations of the sixteenth century were beginning to stir: reformations which were to change how the Heavenly Jerusalem was depicted and alluded to in the churches.¹⁸

Thus, when the congregation stood in front of the triumphal arch at Sanderum, they had in front of them a visual retelling of the Passion, setting the scene for the sacrament celebrated at the high altar. When looking up, they could see why Christ had sacrificed himself for them, and be reminded of how they also could find themselves among the saved entering the Heavenly Jerusalem.

¹⁸ See Martin Wangsgaard Jürgensen, “Jerusalem and the Lutheran Church Interior,” *Tracing the Jerusalem Code*, vol. 2, 316–43.



Fig. 19.9: St Peter at the gates of the Heavenly Jerusalem, c.1525, nave of Sanderum Church. Photo: Arnold Mikkelsen.

A New Vision

The murals in Sanderum Church demonstrate how the envisioned relationship between man and the divine changed during the Middle Ages, and with this change, the understanding of man's place in relation to the Heavenly Jerusalem changed. The Romanesque paintings at Sanderum tell us of a god who approaches mankind by showing himself miraculously in the world; they revolve around the *adventus* or epiphany of Christ, with the revelation or coming as the central message. The frank enthusiasm for the representation of such direct illustrations of the way the miraculous revealed itself in the world lessened in the late thirteenth century, as prayer and penance increasingly fused with the devotional practices of the laity. This process has been described minutely in research on late medieval *praxis pietatis* in the last three or four decades.¹⁹ To this development, we can also add the ever-increasing focus on all things Christological, and Christ as the point around which everything

¹⁹ To name but two important works dealing with devotional culture and the Heavenly Jerusalem see Hans Robert Jauss, *Genèse de la poésie allégorique française au moyen âge (1180–1240)* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Verlag, 1962); Barbara Nolan, *The Gothic Visionary Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

else revolved in the church, always stressing him over saints and their miracle stories which clearly had an easy audience among large sections of the laity.²⁰ The late Gothic images at Sanderum illustrate this particular shift. The divine revelation is here a distant incident, which will only happen on the Last Day, when Christ emerges as the great judge separating the chaff from the grain. Divinity as such is not shown in the pictures. They instead point to the sacrifice of Christ, as the central miraculous event on which everything else rests, in a visual language which by an affective appeal to the viewer through pain and suffering is to move him or her closer to Christ. Moving closer are the operative words here, to which we shall return shortly. The god shown to the congregation in these images is a withdrawn deity that man must seek in prayer and supplication. The movement between man and the divine has accordingly changed completely from the Romanesque to the late Gothic iconography, from the divine moving into the world to humankind moving outward or upward to the celestial home.

While the images at Sanderum can serve as an illustration of these conceptual changes, the late medieval paintings do not entirely capture where the visual appropriation these thoughts was leading. To find this illustrated we have to look elsewhere. One of the most striking phenomena spurred directly by the shifts discussed above is the iconography of Paradise. In a northern European context, paradisiac iconography began to gain popularity in the mid-fourteenth century in everything from pictorial art and architecture to furnishings, such as for instance the famous “Tulpenkanzel” in the cathedral at Freiberg, produced around 1505. Nevertheless, on a general level, this new style spread into Scandinavian wall-painting in the first quarter of the sixteenth century.²¹ The murals in Løjt Church in southern Jutland, close to the Danish-German border, are an expressive example of this. The depiction of the holy is here very different from what we see in Romanesque art and indeed from what we see in the late medieval paintings at Sanderum. The visual vocabulary has radically altered to accommodate a new vision. The Heavenly Jerusalem and Paradise are of course almost interchangeable or at least closely related ideas, separated only by subtle differences in conceptual origin. While they

20 This development can be found addressed in Berndt Hamm, “Von der spätmittelalterlichen Reformation zur Reformation: der Prozeß normative Zentrierung von Religion und Gesellschaft in Deutschland,” *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 84 (1993); Thomas Lentz, “Auf der Suche nach dem Ort des Gedächtnisses: Thesen zur Umwertung der symbolischen Formen in Abendmahlslehre, Bildtheorie und Bildandacht des 14.-16. Jahrhunderts,” in *Imagination und Wirklichkeit: Zum Verhältnis von mentalen und realen Bildern in der Kunst der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Klaus Krüger and Alessandro Nova (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2000).

21 The seminal study on this theme is Karl Oettinger, “Laube, Garten und Wald: Zu einer Theorie der süddeutschen Sakralkunst 1470–1520,” in *Festschrift für Hans Sedlmayr*, ed. Karl Oettinger and Mohammed Rassem (Munich: Beck, 1962). See also Margot Braun-Reichenbacher, *Das Ast- und Laubwerk: Entwicklung, Merkmale und Bedeutung einer spätgotischen Ornamentform* (Nürnberg: Carl, 1966).



Fig. 19.10: A vision of Paradise painted in the chancel vault of Løjt Church, c.1520.

thus are two modes of showing the same, the Romanesque vision of the city and the Gothic vision of the garden are also strikingly different representations of the Heavenly Jerusalem. In Løjt the church was transformed by the murals into a paradisiacal garden. Today only the decorations in the two vaults of the chancel are preserved, but originally the entire church was painted with dense vines of acanthus leaves bearing red fruits and sprouting large, fanciful flower cups (Fig. 19.10). Entangled in the rich foliage we find a rendering of the Crucifixion along with symbolic representations of fowls and swans. The interior of the church is here transformed into a lush nature scene with the abundant growths and flowers depicting the celestial home not as a fortified city or castle, but as a living, organic, fragrant and bountiful garden.²² The images in Løjt were probably painted around 1520 and number among several similar decorative schemes from around the country in Denmark. To take another example one can cite the elegant late gothic chapel of St Birgitta added to Roskilde Cathedral in 1511 (Fig. 19.11).²³ Here we also find vines and flowers, but instead of symbolic creatures, apostles and church fathers inhabit the scroll, and thereby hinting to what company the beholder may expect to find

²² See Dietrich Schmidtke, *Studien zur dingallegorischen Erbauungsliteratur des Spätmittelalters: Am Beispiel der Gartenallegorie* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1982).

²³ DK København: 1600–06.



Fig. 19.11: Saints and paradise vision entwined. Painted in Chapel of St Birgitta, Roskilde Cathedral, in 1511.

themselves in the next life. Like the images at Sanderum this decoration also expresses strong support for the institutional church as the road leading to this promised paradise. It was these garden visions which became the new fashion of showing the Heavenly Jerusalem in the last decades leading up to the Lutheran reformation. Indeed, this iconography was still painted in the now Protestant church interiors during the 1540s and 1550s. It was thus only around c.1575 that things changed again and new ideals came to be expressed in Danish parish churches.²⁴

Signs of Change: A Continental Perspective

If we now to take a step back from the decoration discussed above, we may ask what these new interiors were meant to communicate, and what thoughts informed them. It is well known that the Book of Revelation was a decisive locus for the visualization of the City of God as it developed in the Middle Ages.²⁵ The descriptions and

²⁴ See Martin Wangsgaard Jürgensen, “Jerusalem and the Lutheran Church Interior,” *Tracing the Jerusalem Code*, vol. 2, 316–43.

²⁵ See for instance Richard K. Emmerson and Bernard McGinn, eds., *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); Bernard McGinn, “From Admirable Tabernacle to the

metaphors of John lend themselves well to pictorial art. Romanesque art in particular took up his account, and often employed the biblical descriptions with minute attention to detail. What Romanesque art first and foremost attempted, however, was to insert the viewers into the role of John and enable them, like him, to see through mystical eyes and share the apocalyptic revelations. “And I John saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband,” begins the famous second verse in chapter 21 of the Revelation.²⁶ Exactly this “I” of the biblical narrator was to my mind decisive as a catalyst for the visualization of the celestial home in Romanesque art. The Heavenly Jerusalem revealed itself to John, and through his words, it could press itself into the world and show itself to the Church or the individual Christian. Accordingly, as already discussed in the case of Sanderum Church, the “I” of the Revelation spurred the visualization painted in the church as a holy vision revealing itself to the faithful. But in these representations of Jerusalem, the viewer in John’s place is allowed only glimpses and partial insights into the true nature of what constitutes the inside of the City of God. In that sense, the Romanesque viewer remains an outside observer, to whom the splendour of the city is shown and given as a promise. “This is going to be your new home,” the promise seems to say, “and soon all the faithful will be allowed to step in behind the city’s gates.” This kind of visualization I have called “near but far,” because the city is staged as coming towards man, but at the same time remains distant, not fully revealed or open to the beholder.

This understanding of the City of God, as a something that enters the world, encouraged an active, outward-reaching ideal of piety, in which the earthly city of Jerusalem was conflated with its celestial counterpart.²⁷ A chivalrous warrior ideal in this way became an image of the earthly struggle of the Christian before the gates of the Heavenly Jerusalem, and the knightly warrior the emblematic representation of the struggling soul battling sin in this life while on its pilgrimage to God. It would seem to be in this light that we have to understand the depiction of besieged castles and clashing soldiers in late Romanesque wall-paintings, such as the ones we see in Aal Church in western Jutland, painted on the north wall of the nave c.1200–1225 (Fig. 4.1). At Aal, as in the other late Romanesque scenes of combat in wall-painting, mail-clad knights or soldiers fight sword in hand in what is likely to be understood as the battle for the faith, and thereby also clearing the way for the coming of the Heavenly Jerusalem.²⁸

House of God,” in *Artistic Integration in Gothic Buildings*, ed. Virginia Chieffo Raguin, *et al.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

²⁶ Cf. *Prelude*, 4.

²⁷ Introduction, Chapter 1 (Kristin B. Aavitsland), 34.

²⁸ These battle scenes are discussed in Eigil Rothe, “Rytterbillederne i Ål Kirke samt andre middelalderlige Kampscener i danske Kirker,” *Aarbog for Nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* (1908); Knud Hannestad, *Korstogene: Et møde mellem to kulturer* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1963); Else Klange,

However, during the course of the 1100s, there was a decisive change in the devotional culture, in which the active, outward-acting ideals of knighthood as an emblematic figuration of piety started to lose their effect. This change is difficult to trace specifically in the North, where written sources are scarce, but if we look to the continent in general, these transformations can be followed closely. Hartmann of Aue (c.1160–c.1220) wrote his famous narrative *Gregorius oder Der gute Sünder* (Gregory, or The Good Sinner) between 1186 and 1190, in which he described the impossibility of reconciling knighthood with a true fear of God, because, as he states, worldly activities always corrupt. In this text the distinction from The Book of Revelation comes into play: the life of the knight is turned into a matter of this world, and not a discipline paving the way for the next. Through the eyes of his protagonist, Hartmann of Aue meticulously describes all the colours, riches, deeds and beauties of the courtly world. His hero loves it all, but in the end, he concludes that all of this has to be abandoned to reach God.²⁹ Walter von der Vogelweide (c.1170–c.1230), another celebrated German poet, expressed this even more clearly in the early thirteenth century by exclaiming: “But it can sadly never be, that goods and worldly renown and the grace of God are joined in the same heart.”³⁰ What we are reading here are expressions of an ideal in flux. The text of course pertains particularly to the social class of knights and ideals of chivalry, but it does also say something about the understanding of Jerusalem. It entails an abandonment of the striving for the earthly Jerusalem and the mirroring of the terrestrial city with the Heavenly Jerusalem. The knightly quest of taking Jerusalem into possession and thereby also, spiritually, entering the Heavenly Jerusalem, is abandoned, and the warrior ideal is portrayed as a mere illusion or a labyrinth leading the faithful astray and away from God.³¹

“Er det Roland, der kæmper i Ål: Et tolkningsforsøg,” *ICO Iconographisk Post* 3 (1980); Otto Norn, *At se det usynlige: Mysteriekult og ridderidealer* (Copenhagen: Gad, 1983); Lise Gotfredsen, “Og jorden skælver,” *Århus Stifts Årbog* (1983); Lise Gotfredsen and Hans Jørgen Frederiksen, *Troens Billeder: Romansk kunst i Danmark* (Herning: Systime, 1988), 234–52; Nicola Coldstream, “The Kingdom of Heaven: Its Architectural Setting,” in *The Age of chivalry: Art in Plantagenet England 1200–1400*, ed. Jonathan Alexander and Paul Binski (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1987); Kristin B. Aavitsland, “Elite Soldiers of Christ: Elevating the Secular Elite on Danish Church Walls (Twelfth to Thirteenth Centuries),” in *Nordic Elites in Transformation, c.1050–1250. Volume III: Legitimacy and Glory*, ed. Wojtek Jezierski, et al. (Routledge, 2020).

29 Hartmann von Aue, *Gregorius, der gute Sünder: Mittelhochdeutsch und neuhochdeutsch*, ed. Friedrich Neumann, Ditzingen: Reclam, 1963.

30 “Jâ leider desn mac niht gesîn, daz guot und werltlich êre und gotes hulde mêre zesamene in ein herze komen,” Manfred Günter Scholz, *Walther von der Vogelweide* (Stuttgart: Springer-Verlag, 2005), 44–53.

31 Joachim Bumke, *Höfische Kultur: Literatur und Gesellschaft im hohen Mittelalter* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1988; repr., 1999), 430–450; Bernard McGinn, “Iter sancti sepulchri: The piety of the First Crusaders,” in *Essays on Medieval Civilization*, ed. Bede K. Lackner and Kenneth R. Philip (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998).

The criticism expressed in these and other texts is part of a broader change in the religious ideal which was monastic in its outset but gradually spread into the world outside the walls. This turn in the ideal went from an outward, external emphasis to an inward-looking or interiorized piety. Along with the quotations above, another well-known and striking passage can elucidate this process further. When the English canon Philip went on pilgrimage to the Holy Land for the bishopric of Lincoln in 1129, he stopped on his way at Clairvaux and travelled no further. When the bishop of Lincoln wrote to ask why, the abbot, Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), wrote back and answered:

I write to tell you that your Philip has found a short cut to Jerusalem and has arrived there very quickly [. . .] And this, if you want to know, is Clairvaux. She is the Jerusalem united to the one in heaven by whole-hearted devotion, by conformity of life, and by a certain spiritual affinity.³²

We may also stay with Bernard in a further example, and think of another moment, which comes down to us as another iconic confrontation, namely Bernard's extremely harsh criticism of Abbot Suger (1081–1151) and his celebrated decorations in the church of St. Denis in Paris, which Bernard famously called the "workshop of Vulcan" and "Synagogue of Satan."³³ On the surface, Bernard chastises the abbot for his indulgence in costly materials and lavishness, but if we scrutinize the attack a little closer, it becomes clear that Bernard's letter to Suger is about the qualities and limitations of representation through material objects. We are used to thinking of Suger as a man who spurred the creation of something new with the church St. Denis, and he is regularly mentioned as "the inventor of the Gothic style" in older research, but in the light of what has been argued here, Suger is the man of the past who is still embedded in the Romanesque paradigm of representation, where the encounter with the architecture of God's city is observed from the outside by the viewer through the eyes of John in the Book of the Revelation. Opposed to this is Bernard, who here is the modern man, looking inward and claiming that Jerusalem is in all of us, we just have to work to find the way leading there.

³² "Philippus vester, volens proficisci Ierosolymam, compendium viae invenit, et cito pervenit quo volebat [. . .] Et si vultis scire, Claravallis est. Ipsa est Ierusalem, ei quae in caelis est, tota mentis devotione, et conversationis imitatione, et cognatione quadam spiritus sociata. Ep. 64.1–2," Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. G. Winckler, Innsbruck: Tyrolia Verlag, 1990–1999. English translation, Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux*, ed. B.S. James (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1998). For further discussion of the meaning behind Bernard's letters and their monastic implications see Mette B. Bruun, *Parables: Bernard of Clairvaux's Mapping of Spiritual Topography* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 103–6.

³³ See for instance the classic introduction in Erwin Panofsky, ed. *Abbot Suger on the Abbey church of St. Denis and Its Art Treasures*, second ed. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979), 6 and the fine analysis in M.B. Pranger, *Bernard of Clairvaux and the Shape of Monastic Thought: Broken Dreams* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 222–32.

The ambiguous relation between the external representation and the inner presence, which we find illustrated in Bernard's assault on Suger, was not new. Already the Venerable Bede (672–735) had addressed it. Bede maintains the significance of the outer, material representation, but basically acknowledges, through a number of passages from Scripture, that human beings are the building blocks of the Heavenly Jerusalem, the living stones, and humanity therefore carries around Jerusalem in its heart.³⁴ Jerusalem is "built in Heaven out of living stones;" that is, the flesh of martyrs and the souls of the pious, as it is sung in the *Urbs beata* hymn cited above.³⁵ The ambiguity has thus existed at least since the 700s and even before that.

However, if we are to find an epistemological turning point which, for analytical purposes could be defined as a watershed mark within what is basically a long, sliding process of change, the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 is the clear choice. The council was a critical moment in the long development of the medieval Church on many levels.³⁶ The importance of the meeting as a formalization of changes already under way can hardly be underestimated, but in the perspective that we pursue here, it is the systematized institution of penance and confession for the laity that is crucial.³⁷ While most of what the council officially acknowledged was already practised, the decrees of the council concerning penance meant that each individual Christian was obliged to follow the gospel injunction to "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 3:2). Traditional monastic ideals of piety had thereby gradually spilled into what was required of the laity, but contrary to the early Middle Ages, these calls for penance were not so much directed at external activities as aimed at an interiorization of the faith. Penance was in other words turned inwards, becoming part of a scrutiny of the soul which surely did not filter into all parts of society, but certainly in time fused into late Gothic pictorial art and thereby set in motion the visual shift that is discussed here.

This soul-searching call for penitence was spurred by the belief that the end could not be far away. Christ would soon be coming, and humanity had to be ready when the day came. While these calls for repentance are difficult to trace in the Scandinavian written sources, we do encounter them in the preserved primers and prayer books of the fifteenth century and early sixteenth centuries, such as the primer

34 Ann R. Meyer, *Medieval Allegory and the Building of the New Jerusalem* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), 17–23.

35 "Quae construitur in coelis vivis ex lapidibus."

36 See *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Norman P. Tanner, 1, London: Sheed & Ward, 1990.

37 Thomas N. Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 3–27; Mary Mansfield, "The Humiliation of Sinners: Public Penance in Thirteenth Century France," (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 159–88.

of Anna Brade from 1497 or the primer of Ingeborg Predbjørnsdatter from c.1519.³⁸ Through the prayers gathered here we see how the *imitatio Christi*, of being *like* Christ, momentarily could lead to being *with* Christ. It was thereby believed that through the internalization of faith and the preparation of the soul to enter into the new life, the devout penitent moved closer to the Heavenly Jerusalem. In this way it became possible to enter the City of God spiritually, while still alive. The foundation for this belief rested in scriptural passages which revealed that the Heavenly Jerusalem was already extant, waiting for the believers to arrive. A much-quoted passage was “For unto you is paradise opened, the tree of life is planted, the time to come is prepared, plenteousness is made ready, a city is builded, and rest is allowed, yea, perfect goodness and wisdom” (2 Ezra 8:52).³⁹ Important here is the active part of the text telling the reader that the gates to Paradise are in fact open. Just as the canon Philip in Bernard’s letter has understood that he has already arrived in Jerusalem, so did late medieval devotional culture stress how the pious Christian was already part of the fabric of the new home, and that through meditation his future existence could be glimpsed and appreciated. The Heavenly Jerusalem was consequently not solely understood as the fortified place sealed to those outside; instead it was already open to those worthy of entrance. These notions were strengthened or emphasized ritually through the understanding of the Eucharist as a direct encounter with Christ, who became flesh and blood on the altar, as the Mass moved the celebrants and participants into an atemporal space where the biblical past became manifest and was repeated.⁴⁰ Those gathered for Mass, by this encounter with Christ and through this meeting, ideally matched the demands of the promised next life. The fleeting glimpses of the Heavenly Jerusalem became the product of a particular sacramental culture which the liturgy facilitated for both clergy and laity alike. In the decades around 1200 scholasticism developed the term *aevum* for this atemporal, visionary experience in which the soul was thought to move from the earthly realm and into the eternal realm of the transcendent.⁴¹ *Aevum* was a fleeting, in-between position bridging two states of being which was neither fully terrestrial nor celestial. However, for a moment the soul was in God’s realm, the Heavenly

³⁸ See *Middelalderens Danske Bønnebøger*, ed. Karl Martin Nielsen, Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, 1946. For specific examples of prayers see vol. 1, 310–311; vol. 4, 151.

³⁹ See this theme unfolded in McClung, *Architecture of Paradise*; and recently by Alastair Minnis, *From Eden to Eternity: Creations of Paradise in the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

⁴⁰ Browe, “Die Elevation in der Messe”; Browe, *Die Eucharistischen Wunder des Mittelalters*; Kobińska, *This Is My Body*; Jürgensen 2018, *Ritual and Art*, 257–60.

⁴¹ The concept is discussed further in G.C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), esp. the chapter “Immortality;” and several articles in Pasquale Porro, ed. *The Medieval Concept of Time: Studies on the Scholastic Debate and its Reception in Early Modern Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

Jerusalem or Paradise, and once returned to the terrestrial state would remember what had been glimpsed. While pilgrimage could be performed bodily by traveling to shrines and sacred sites, the soul could also undertake its own pilgrimage to heaven through meditation, leaving the world behind and performing an inward or outward movement to its promised true home.

We already find the outset of these developments in such sources as Bernard's meditations on the Song of Songs, and we equally find them more fully developed in the devotional culture that grew out of the rich, urban milieus of the Netherlands.⁴² Here such an early figure as Hadewijch of Antwerp, who died around 1240, is a famous example. Hadewijch's longing for God and the feeling of timeless inner meeting with Christ, as she describes in her meditations on the Eucharist, are, I would argue, nothing but her momentary experiences of the promised future life with Christ in the Heavenly Jerusalem. Spiritually, therefore, the devout had the opportunity to find and briefly inhabit this heavenly home through penance and devotional exercises and finally, on the Day of Judgement, such fleeting visits would end as mankind could now enter into the afterlife in body as well as spirit.⁴³ A thought we also find expressed in, for instance, the visionary writings of Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179), who described humanity as the tenth order of angels who fell along with Lucifer, but now on the final day are to re-enter their true home and sing praises, not with angelic voices, but in their earthly tones, because they once had and still inhabit material bodies.⁴⁴ Another example is the writings of Mechtild of Magdeburg (1207–1282) whose poetic visionary treatise *Das fließende Licht der Gottheit* (The Flowing Light of Divinity) from the second half of the thirteenth century. This text is filled with descriptions of her yearning and desire for God; emotions so strong they lift her spirit into heaven in transitory visits. Mechtild thus describes how only an eggshell-thin partition

⁴² See for instance R.R. Post, *The Modern Devotion: Confrontation with Reformation and Humanism* (Leiden: Brill, 1968); and the essays of A. N. Galpern & Marvin B. Becker in part two of Charles Trinkaus and Heiko A. Oberman, eds., *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions (Leiden: Brill, 1974). See also Leen Breure, "Männliche und weibliche Ausdrucksformen in der Spiritualität der Devotio modern," in *Frauenmystik im Mittelalter*, ed. Peter Dinzelsbacher and Dieter Bauer (Stuttgart: Schwabenverlag, 1985); Peter Dinzelsbacher, "Zur Interpretation erlebnismystischer Texte des Mittelalters," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 117 (1988); Peter Dinzelsbacher, "Rollenverweigung, religiöser Aufbruch und mystisches Erleben mittelalterlicher Frauen," in *Religiöse Frauenbewegung und mystische Frömmigkeit im Mittelalter*, ed. Peter Dinzelsbacher and Dieter Bauer (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1988).

⁴³ Hadewijch, *Vision 7: Oneness with the Eucharist*, trans. Columba Hart, revised ed, The Complete Works (Classics of Western Spirituality), New York: Paulist Press, 1980.

⁴⁴ Margot E. Fassler, "Composer and Dramatist: 'Melodious Singing and the Freshness of Remorse,'" in *Voice of the Living Light: Hildegard of Bingen and Her World*, ed. Barbara Newman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); William T. Flynn, "Singing with the Angels: Hildegard of Bingen's Representation of Celestial Music," in *Conversations with Angels: Essays Towards a History of Spiritual Communication, 1100–1700*, ed. Joad Raymond (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

separates this world from the next, and through her strong devotion she is able to penetrate this barrier and find herself in the proximity of the object of her love.⁴⁵ I would argue that it was exactly thoughts like these which actuated the change in iconography surrounding the Heavenly Jerusalem, conflating the concept of the promised home as a city and biblical descriptions of Paradise from which man had been expelled by the Fall. Thoughts which, in all likelihood, travelled to Scandinavia through texts collected in primers and prayer books but also by way of collections of sermons and, of course, the preachers and writers themselves.⁴⁶ Standing inside a church such as the one in Løjt, the imagery cloaked the individual in allusions to a rich, fertile next life where everything blossomed and bloomed (Fig. 19.10).

In his description of these transformations of the church into a garden, Danish art historian Søren Kaspersen has eloquently put the decorative schemes in contact with words such as *renovatio*, *reformation* and *rinascimento*, arguing that these visions addressed a regenerating Church, a church institution in the grip of change and blossoming into a new form.⁴⁷ Kaspersen's points are well taken, but rather than emphasizing the meaning in relation to the church as an institution, I would read the visions of Paradise as referring to the entrance of the faithful followers of Christ into the paradisiacal next world where body and spirit enter into a new purified and rejuvenated state of being.⁴⁸ The eggshell barrier has consequently here been punctured and the mystical visions elucidated through the decorations. But these devotional trends sparked not only the visions of foliage and flowers, we also see what can only be a radical expansion of the traditional depiction of the Heavenly Jerusalem in the guise of a fortified city. In the Danish church of Vinderslev in central Jutland, we get one of those rare glimpses into urban or civic envisioning of Jerusalem (Fig. 19.12). Here, in the easternmost vault of the nave, a Last Judgement scene was painted during the first quarter of the sixteenth century. The motif is more or less identical to what has already been described in the church of Sanderum, but here at Vinderslev a further addition is made to the images. Rather than just showing the saved souls being led into the Heavenly Jerusalem by St Peter, we are here allowed to follow

⁴⁵ See Mechthild von Magdeburg, *Das fließende Licht der Gottheit*, ed. Hans Neumann, Munich: Münchener Texte und Untersuchungen zur deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters, 1990–1993. See also a translation in *Das fließende Licht der Gottheit*, ed. Margot Schmidt, Übersetzung mit Einführung und Kommentar. *Mystik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 11 (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1995).

⁴⁶ On the routes of new spiritual ideals and theological writings from the continent and into Scandinavia see Anne Riising, *Danmarks middelalderlige prædiken* (Copenhagen: Gads forlag, 1969).

⁴⁷ Søren Kaspersen, "Kirken som have," in *Løjttavlen: Et sønderjysk alterskab*, ed. Poul Svensson (Herning: Forlaget De Unges Kunstkreds, 1983).

⁴⁸ Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the body in Western Christianity, 200–1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 329–41.



Fig. 19.12: Inside Heavenly Jerusalem. Mural in Vinderslev Church, 1500–1525.

them in.⁴⁹ We here see what the inside of the Heavenly Jerusalem looks like. Behind the city gates where Peter stands guard the saved are led into a green garden, from where they follow the call of music played by angels and drawing them into the Heavenly Jerusalem – an open hall filled with the light from large windows. Here the souls of monks and bishops mingle with the souls of secular men and women while the angels play their instruments on the roof of the building. The company in which the saved souls are depicted thereby significantly echoes the depiction in St Bigitta's Chapel in Roskilde Cathedral mentioned above, bringing the two murals together in what they say to the beholder (Fig. 19.11). The scene accordingly enables the viewer to glance directly into the very heart of divinity and see life as it unfolds in the next world. The challenge in this is evident, and one does get the impression that too much is revealed or demystified here, as the scene is curiously bare, almost empty: and it is accordingly not strange that images such as this are exceedingly rare, and

⁴⁹ It is interesting to note that the chancel at Vinderslev was decorated with one of the evocations of paradise around 1550–60 and thus added another new vision of Jerusalem to the church.

wholly surpassed by the vision of Paradise which seems to balance the dichotomy of revelation and mystery with much more impact.

Closing Words

What has been argued here is that the representation of the Heavenly Jerusalem changed during the late Middle Ages in both aspects of its iconography, and more acutely, in the intellectual backdrop of those images. This change was spurred by the interiorization of the devotional culture and what we could call the *praxis pietatis*; a development which was slowly building in the devotional literature of the eleventh and twelfth centuries but finally flourished during the 1200s, by which point it also began to affect how things were depicted or visualized inside the churches. The new imagery, rather than showing the beholder as standing at the gates of the heavenly home, depicted the beholder instead as standing inside Paradise or its parallel expression, the fortified city of the Heavenly Jerusalem. The earlier Romanesque mode of showing this destination I have called “Near but Far”, as Jerusalem is pressing itself into the world of the beholder, but remains a distant city not yet entered. The second, Gothic mode of showing it I have called the “Distant but Close”. Distant because the apocalyptic message of the impending Day of Judgement no longer is a theme of the same intense urgency as the millennial atmosphere of impending end was receding into the background. Close because the beholder is actually allowed spiritually to enter through the gates previously only seen from outside and thus obtain first hand impressions of the paradisiacal after-life to come.

One can therefore say that the first-person narrator of The Book of Revelation is here understood as the fundament on which the Romanesque iconography around the Heavenly Jerusalem revolves, enabling the beholder to step into the role of the visionary and perceive the glorious truth through his or her own eyes. In these images, it is the holy which appears to man and penetrates into the terrestrial sphere to meet the devout gathered in church. This changes radically in the art of the late Middle Ages, where the individual actually crosses the threshold of the afterlife and momentarily takes up a place in the proximity of Christ. As a result, we see the movement in Romanesque art reversed – here it goes from the terrestrial sphere and into the next world. The devotional culture enabled this experience and the visual art eventually developed to enhance and support it. That is accordingly also why during the fifteenth century we see the evolution of new iconographic programmes. Programmes which not only visually supported the notion that the congregation, when assembled in church during Mass, were believed to have an atemporal meeting with Christ, but actually also had the opportunity, through their prayers, to momentarily enter into contact with the future space they should occupy

in heaven. While it is true that the Heavenly Jerusalem was at the heart of all representations in the church interior and indeed was always present in all churches, the envisioning of this celestial home was by no means static. It was a concept susceptible to slow changes, both those subtle and those self-evident, throughout the Middle Ages. What has been discussed here is perhaps the most important shift before the Reformations of the sixteenth century once again sparked a renegotiation of the nature of the Heavenly Jerusalem and how this concept could be visually grasped; but that is the material for another study.



Fig. 20.0: The Heavenly Jerusalem. Altar retable, Sahl Church, Jutland, c.1200–1225.

**Part IV: Navigating the Sacred Storyworld:
Nordic Landscapes and Salvation History**

Kristin B. Aavitsland

Chapter 20

Civitas Hierusalem famosissima: The Cross, the Orb, and the History of Salvation in the Medieval North

Three vernacular manuscripts from Iceland and Norway, all dating from the first half of the fourteenth century, contain a circular, schematic map of Jerusalem. This geometrical mode of representing the holy city seems to have emerged in Flanders during the first decades of the twelfth century. Here, geometrical Jerusalem maps were composed during the heyday of the crusader states in the Levant, at a point in history when the earthly Jerusalem had gained a new (political) interest to Latin Christianity and the victorious first crusade was still a living memory. The historical context of the Old Norse Jerusalem maps is a different one. Why did the twelfth-century crusader maps of Jerusalem still matter in the early fourteenth century? And why did they matter to people in the north, at the very edge of the Christian world? This chapter aims to shed some light on these questions through a three-step analysis: Firstly, I shall examine some peculiarities in the visual language of the northern maps that make them stand out from their continental predecessors. Secondly, I will discuss the maps' immediate textual surroundings in the three Old Norse manuscripts. Thirdly, I demonstrate how the maps and their surrounding texts are related and mutually connected rhetorical arguments.

Picturing Jerusalem in Old Norse Manuscripts

The three circular Jerusalem maps in Old Norse manuscripts (AM 544 4to, AM 732b 4to, and AM 736 I 4to) have a common overall design and all share significant features (Figs. 20.1–20.3). The design is clearly modelled on the “crusader map” *typos*, of which a dozen are preserved in continental manuscripts from the twelfth century, predating the Old Norse versions by two hundred years.¹ In some of the Flemish

¹ Rudolf Simek, “Hierusalem civitas famosissima: Die erhaltenen Fassungen des hochmittelalterlichen Situs Jerusalem,” *Codices Manuscripti. Zeitschrift für Handschriftenkunde* 12 (1992), 121–53. In his overview, Simek lists fourteen medieval Jerusalem maps altogether, including schematic maps the design of which differs from the Icelandic ones. In this context, I find it more useful to restrict the group to



Fig. 20.2: Plan of Jerusalem. Icelandic manuscript fragment, early fourteenth century (AM 736 I 4to, fol. 2r), The Arnarnagæaen manuscript collection, Copenhagen.

those sharing the same figural features. Simek omitted the Jerusalem map in Uppsala ms C691, described by Milka Levy-Rubin, “The Rediscovery of the Uppsala Map of Crusader Jerusalem,” *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina Vereins* 111 (1995). See also Jay Rubenstein, “Heavenly and Earthly Jerusalem: The View from Twelfth-Century Flanders,” in *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem*, ed. Bianca Kühnel, et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014). On the patristic and early medieval origin of the circular Jerusalem map, see Milka Levy-Rubin, “From Eusebius to the Crusader Maps: The Origin of the Holy Land Maps,” in *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem*, ed. Bianca Kühnel, et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014).

manuscripts, the circular Jerusalem maps illustrate chronicles about the first crusade and the Frankish conquest of Jerusalem in 1099 (Fig. 20.4).² In the three Icelandic manuscripts, on the other hand, the immediate crusading context is gone. Here, in these books compiled more than one century after the Franks' loss of Jerusalem, at least one generation after the fall of Acre (the last Western stronghold in the Terrasanta), and not long after the transfer of the papal See from Rome to Avignon, the Jerusalem maps are integrated into texts presenting general encyclopaedic knowledge. The manuscripts seem to originate from the Benedictine monasteries in Northern Iceland, although nothing definite is known of their production.³

At first glance, the Icelandic Jerusalem maps follow their twelfth-century prototypes closely: the direction is orientated, the city plan is rendered in the form of a perfect circle, and within the crenellated city walls the most significant pilgrimage sites are indicated. All three maps substantially include the same Latin legends and the same sites – the only vernacular legend in the Icelandic maps is found in AM 736 I 4to, where the name of the city is given twice: *Jorsala borg/Jerusalem* (Fig. 20.2). Churches and monuments are distributed according to convention in each of the four quarters of the city, reflecting to a certain extent the real topography of Jerusalem's Old City. Still, symbolic form clearly trumps topographic reality in all the circular Jerusalem maps. The very choice of the circle as a fundamental design for the city indicates a conceptual connection between Jerusalem and the totality of *terrarum orbis*, the inhabited world as a whole.⁴ Hence, the holy city, navel of the world, becomes a visual metonym for the entire world, a quality which is enforced by the intentional three-dimensionality of the circular Jerusalem designs. As Mary Carruthers has convincingly shown, medieval geometric diagrams were intended to be “read” as three-dimensional figures. The circular Jerusalem maps should thus be conceived of as hemispheres viewed from above, with the crenellated city walls “popped up” imaginatively above the circular “ground” of the city itself.⁵

Despite evident similarities with the twelfth-century Jerusalem maps, the Icelandic exemplars also exhibit some conspicuous deviations. The street grid in the twelfth-century continental Jerusalem maps tends to echo the most common and best established *imago mundi* of medieval learning: the T-O map, a representation of the three

² For instance St Omer, Bibliothèque municipale, cod. 776; Leiden, Bibliothek der Rijksuniversiteit, cod. Voss.Lat.F 31; Uppsala, Universitetsbiblioteket, ms C691; Brüssel, Bibliothèque Royale Albert 1er, cod. 9823–24; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, cod. Lat. 8865; The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Cod. 75 F5.

³ Karl G. Johansson, “Om nordisk och lärt hos de tidiga benediktinarna på Island,” in *Tidlige klostre i Norden før 1200. Et symposium*, ed. Lars Bisgaard and Tore Nyberg (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2006).

⁴ Cf. Chapter 1 (Kristin B. Aavitsland), 14–17.

⁵ Mary Carruthers in her not yet published lectures on geometry and eloquence, “Cognitive Geometries: Using Diagrams in the Middle Ages,” (2017). I wish to thank Mary Carruthers for her thoughtful comments on the overall design of the circular Jerusalem maps.



Fig. 20.3: Plan of Jerusalem. Icelandic manuscript, early fourteenth century (AM 544 4to, *Hauksbók*, fol. 19r), The Arnamagnæen manuscript collection, Copenhagen.

continents of the world, according to Isidore of Seville's description (Fig 20.4).⁶ In the Icelandic maps, moreover, the street grid is rendered with a different emphasis – the four city quarters are represented as equal parts, explicitly divided by a cruciform crossroads [*cardo/decumanus*]. Hence, the city plan takes on another highly symbolic form: it is a cross, inscribed by an orb, thus hinting at the idea of *Christus pantocrator*, Christ's universal dominion. The tendency to favour the cross form at the expense of topographic reality is striking in the three Icelandic maps. In all of them, and in none of the continental ones, the precinct of the Haram al-Sharif or Temple Mount is incorrectly divided to achieve a distinctly cruciform city plan. The upper part of the *cardo* thus separates the *templum domini* (the crusaders' interpretation of the Dome of the Rock) from the *templum salomonis* (the corresponding interpretation of the Al-Aqsa Mosque). Moreover, the Icelandic exemplars represent the city in splendid isolation: no attempts are made to render the surrounding topography, the roads, mountains, lakes, and rivers found in the twelfth-century versions, where the biblical sites in the city's immediate environment are clearly indicated, and in some cases armed horsemen (crusaders?) and pilgrims populate the landscape. In these twelfth-century continental maps, the city itself tends to be seen from the perspective of those pilgrims and horsemen, so to speak: the walls and gates are rendered as seen from outside. The gates in The Hague KB ms 75 F, for instance, are facing outward, so that travellers may enter via those roads drawn to approach them (Fig. 20.4). Contrary to this manner, the three Icelandic maps represent the walls and gates as facing in towards the city, suggesting an enclosed space and a perspective from within. This pictorial means of rendering the holy city as a three-dimensional closure is in accordance with traditional, foursquare representations of St John's vision of the heavenly Jerusalem, as in the many manuscripts illustrating the eighth-century Spanish monk Beatus of Liebana's commentary of the Book of the Apocalypse.⁷

There are yet some other features distinguishing the Icelandic Jerusalem maps from their continental predecessors. First, the Icelandic Jerusalem maps refer solely to sites connected with biblical history: to the dignity of Israel's kings and to the passion and resurrection of Christ. This is in contrast to the twelfth-century maps, which also include legends referring to mundane sites like the market square and the money exchange [*forum rerum venalium; cambium monete*]. Second, the drawings of buildings in the three Icelandic maps also vary from the other maps in this group. Unlike the earlier maps, which mostly render the circular structure of the Anastasis rotunda as a ground plan seen from above, the Icelandic maps all depict the *Templum sanctae crucis* (Church of the Holy Sepulchre) as a domed building with twin towers. Moreover, the Icelandic representations of the *templum domini* (Dome of

⁶ Anne-Dorothee von den Brincken, *Fines Terrae: Die Enden der Erde und der vierte Kontinent auf mittelalterlichen Weltkarten*, MGH (1992), 45–54.

⁷ Cf. Carruthers, "Cognitive Geometries."



Fig. 20.5: *Templum Domini*. Detail of the Jerusalem plan in AM 736 I 4to, fol. 2r. The Arnamagnæen manuscript collection, Copenhagen.

the Rock) also differ from the earlier maps, which all tend to depict it according to reality, as a centralized, vaulted building. In the Icelandic maps, the dome is lacking and the *templum domini* is represented as a basilica-like structure with multiple towers (Fig. 20.5). Remarkably, all representations of architecture in the Icelandic maps show close stylistic and iconographical similarities to architectural elements in Scandinavian church art from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The buildings represented in the maps look very much like two-dimensional versions of the peculiar type of wooden church models still found in some Norwegian parish churches and preserved in museums (Fig. 20.6). During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, this particular form of micro-architecture served as tabernacles for the sacrament and canopies above sculptures of the mother of God or other saints.⁸ The same kind of stylized,

polychrome, architectural elements are seen in several of the remarkably well-preserved altar panels originating from Norway and Iceland in the same period. In the altar panels, the architectural elements always surround the figures of holy persons in their celestial glory.⁹ Even in sculpture, we find the same type of architectural representation on the royal thrones of the Virgin and St Olav. Hence, in rural Norway and Iceland, this kind of urban architecture clearly belonged to the City of God, the heavenly Jerusalem.

⁸ Kaja Kollandsrud, "A Perspective on Medieval Perception in Norwegian Church Art," in *Paint & Piety*, ed. Noëlle L.W. Streepton and Kaja Kollandsrud (London – Oslo: Archetype, 2014); Elisabeth Andersen, "Madonna Tabernacles in Scandinavia c.1150–c.1350," *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 168, no. 1 (2015).

⁹ See for instance the altar panels from Tingelstad in Eastern Norway and Möðruvellir in Iceland.

At this point, we may conclude that the visual characteristics of the Icelandic Jerusalem maps favour Christological and eschatological dimensions. Turning to their manuscript contexts, the motivation for copying Jerusalem maps in fourteenth-century Iceland may become clearer.

The Manuscript Contexts of the Icelandic Jerusalem Maps

The three northern manuscripts containing Jerusalem maps belong to a cluster of Old Norse encyclopaedic texts with a shared transmission history, as Rudolf Simek has shown in his vast work *Altnordische Kosmographie* (1990). The texts in this cluster deal with topics such as cosmology, astronomic constellations, calendar calculations, meteorology, lands, animals, and plants, and historiography of various

kinds. Furthermore, they include lists of holy places, itineraries, and descriptions of the earthly paradise. Most of these texts were either composed or translated and adapted to Old Norse during the second half of the twelfth century, and have come down to us through a group of nine fourteenth-century manuscripts or manuscript fragments.¹⁰ In the texts translated from Latin, we find several interpolations with



Fig. 20.6: Wooden church model, probably the headpiece of a ciborium. Oslo University Museum of Cultural history.

¹⁰ Rudolf Simek, *Altnordische Kosmographie: Studien und Quellen zu Weltbild und Weltbescheidung in Norwegen und Island vom 12. bis zum 14. Jahrhundert*, *Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* 4 (Berlin – New York: de Gruyter, 1990): 370–71.

supplementary information on things related to the northern world and comments regarding linguistic differences between Latin and Old Norse.¹¹

Rudolf Simek has studied the cosmological and geographical content in this text cluster and taken an interest in the Jerusalem maps as geographical documents. As he concentrates exclusively on cosmography and geography, he has omitted from his study the other text genres belonging to the cluster and to the codicological proximity of the Jerusalem maps. According to Simek's categorization, cosmological and geographical information occurs in three categories of Old Norse manuscripts: 1) "Enzyklopädische Handschriften, welche die meisten kosmographischen, geographischen und ethnographischen Texte enthalten;" 2) "Astronomisch-komputistische Sammelhandschriften;" and 3) "Handschriften eigenständiger Werke, welche Stellen kosmographischer Natur enthalten."¹² The manuscripts containing Jerusalem maps belong to Simek's category 1 and 2. One may question, of course, whether it is relevant to categorize medieval texts according to these modern academic disciplines. In his monograph on Icelandic cartography, Dale Kedwards gives a timely reminder that what we today classify as geographic and cosmographic knowledge, medieval authors tended to categorize as geometry.¹³ As one of the seven liberal arts, geometry traditionally embraced information about the size and shape of the world, and of the properties of peoples. For the investigation of the Icelandic Jerusalem maps with their eminently *geometric* rendering of the city, this premodern categorization of knowledge will prove to be relevant, as I hope to show. In the following, I shall thus give a brief description of the codicological environs of the three Icelandic Jerusalem maps.

AM 732b 4to (c.1300–1325)

This manuscript is a fragmented bilingual encyclopaedia of nine folios (one quire plus a single leaf), written in two hands.¹⁴ The preserved folios contain texts on computus (calendar calculation), measures, cosmography, and astronomy, as well as mnemonic verses of different kinds. Geometric diagrams dominate the preserved pages. Preceding the circular Jerusalem map on fol. 8v (Fig. 20.1), there are six more circular designs scattered about the nine folios: a wind diagram; a hemispherical world map; a concentric diagram listing the elements, the planets, and the celestial spheres; a zodiac diagram; a circular labyrinth; and an (incomplete?)

¹¹ This practice is referred to as "autopsy" in philological scholarship; see Dale Kedwards, "Cartography and Culture in Medieval Iceland" (PhD Thesis, University of York, 2014), 69.

¹² Simek, *Altnordische Kosmographie*, 368–69.

¹³ Kedwards, "Cartography and Culture in Medieval Iceland," 17.

¹⁴ Kedwards, "Cartography and Culture in Medieval Iceland," 87.

| Folio/ quire | AM 732b 4to |
|-----------------|---|
| 1r | Text on how the conjunctions of the sun and moon produce the tides. Reference to Bede. |
| 1v | Notices on calendar computing. Latin mnemonic verses. |
| 2r–v | Diagram of winds. Latin text from Isidore on the same. |
| 2v–3r | Old Norse text on the lunar cycle. Hemispherical world map. |
| 3v–4v | Diagram of the planetary spheres and the four elements. Old Norse text on the length of days and the course of the sun. |
| 4v–5v | Exercises for Latin grammar and syntax. |
| 6r | <i>Macrobius dicens</i> . Old Norse text referring to Macrobius on the constellations and the movements of the planets. Zodiac diagram. |
| 6v | Latin text referring to St Jerome about fifteen signs appearing before the Last days. List of the names of the Hebrew letters and their (allegorical) meaning. Notice on the importance of keeping the canonical hours. |
| 7r | Short notice on the martyrdom of St Kilian and his followers. Labyrinth with the inscription <i>Volundar hús</i> . Measure of Christ's body with a comment both in Norse and Latin. List of the five <i>bonae cogitationes</i> , seven steps of wisdom, and an explanation on how thoughts, words, and deeds may lead man to heaven or to hell. |
| 7v | Diagram of the lunar and solar cycles, four lesser circles for the calculation of <i>calendæ</i> , <i>nonæ</i> and <i>idus</i> during the twelve months of the Julian calendar. Scheme of the fundamental attributes of God, soul, and body. |
| 8r | Latin explanation of a <i>computus manualis</i> for remembering the signs of the zodiac and the names and characteristics of the planets. Figure of hand. Short notice on the Late antique historian Orosius (<i>frásagnamaðr</i>). |
| 8v | Map of Jerusalem with Latin legends. Notice on measures and calculations of weights and currencies and two verses in Old Norse. |
| 9r–v | Text on zodiac signs and planets' names and their origins in classical mythology, with a reference to Ovid. Arab numbers, Latin alphabet. |

figure illustrating the lunar circle during the year. In addition, the figure of a human hand functions as a mnemonic device for calculus rules. Framing these diagrams are several short texts, some in Latin and some in the vernacular, elaborating on the information found in the diagrams. Some of the texts have, however, no apparent connection with the figures. An overview of the compiled texts and figures and their distribution across the nine folios follows below.

From the overview above, we may establish that a recurrent theme in what remains of this encyclopaedic manuscript is the movement of the celestial bodies. Another theme related to this one is the issue of calculation and measurement, particularly the measure of time, but also of weights, currencies (fol. 8v), and the

length of Christ's body (fol. 7r). In some of the texts an eschatological dimension is clearly pronounced.

AM 736 I 4to (c.1300–1350)

This is a manuscript fragment of two folios, seemingly originating from a similar encyclopaedic compilation as AM 732b 4to. Two hands have been identified: one is responsible for fols 1r–2r and dated to ca 1300, whereas the second is responsible for fol. 2v and dated to ca 1350.¹⁵ In addition to the full-page map of Jerusalem on 2r (Fig. 20.2), there are two cosmographic diagrams, both of them corresponding to two of the diagrams in AM 732b 4to. It emerges that this encyclopaedic manuscript fragment contains the same kind of and calendar-related texts and diagrams as in AM 732b 4to. In addition, geographical and topographical description seems to be the main interest here.

| Folio/ quire | AM 736 I 4to |
|-----------------|---|
| 1r | <i>Sva er kallat sem þrideild se iord</i> : Old Norse text describing the three continents of the world; sometimes referred to as “the Icelandic Geographical Treatise”. ¹⁶ <i>Gaspar balthasar melchior</i> : Unreadable text headed with the names of the biblical magi |
| 1v | <i>Galterus meistari segir solar gang</i> : Note in Old Norse on the error in the Julian calendar. Hemispherical world map. Old Norse text on the lunar cycle and the tides. Rota diagram of the planetary spheres and the four elements. Latin verse on the cross. |
| 2r | Map of Jerusalem (Jorsalaborg) with Latin legends. |
| 2v | Description of Jerusalem and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Old Norse. |

AM 544 4to (Hauksbók, c.1300–1350)

The most famous of the Icelandic manuscripts containing Jerusalem maps is the so-called *Hauksbók*, a huge, composite compilation with a complex transmission history. This text corpus is traditionally connected to the learned Icelandic magistrate [*lagmann*] Haukr Erlendsson, a member of the Norwegian elite, who died in

¹⁵ Kedwards, “Cartography and Culture in Medieval Iceland,” 67.

¹⁶ Simek refers to this text as “Kurze Weltbeschreibung”, Simek 1990, *Altnordische Kosmographie*, 428.

Norway in 1334.¹⁷ The main compilation is dated 1300–1310, and has subsequent fourteenth-century additions. At some point it was split into three separate quarto manuscripts, of which the one containing the Jerusalem map, AM 544 4to, is the largest.¹⁸

The map of *Civitas Hierusalem famosissima* is found on fol. 19r of AM 544 4to, in the middle of the third quire (Fig. 20.3), and it is the only proper illustration or diagram in the entire manuscript – at least in its extant form. The parchment is cut across the page, so that the lower part is missing, which, of course, makes it difficult to determine the map’s original immediate context. It is preceded by a collection of texts with geographical and theological content (fols 1r–18v), and followed by a brief text on excommunication (fol. 19v) as well as the mythological Old Norse poem *Völuspá* (fols 20r–21r). Due to a lacuna between quire 2 and 3, Finnur Jónsson considered the texts preceding the Jerusalem map to be two separate entities, and in his edition of *Hauksbók*, they were given the titles *Heimslýsing ok helgifræði* (quires 1 and 2; fols 1r–14v) and *Heimspeki ok helgifræði* (first part of quire 3, fols 15r–19v).¹⁹ From a codicological point of view, there is reason to consider them as two “production unities” which may have existed as two separate booklets before they were added to *Hauksbók* sometime after Haukr Erlendsson’s death in 1334.²⁰ The main body of texts in these three quires (fols 1r–18v) is attributed to two Norwegian scribes and dated to ca 1300, whereas the remainder of the third quire (fols 19r–21v), including the Jerusalem map and the Eddic poem *Völuspá*, seem to have Icelandic origin and date from the first generation after Haukr’s death. Karl G. Johanson suggests that the scribes responsible for these late additions were

17 It has generally been assumed that most of the compilation was written or at least commissioned by Haukr himself, whereas recent scholarship tends to question the character of Haukr’s connection to the book, and argues that the extant manuscript represents “various stages of production,” cf. Karl G. Johansson, “The *Hauksbók*: An Example of Medieval Modes of Collecting and Compilation,” in *The Dynamics of the Medieval Manuscript*, ed. Karen Pratt, et al. (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2017).

18 The two others, also in the Arnamagnæan Collection, have shelf marks of AM 371 4to (presently kept in Reykjavik) and AM 675 4to (presently kept in Copenhagen). A complete edition of *Hauksbók* appeared in Copenhagen in the 1890s, see *Hauksbók. Udgivet efter de Arnamagnæanske håndskrifter no. 371, 544 og 675, 4o, samt forskellige papirshåndskrifter af Det Kongelige Nordiske Oldskrift-Selskab*, ed. Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Thieles Bogtrykkeri, 1892–1896).

19 These labels, which may be translated as “Description of the world and knowledge of the sacred” and “Wisdom of the world and knowledge of the sacred” respectively, do not occur in the manuscript and seem to be the editor Finnur Jónsson’s invention. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Arni Magnusson described the two first quires as “geographica quaedam et physica, theologica quaedam ex sermonibus Augustini, Varia, atque inter ea Astronomica quaedam.” The third quire he characterized as “theologica quaedam videtur esse ur Adamsbók,” cf. *Katalog over Den arnamagnæanske håndskriftsamling udgivet af Kommissionen for det arnamagnæanske legat*, 2 vols (Copenhagen 1889–1894).

20 Johansson, “The *Hauksbók*,” 137–38.

associated with the Benedictine monastery þingeyrar in Northern Iceland.²¹ As the following analysis shows, a monastic setting is reasonable for this and the two other manuscripts containing Jerusalem maps.

Although the first three quires presumably existed as two separate booklets written by two different Norwegian scribes, they were at some point, probably in an Icelandic monastery about 1350, conceived of as one unit, perhaps independently of the rest of AM 544 4to. Hence, I will consider them as one thematic entity in the following.²² The compiled texts, all of them in Old Norse and enumerated consecutively for the purpose of this analysis, are as follows:

| Folio/ quire | # | AM 544 (Hauksbók) |
|-----------------|---|---|
| Quire 1 | | |
| 1r–v | 1 | On the waters of the world, originating from the four rivers of Paradise. |
| 1v | 2 | <i>Prologus</i> ; referring to a biblical (Moses) as well as a classical (Herodotus) authority for the legitimation of history writing. |
| 2r | 3 | <i>Fra paradiso</i> . A description of the earthly Paradise and the Tree of Life. |
| 2r–4r | 4 | <i>Her segir frá þui hversu lond liggja í veroldenni</i> . A description of the world and its three continents. |
| 4r–8r | 5 | <i>Vm þat hvaðan otru hofst</i> . (Homiletic?) text on false religion and the necessity of monotheism. |
| 8r–v | 6 | <i>Fra þui hvar huerr Noa sona bygði heiminn</i> . On the sons of Noah who populated the world and spread to all lands. |
| 8v | 7 | <i>Her segir frá marghattaðum þjóðum</i> : Description of the “monstrous races” living at the edge of the world. |
| Quire 2 | | |
| Continued: | | |
| 9r | | <i>Her segir frá marghattaðum þjóðum</i> . |
| 9r–10v | 8 | <i>Her segir . . .</i> : On heretics and false prophets, referring to Augustine. |

²¹ Johansson, “Om nordisk och lärt hos de tidiga benediktinarna på Island,” and Johansson, “The *Hauksbók*,” 132.

²² Here, I deviate methodologically from Karl G. Johansson, who has authored the most recent study of this manuscript and analyzed its codicology. Johansson upholds Finnur Jónsson’s distinction between quire 1 and 2 on the one hand and quire 3 on the other, which is sound from a codicological point of view. There are, however, textual and thematic links between the two and the Jerusalem map, as I will subsequently show. My emphasis is thus the conceptual and rhetorical unity between the texts in the three quires, which must have been evident when the two entities were bound together, and which is clearly enhanced by the insertion of the Jerusalem map about 1350.

(continued)

| Folio/ quire | # | AM 544 (Hauksbók) |
|-------------------|----|--|
| 10v–11r | 9 | <i>Her segir hvaðan blot skur guða hofust</i> : Dialogue between a student (<i>Discipulus</i>) and his teacher (<i>Magister</i>), discussing idolatry and the reasons for its existence. |
| 11r | 10 | <i>Her segir fra draumum</i> : Dialogue form continued. On the origin of dreams. |
| 11r–v | 11 | <i>Her segir fra Antíchristo</i> : Dialogue form continued. On the prophecy of Antichrist. |
| 12r | 12 | <i>Vm uprisu kuicra oc dauða</i> : Dialogue form continued. On the resurrection of the flesh at the end of time. |
| 12r–13r | 13 | <i>Vm íbru daga hald</i> : On fasting on the so-called ember days (<i>imbrudagar</i>) and their biblical (Mosaic) legitimation. |
| 13r–v | 14 | <i>Vm regnboga</i> : Description of the rainbow with an explanation of its allegorical significance. |
| 13v–14r | 15 | <i>Vm solstoðr</i> : On the calendar and the solstices. |
| 14r–v | 16 | <i>Vm borga skipan oc legstaðe heilgara manna</i> : List of towns with important relics and the burial places of notable saints. |
| Lacuna (2 folios) | | |
| Quire 3 | | |
| 15r | 17 | Fragment, ending a narrative about a servant of God. |
| 15r–16r | 18 | <i>Fra heilræðum spekinga</i> : Dialogue between a student (<i>lærisveinn</i>) and his teacher (<i>Meistari</i>) on the brevity of life and the importance of remembering death. |
| 16r–17r | 19 | <i>Af natturu mannzins ok bloði</i> : On the correspondence between the four humours and the four elements. |
| 17r–18v | 20 | <i>Huaðan kommin er + drottins</i> : The legend of the Wood of the Holy Cross. |
| 18v | 21 | <i>Þessir eru xij heíms osomar</i> : On twelve unseemly things leading to damnation. |
| 19r | 22 | Map of Jerusalem with Latin legends. |
| 19v | 23 | On the conditions of excommunication. |
| 20r–21r | 24 | <i>Völuspá</i> . |

As we see from the above, the three first quires of AM544 4to make up a miscellaneous corpus of texts, drawn from a variety of sources.²³ Notwithstanding the

²³ The four pieces in dialogue form (texts 9–12) seems to be based on Honorius Augustodunensis' *Elucidarius*, whereas texts 3–8, 13–16, 19, 21, and 22 (the Jerusalem map) correspond to similar texts in the *Liber Floridus*, a compendium of theology, cosmology, nature lore and historiography

disparity of this compilation, a few themes repeatedly recur. Some we have already met in the surroundings of the other two Jerusalem maps: these are issues related to the calendar, the movements of the celestial bodies and the relation between man and cosmos (nos 13, 14, 15, 19), and issues related to world description and significant places (nos 1, 3, 6, 7, 16, 22). In addition, there are texts that may be characterized as historiography in the widest sense (nos 2, 20, 24). Furthermore, several of the texts relate to the discrimination between true and false religion and the conditions of salvation (nos 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 21, 23). Neither of these thematic categories is exclusive, and dimensions of all themes are found in most of the texts. Moreover, all of them without exception are informed by and /or refer to the master narrative underlying medieval encyclopaedic literature in general: that of the history of salvation.²⁴ Within this conceptual and thematic entity composed of the first three quires of AM 544 4to, the geometric rendering of Jerusalem at fol. 19r plays a certain role as a structuring device – as do, I argue, the Jerusalem maps in the two fragmented encyclopaedias AM 732 I 4to and AM 736I 4to. In the following, I shall therefore treat the three maps and their surrounding texts in parallel – although greatest emphasis is placed on the first three quires of AM 544 4to (*Hauksbók*) with its richer selection of texts.

Recurrent Themes in the Texts Surrounding the Three Icelandic Jerusalem Maps

Taken as a whole, the textual surroundings of the Jerusalem maps in all three manuscripts display striking thematic similarities. The concern about celestial bodies and the measuring of time is already mentioned, as is the interest in geographical description and what we could call sanctified topography, pointing out holy places as “centres of immanence.”²⁵ Both themes may be seen as symptoms of the need to assure the northern lands a place within the realm of Christendom, both in time and space. Preoccupation with the measurement of time and the urge to overcome the deficiencies of the Julian calendar were imperative issues for the whole of

compiled by Lambert, a canon of Saint-Omer in Artois near the border of today's Belgium. However, the correspondences with *Liber Floridus* are by no means direct translations; cf. Simek, *Altnordische Kosmographie*, 381–83.

²⁴ Mary Franklin-Brown, *Reading the World. Encyclopedic Writing in the Scholastic Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012). Cf. the introduction to this volume, Chapter 1 (Kristin B. Aavitsland), 22–4.

²⁵ Hans Henrik Lohfert Jørgensen, “Sensorium: A Model for Medieval Perception,” in *The Saturated Sensorium: Principles of Perception and Mediation in the Middle Ages*, ed. Hans Henrik Lohfert Jørgensen, *et al.* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2015), 29.

the Christian oikumene, and proper calculation of time was required in order to celebrate Easter at the right time, along with the rest of the Church.²⁶ The recurrent descriptions of the inhabited world testify to a similar need to be included in Christendom. All three manuscripts hint several times that the sons of Noah are “builders” of each part of the inhabitable world and thus ancestors to the three continents. This is a commonplace in medieval encyclopaedic knowledge, verbally suggesting the figure of the T-O map. Text no. 6 of AM 544 4to (*Hauksbók*) is no exception to this rule: “Sem got that part which is called Asia and makes up the half of the world. And Japhet son of Noah was to build the northern part of the world, which is called Europe. And Kam, the third of Noah’s sons, was to build the land which is called Africa.”²⁷ However, the author adds geographic details of the north to the commonplace description of how Noah’s son Japhet populated Europe, carefully mentioning Sweden, Denmark, and Norway [*Svíþjóð oc Danmore oc Noregi*]. A similar feature is also found in the fragmented encyclopedia AM 736 I 4to: Geographical description derived from authorities like Isidore, Martinanus Capella, and Eusbeius is supplemented with details about Iceland and the North Atlantic that were unknown to the acknowledged *auctores*.²⁸ In these texts, the Icelandic authors explicitly inscribe the northern territories to authoritative accounts of the inhabited world.

Another interesting feature is the remarkable emphasis on mission and the spread of Christianity in some of the geographical texts. The geographical treatise in AM 736 I 4to (fol. 1r) describes the three continents of the world, including biblically significant places like Babylon and Jerusalem. Here, painstaking care is taken to mention who converted the lands described. Moreover, reflections about the pagan past of the ancient Mediterranean world as well as the countries in the north occur in several of the texts. Related to this theme are the frequent mentions of Babylon as the cradle of polytheism and idolatry. The linguistic chaos of Babel, described in Gen 11: 1–9, is interpreted as an analogy to the religious chaos of multiple faiths. In texts no. 5 and no. 9 in AM 544 4to (*Hauksbók*), for instance, heathendom and pagan practices are associated with the sinful state of man before the flood. In these texts, which are seemingly adapted from Lambert of St. Omer’s *Liber floridus* and Honorius Augustodunensis’ *Elucidarius* respectively, the story of Babel is understood mainly as the paradigm of idolatry: the confusion of languages leads to the confusion of mind and difficulties in recognizing the creator and true God. Instead, a plurality of faiths and cults parallels the plurality of languages. The ancient pantheon is described as men and women made gods by the heathens, hence the error of idolatry inflicts the

²⁶ Kedwards, “Cartography and Culture in Medieval Iceland,” 79.

²⁷ “Sem hafðe þann lut heimsens er asia heití. þat er kallat helmíngr heimsens. En Iafeth sonr Noa skilldi byggja norðr halfo heimsens, þat er kallat Europa. En Kam hinn þriði Noa sonr. hann skilldi byggja þat land er Africa heitir,” *Hauksbók*, 165/310.

²⁸ Kedwards, “Cartography and Culture in Medieval Iceland,” 69.

landscape, producing barren wastelands.²⁹ Predictably juxtaposed with descriptions of this barrenness is the lushness of the converted lands, and the paradisiac *topos* of the lush and sprouting tree combined with running water – a common symbolic reference to baptism – frequently occurs.

Yet a theme surfacing frequently is that of the hidden knowledge of Christ in pre-incarnation history. Not only the Old Testament, but also other historical narratives are understood as imbued with typological information of Christ, as I will show further below. Eschatology is another leitmotiv in the texts surrounding the Jerusalem maps, often connected to the apocalyptic prophesy of the Antichrist.³⁰ The figure of the Antichrist will rise from Babylon and is hence connected both to idolatry and whoredom. He will conquer the world by cunning and terror, but all his performances are false and his signs are lies [*þoll tacn hans ero lygin*]. Jerusalem plays a prominent role in this narrative: the Antichrist installs himself there as if he were God, allies with the Jews, and will eventually be defeated at the Mount of Olives [*i fallenu Oliueti*] after seven years of reign.³¹

Thus, we may conclude that the texts compiled in the manuscripts with Jerusalem maps share a common urge to interpret the physical world, the past, and the future in light of the master narrative of salvation history, and to claim the universal and eternal truth of the Christian faith despite the historical existence of other beliefs. Against this background, I shall investigate the ways in which the circular Jerusalem maps may add significance to these concerns.

Cognitive Geometry: The Quadripartite Circle

As emphasized above, the constituting feature of the three Icelandic Jerusalem maps is the cruciform city plan inscribed by a circular wall (Figs. 20.1–20.3). This cross within an orb is a figure with symbolic meaning in its own right: it hints at the universal realm of Christ. Moreover, the geometrical design has further potential for generating meaning – the cross and the orb make up a quadripartite circle, which is one of the most common diagrammatic schemes in medieval “encyclopaedic” literature. Lambert’s *Liber floridus*, for example, abounds with such quadripartite diagrams, and they occur frequently in manuscript illumination from the twelfth through the

²⁹ *Hauksbók*, 157–58 and 70.

³⁰ AM 544 4to (*Hauksbók* 1892–1896), text nos 9, 11.

³¹ The preoccupation with the Antichrist may associate to a feature in narratives of the Holy Land from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, especially in Franciscan exegesis, in which the Antichrist is associated with Mohammad, cf. Marianne Ritsema van Eck, “Custodians of Sacred Space. Constructing the Franciscan Holy Land through Texts and *sacri monti* (ca. 1480–1650)” (Doctoral dissertation, Amsterdam University, 2017), 122.

fourteenth centuries, as well as in monumental art.³² The quadripartite circle is a figure suitable for visualizing a concept that was central to the medieval paradigm of knowledge: that of analogies in the created universe, like the correspondences between the four seasons, the four elements, and the four humours of the human body. Hence, it is a prominent example of what Mary Carruthers recently has characterized as cognitive geometries: “the medieval creative practice among geometric shapes, meditation, and the human ability to create original works.”³³ Carruthers claims that cognition and topical invention happened by the use of geometric diagrams in the minds of the intellectually trained during the High Middle Ages. This claim finds support in influential, widely distributed and much-quoted medieval authors like, for instance, Hugh of St. Victor.³⁴ If we take this as a condition also valid for the scribes behind the Icelandic manuscripts under discussion here – and there is little reason not to – it is interesting to observe how the scheme of the quadripartite circle is found, not visually, but verbally, in some of the texts surrounding the Jerusalem map in *Hauksbók*. Two of these are text no. 13, *Vm ímbru daga hald*, and text no. 19, *Af natturu mannzins ok bloði*, which both have parallels in Lambert of St. Omer’s *Liber floridus*.

Text no. 13 explains the practice and meaning of the so-called ember days. These are yearly fast days at the beginning of each quarter of the year, which should be kept, as in the times of Moses, the text argues, for agricultural benefit. Hence, these fast days are clearly connected to the seasons and the cycle of the year. The allegorical meaning (or mnemonic pedagogy?) of their number (3x4) is explained, according to theology (trinity; gospels; apostles) and knowledge of nature (three parts of mind/spirit; four elements and four humours making up the body). Hence, entities that may be visualized by a circle (the cosmos, the year, the human life-span, God’s revelation) and entities that come in fours (elements, humours, seasons, gospels) are integrated in the text as a kind of mental diagram of a quadripartite circle – or a circle spanning the figure of the cross. By fasting on the ember days at each quarter of the year, this diagram is embodied and performed: conceptually, the ember days make up a cruciform pattern across the cycle of the year.

In text no. 19 a similar mental diagram is created. The text explains how the four elements existed from creation, and how they are distributed and exchanged across the cosmos. Furthermore, it describes how this distribution has a correspondence in

³² A well-known example on a monumental scale is the microcosmos-macrocosmos diagram in the frescoed crypt of the cathedral of Anagni, dated 1225–1250.

³³ Carruthers, “Cognitive Geometries.”

³⁴ Hugh, whose didactic book on the arts was paramount for the intellectual culture of the High Middle Ages, refers to geometry as “fons sensuum et origo dictionum,” that geometry is “the well-spring of our sensory cognition and the source of the things we say,” Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, PL, 176. See also Kristin B. Aavitsland, *Imagining the Human Condition in Medieval Rome. The Cistercian Fresco Cycle at Abbazia delle Tre Fontane* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012), 203.

man (Adam created from the red earth of Hebron), as the four temperaments correspond with the four elements and their properties (cold/warm; dry/humid); and the changes in temper follow the changing seasons during the year and in the course of man's life. The correspondence between world and man, macrocosmos and microcosmos, is one of the most frequent uses of the quadripartite circle diagram in medieval culture. This well-known commonplace, more frequently communicated by visual means, is given a verbal form in text no. 19.

The world described in these and most other texts of the first three quires of AM 544 4to, in AM 732 4to, and AM 736 I 4to has Jerusalem as its geographical as well as moral centre. Jerusalem is the spot on earth where the transcendent had proved to break through [*axis mundi*]. Hence, its design may be considered a key to knowledge of this divinely created world. Within the paradigm of medieval learning, the city plan of Jerusalem is a figure of cognitive geometry with pedagogic as well as mystical qualities.

The Holy Cross: Cosmic Sign and Wooden Substance

In the three Icelandic Jerusalem maps, the cruciform city plan is pronounced more explicitly than in the twelfth-century ones, as we saw above. Interestingly, the figure of the cross is also a recurrent motif in the manuscript environments of all three Jerusalem maps under discussion here. Cruciform figures occur not only indirectly through textual references to the diagrammatic qualities of the quadripartite circle, as we saw above, but also as explicit mentions of the cross of Christ, in which the form of the cross as well as its physical substance play significant argumentative roles. Some examples follow.

Text no. 8 in AM 544 4to (*Her segir . . .*, fols 9r–10v) warns against false prophets, heathen rites, and witchcraft.³⁵ Towards the end of the text, the sign of the cross [*guðs pinslar marke*] is introduced as more powerful than heathen practices and as the most efficient means against the snares of the devil. Making the sign of the cross aids memory to contemplate the wood on which the Lord suffered [*lata oss þann cross þa i hug koma er drottenn vár var píndr a*]. Moreover, the cross is embedded with great significance [*miklar iartegnir*]. The universal significance of God's sacrifice is indicated in its form: lying on the ground, the cross becomes a figure of the world, pointing to (showing towards?) all four directions [*ef crossenn er lagðr niðr a iorð þa synir hann sic yfir üij halfor heimsens, austr oc vestr, norðr oc suðr*], while standing upright it connects heaven and earth [*þa tacnar hann beði hifneska luti oc iarðneska*]. This didactic reading of the figure of the cross is originally drawn from a sermon

35 *Hauksbók*, 167–70.

by Augustine, and is referred to by numerous medieval authors.³⁶ The widely distributed *Legenda aurea*, compiled ca 1260, quotes Augustine's sermon in a wording that seems quite close to the *Hauksbók* text. On Norse ground, similar interpretations of the cross are found both in the Old Norse Homily Book (May 3, *Inventio crucis*) and in the Old Icelandic homily book.³⁷ In AM 544 4to, the interpretation of the cross's design as an image of the world inevitably mirrors the orbicular and cruciform Jerusalem map, which in the present binding is placed eight folios away.

The three manuscripts containing Jerusalem maps refer to the Holy Cross not only as sign and geometrical figure, but also as material substance. Since St Helena's assumed discovery of the true cross in Jerusalem in the fourth century, its wood had been the most precious and prestigious relic in Christianity, surrounded by political significance, but also by poetic, legendary, and didactic discourse. The three Icelandic manuscripts contain several traces of these centuries-old traditions, most prominently in AM 544 4to (*Hauksbók*), in which fols 17r–18v are reserved for the legend of the Wood of the Cross (text no. 20).

Several texts about the Wood of the Cross and its typological significance appeared in historiographic works by twelfth-century authors like Honorius Augustodunensis, Petrus Comestor, Godfrey of Viterbo, and Lambert of St. Omer.³⁸ Obviously fuelled by typological enthusiasm, these texts aim to trace the predictions of the cross of Christ in the stories from the Old Testament; and hence a number of legendary motifs, sometimes mutually contradictory, were generated.³⁹ Around 1200, a group of narratives emerged in monastic environments, drawing on this theological-historiographical tradition as well as on the rich apocryphal literature connected to Adam and Eve. These narratives share a general storyline relating the history of the Wood of the Cross from the last days of Adam until the last days of Christ, construed as the New Adam. At the core of this group of texts is a Latin prose version from ca 1220, simply called the *Legenda*. It was translated into several vernaculars (Old French, Middle English, Flemish), and it seems that it is also the basis for the Old

36 Augustine of Hippo, *Sermo* 53, PL, 38. The fifth-century author Sedulius, much quoted throughout the Middle Ages, presents a similar reflection, as does Honorius Augustodunensis. Both of them informed Old Norse devotional literature extensively.

37 In the homily for the feast of *Inventio crucis*, the Old Norse Homily Book adds an explanation of the site of the crucifixion (my translation): "Thus our Lord suffered in the middle of the world, where the distance to all ends of the world is the same, so that the mercy we receive through his suffering is as near for all those who adore him in faith and through good works" (*Af því var droten i miðium hæimi pindr þar er iam-langt er til allra hæims ende, at iam-nær er ollum miscun pinslar hans þeim er hann gofga með tru ok goðum vercum*), *Gamal norsk homilebok: Cod. AM. 619 4º*, ed. Gustav Indrebø (Oslo: Kjeldeskriftfondet, 1966).

38 Barbara Baert, *A Heritage of Holy Wood: The Legend of the True Cross in Text and Image*, Beliefs, and Traditions (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 291–4.

39 Baert, *A Heritage of Holy Wood* gives a thorough account of the cluster of legends surrounding the True Cross and their diffusions in texts and images throughout the medieval period.

Norse legend of the cross in AM 544 4to.⁴⁰ The story may be summarized as follows: Adam repented his sin, and God promised him that by the end of the world [*við enda heimsins*] he would receive the oil of mercy [*miskunnar oleum*]. As he approached death, Adam sent his son Seth to follow his parents' footprints back to Paradise to fetch the oil for him. Seth reached Paradise, marvelled at its wonderful brilliance and presented his errand to the guarding angel. He was then given visionary insight, as he saw the fountain from which the four rivers sprang that watered the entire world, and above it a huge tree [*ifir keldunni sá hann apalldr einn standa med morgum greinum*]. A serpent was twining around its trunk [*orm einn skreið umhverfs apalldrinn*]. The tree was so large that its branches seemed to reach the sky and its roots went all the way down to hell. At the top, Seth saw a crying baby wrapped in swaddling clothes [*barn eitt grátanda ok sveipt i klæðum*], whereas below, entangled in the roots, he recognized his brother Abel. The angel explained to him that the boy child is the Son of God, and that he is the oil of mercy promised to his parents [*sveinbarn þat þu set er guðs sun . . . han er þat miskunnar oleum er þeim var heitið*]. Then Seth was given three seeds of the tree from which his father had eaten. The angel instructed him to plant them in his father's mouth when he had died, and explained that from the first, there will grow a cedar, from the second a cypress, and from the third a pine. In some versions of the legend, the pine is exchanged with the palm, yet another species of tree ripe with symbolic potential. These three different trees originating from the same fruit was, as the angel taught Seth, a representation of the Holy Trinity.

Seth then went back to his dying father and let him know that in the fullness of time [*fullnaðr tímans er kominn*] his sin would be atoned for. Adam then rejoiced for the first time since he was banished from Paradise. Then everything occurred as the angel had foretold: Adam was buried in the valley of Hebron, and three blooming saplings [*teinungar*] grew from his mouth. The rods of Moses and Aaron were later taken from them, and these rods worked all the miracles [*allar iartegnir*] for the people of Israel in the desert on their way to the Promised Land.⁴¹ King Solomon had the tree cut when in need of building material for the temple in Jerusalem, but the wood from the wondrous tree behaved strangely, altered its size, and was impossible to fit into the structure. It was thus put down beside the sanctuary [*þvi var þat lagt niðr hia mustarinu*]. When the Queen of Sheba, the wisest of all heathen women [*allra heiðanna kvenna vitruzt*] came to Jerusalem, she recognized the significance of the rejected piece of wood, and foretold that one day a man will hang upon this

⁴⁰ Baert, *A Heritage of Holy Wood*, 300. Baert, however, is not aware of the Old Norse version.

⁴¹ In AM 544 4to, Moses and Aaron's relation to the holy wood is mentioned only in a few lines. In the Latin *Legenda*, however, this part of the narrative is more elaborated, and a section is included about King David, who moves the three samplings to Jerusalem, experiences that they work miracles along the way, plants them in a well and observes that they grow into one single tree. As this part is omitted here, the passage from three different samplings into one single tree is more unclear than in other versions of the legends.

wood whose death will cause the downfall of the Jews. Upon hearing this, King Solomon became anxious and submerged the wood into a great pond [*i eitt stórt fén*]. In other versions of the legend, the pond is specified as *Piscina Probatica* or Pool of Bethesda, and the miraculous power of its salvific waters is elaborated upon. The wood lay hidden in the pond until it surfaced at the time of Christ, and his executioners used it as material for the cross. The legend in AM 544 4to concludes with the statement that the prophecy of the wise Queen proved to be true, as Emperor Titus sacked Jerusalem soon after the death and resurrection of Christ. Those of the Jews who survived his siege were sold cheaply as slaves. Since then, the Jews have been spread all over the world [*um allan heim*], deprived of land and power. The text thus ends in a clearly anti-Judaic key.

In this, as in most versions of the legend, the typological connection between the sin of Adam and the atonement of Christ is immediately established by the seeds growing from Adam's mouth, linking the Tree of Knowledge to the Wood of the Cross. Thus, the very substance of this miraculous wood becomes a material thread that can be traced across a number of sacred events, hinting at the deeper meaning of salvation history. Through the ages, the seeds from the lost paradise quietly and enigmatically grew into the new tree of life, the cross of Christ, which reopened paradise to fallen man. Moreover, the threefold Wood of the Cross exposes the Trinitarian nature of the true God to those who gain prophetic insight. One fundamental message communicated here is the Christian claim that the truth of Christ exists from the beginning of time, although hidden before the incarnation. This theme is in accordance with a dominating tendency running through most texts in the three first quires of AM 544, as we have seen above.

In the bifolio AM 736 I 4to we meet the mystical wood of the cross again. But here, the three types of wood have become four. On fol. 1v, facing the Jerusalem map at fol. 2r, there is a Latin verse on the cross. The verse is written vertically from the bottom of the page, along a line framing the concentric diagram of the celestial spheres, which is one of two cosmological figures on this page (Fig. 20.7).⁴² The Latin verse reads:

In cruce pes cedrus stipes cipressus oliva fit tituli tabula brachia palma manu[s?] tenet

(In the cross, the foot is cedar, the trunk is cypress, the table of inscription is made from olive, and arms of the cross are palm, holding the hands).

The cedar and cypress we recognize from AM 544 and the legend of the Holy Wood, whereas the pine is here exchanged with the palm. These three woods make up the foot, the vertical and the horizontal beams of the cross. In addition, the wood of the inscription table that Pilate put above Christ's head is identified as olive.

⁴² Dale Kedwards overlooked this verse in his otherwise thorough discussion of AM 736 I 4to, cf. Kedwards, "Cartography and Culture in Medieval Iceland".



Fig. 20.7: Cosmological diagrams and a Latin verse on the Holy Cross, facing the plan of Jerusalem on the opposite folio. Icelandic manuscript fragment, early fourteenth century (AM 736 I 4to, fol. 1r), The Arnamagnæen manuscript collection, Copenhagen.

The idea that the cross of the Lord being crafted from four noble species of wood seems to have developed independently from the legends of the miraculous wood grown from the paradisiac seeds. Rather, it seems to originate from exegetical glosses found in early medieval authors such as John Chrysostom, Gregory of Tours, and the Venerable Bede. To meditate Christ's suffering on the cross and its universal implications, the cross is associated with four woods prominently figuring in the Bible and endowed with symbolic significance. The cedar, which cannot rot, makes up the foot and signifies the eternal validity of Christ's redemptive sacrifice. The upright beam is made from the perfumed cypress, which has conservational qualities and stands for the incorruptibility of Christ's body. The crossing beam is made from a palm tree, whose branches are used as signs of victory and hence indicate Christ's triumph over death. Finally, the titulus with Pilate's trilingual inscription is made from olive to indicate the eternal peace that is the consequence of Christ's sacrificial death.⁴³

The thought of the four distinct woods of the cross certainly reflects some monastic, meditational practice. In the fourteenth century, however, it seems to have spread also in the form of narrative folklore. This is not least because Jacobus de Voragine mentions the idea in his extremely widespread *Legenda aurea* (1260s). In turn, this text was cited by Sir John Mandeville, the alleged author of the popular and much-translated *Book of Marvels and Travels* (1360s). Both Jacobus de Voragine and Mandeville quote an mnemotechnical verse similar to the one found in AM 736 I 4to, however a little more concise: *In cruce sit palma, cedrus, cypressus, oliva*.⁴⁴

The bifolio AM 736 I 4to contains yet another reference to the Holy Cross. On the verso of the same leaf as the Jerusalem map, a description of Jerusalem was added around 1350.⁴⁵ This short text is taken from the so-called *Leiðarvísir*, the twelfth-century itinerary describing how to travel from Iceland to Jerusalem.⁴⁶ Here, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the site of Golgotha are described with careful attention to the precise site of the cross. Long gone, the stones still testify to its presence – the blood that flowed from the cross can still be seen on the rock, and the rift into which it was inserted is still visible. The absence of the wood of the cross in this short text contrasts with the verse on the preceding folio, insisting on its manifold, meaningful material substance.

⁴³ Anton Legner, *Reliquien in Kunst und Kult: Zwischen Antike und Aufklärung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft (WGB), 1995), 76–7.

⁴⁴ Jacobus de Voragine mentions the verse in his account of the finding of the Holy Cross, Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, 2 vols, ed. and trans. William Granger Ryan, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993, vol. 1, 278; whereas Mandeville quotes it in his description of Jerusalem; Sir John Mandeville, *The Book of Marvels and Travels*, ed. Anthony Bale, Oxford World Classics, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, 8.

⁴⁵ Kedwards, "Cartography and Culture in Medieval Iceland," 67.

⁴⁶ Cf. Chapters 11 (Denys Pringle), 203–6, 12 (Stefka G. Eriksen), 218–43, and 21 (Mikael Males), 470.

Prophetic Wisdom, Salvation History and the End of the World

As we have seen above, the legend of the Holy Cross in AM 544 4to (*Hauksbók*) culminates, so to speak, with the Jerusalem map at fol. 19r.⁴⁷ Given that Jerusalem is one main site of this narrative and that the legend puts heavy emphasis on the cross' potential for universal salvation, the presence of the symbolic Jerusalem map with its cruciform street grid seems an appropriate figure for the message communicated in this tale. On the folio after the map, another narrative follows; the Eddic poem *Völuspá* (text no. 24).⁴⁸ This famous mythological poem, which traditionally has been considered a major source for our knowledge about pagan beliefs in the Old Norse world, appears at first sight to be out of context. However, in the third quire of AM 544 4to, *Völuspá* and the legend of the Holy Cross clearly mirror each other, and the Jerusalem map separating them reflects to a certain extent the content of both texts.⁴⁹

Völuspá presents the fate of the world from the creation until its apocalyptic end and the coming of a new and better world. Its protagonists are the pantheon of the pre-Christian North. Nevertheless, the poem is largely shaped and structured by Christian culture and the Christian master narrative of salvation history.⁵⁰ The tale is told as a visionary prophecy, put forward by a *völva*, a sage prophetess in the Old Norse mythological universe. As Gro Steinsland has shown, the figure of the *völva* is fundamentally moulded on the sibyls of the Antique world, and *Völuspá* seems to be directly influenced by the apocryphal sibylline prophecies.⁵¹ From patristic times onwards, the sibyls were interpreted as pagan counterparts to the Hebrew prophets, said to have predicted the incarnation of Christ and prophesized an apocalyptic end

47 The very short text no. 21, *On twelve unseemly things* (four and a half lines long) is added by another hand on the very bottom of fol. 18v.

48 The short text no. 23 on fol. 19v regarding conditions of excommunication is added by another hand. Its content is not at all irrelevant to the issue of true religion and inclusion in the Christian oikumene which seems to be one main theme of the compilation, but will not be considered particularly in this context.

49 Karl G. Johansson makes a similar claim in his recent articles on *Hauksbók*, see Johansson, “The *Hauksbók*” and Karl G. Johansson, “Compilations, Collections and Composite Manuscripts: Some Notes on the Manuscript *Hauksbók*,” in *RE:writing. Medial Perspectives on Textual Culture in the Icelandic Middle Ages*, ed. Kate Heslop and Jürg Glauser (Zürich: Chronos, 2018).

50 See the following four articles in *The Nordic Apocalypse: Approaches to Völuspá and Nordic Days of Judgement*, ed. Terry Gunnell and Annette Lassen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013): Kees Samplonius, “The Background and Scope of *Völuspá*,” 113–45; Gro Steinsland, “*Völuspá* and the Sibylline Oracles with a Focus on the ‘Myth of the Future’,” 147–60; Karl G. Johansson, “*Völuspá*, the Tiburtine Sibyl, and the Apocalypse in the North,” 161–84; and Pétur Pétursson, “Manifest and Latent Biblical Themes in *Völuspá*,” 185–201.

51 Steinsland, “*Völuspá* and the Sibylline Oracles”. See also Chapter 4 (Björn Bandlien), 74–5.

of time. The collection of Christological and eschatological prophesies supposedly of sibylline origin, but in reality authored by early Christian apologists, was well known in the Middle Ages, notably through the *Sibylla Tiburtina*, “one of the most popular, widespread and influential apocalyptic texts of the medieval period.”⁵² Sibylline prophesies were quoted by early medieval authors like Isidore, Bede, and Hrabanus Maurus, and by several chroniclers and compilers in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, among them the English Benedictine Matthew Paris, who spent some time in Norway in the 1240s.⁵³

The Old Norse *vǫlva* prophesies the coming of a post-apocalyptic, heavenly and universal ruler. In this figure, Gro Steinsland recognizes the pagan god Heimdallr, “a god well fitted for a typological use.”⁵⁴ In accordance with the sibylline tradition, the literary fabric of *Vǫluspá* shapes an “indigenous” prophecy in which the second coming of Christ, in the guise of Heimdallr, is predicted. In this context, it is particularly interesting that in AM 544 4to (*Hauksbók*), the “sibylline” *vǫlva* actually has a counterpart in the Holy Cross Legend, which precedes the *Vǫluspá* text. As we saw above, one of the narrative’s protagonists is the Queen of Sheba, who recognizes the wood of the cross and predicts Christ’s death, resurrection, and its consequences. In the Old Norse text, Sibyl is her name, although “some calls her Saba” [*drotning er Sibilla het enn sumir kalla Sába*].⁵⁵ In the medieval reception of the sibyls, the biblical Queen of Sheba is sometimes confused with the legendary Persian sibyl Sambethe or Sabba, seemingly incited by her role as prophetess in the Legend of the Holy Cross.⁵⁶ Matthew Paris is one of the authors echoing this tradition in his rendering of the *Sibylla Tiburtina* in his *Chronica Majora*.⁵⁷

There are, thus, two authoritative prophetesses in the third quire of AM 544 4to, one in each of the two narratives sandwiching the Jerusalem map. Both of them present prophesies concerning events of paramount significance for the fate of humankind. In the Holy Cross Legend, Queen Sibilla predicts the crucifixion of Christ and his victory: future events that will sanctify the city of Jerusalem even more than Solomon’s ongoing building of Jahweh’s temple. As Karl G. Johansson

⁵² Johansson, “Vǫluspá, the Tiburtine Sibyl”. See also Anke Holdenried, “Christian Moral Decline: A New Context for the Sibylla Tiburtina (MS Escorial &I.3),” in *Peoples of the Apocalypse: Eschatological Beliefs and Political Scenarios*, ed. W. Brandes (Berlin – Boston: Gruyter, 2016), 321.

⁵³ Holdenried, “Christian Moral Decline,” 147. For Matthew Paris, see Chapter 22 (Margrethe Stang), 480–93.

⁵⁴ Steinsland, “Vǫluspá and the Sibylline Oracles,” 153. Heimdallr, whose name means “the light of the world,” has his abode in Heaven (*Himinbjörg*) and a distinctly different and mystical genealogy than the rest of the Old Norse pantheon.

⁵⁵ *Hauksbók*, 185.

⁵⁶ Holdenried, “Christian Moral Decline,” 55 and 160.

⁵⁷ Matthew Paris, *Chronica majora*, 7 vols, ed. Henry Richard Luard (London: George Bell & Sons, 1853–1883).



Fig. 20.8: Labyrinth diagram and *mensura Christi*, one 16th-part of Christ's body length. Icelandic manuscript fragment, early fourteenth century (AM 732b 4to, fol. 7r), The Arnarnagnæan manuscript collection, Copenhagen.

has pointed out,⁵⁸ the *völva* in *Völuspá* foretells the apocalypse and the coming of a new era manifested by the shining architecture of *Gimlé*:

Sal sér hon standa/ sólu fegra/ gulli þakþan/ á Gimlé
þar skulu dyggvar/ dróttir byggja/ ok um aldrdaga/ ynðis njóta.

She sees a hall brighter than the sun, thatched with gold, standing on Gimlé.
There worthy people will live and enjoy happiness forever.⁵⁹

The golden hall at Gimlé has often been interpreted as the heavenly Jerusalem – an interpretation which is indeed close at hand in AM 544 4to, where *Völuspá* is preceded by the heavenly architecture of the circular Jerusalem map (Fig. 20.3).⁶⁰ It is thus tempting to interpret the Jerusalem map in this manuscript as a double image, pointing backward to the Holy Cross Legend as it represents the earthly Jerusalem, and forward to *Völuspá* as it represents its heavenly, apocalyptic counterpart.⁶¹

Conclusion: *Pace Hierosolime* and the Authoritative Measure

As we have seen, the three Icelandic Jerusalem maps from the fourteenth century are all integrated into manuscripts that compile knowledge about the world, its size and shape, its inhabitants and history, and its divinely revealed destination. In short, the three encyclopaedic manuscripts account for the *storyworld* of medieval Latin Christianity, the stage on which the drama of salvation history is set.⁶² The Jerusalem maps in the encyclopedias may very well be understood as figurative summaries of this storyworld. From the analysis above, it has emerged that the geometric rendering of Jerusalem in these manuscripts echo authoritative knowledge-systemizing diagrams, like the quadripartite circle and the T-O map of the *terrarum orbis*. At the same time, the maps' representation of architecture alludes to the imagined structures of the

⁵⁸ Johansson, "The *Hauksbók*".

⁵⁹ *Völuspá* stanza 50, quoted after Paul Schach, "Some Thoughts on *Völuspá*," in *Edda: A Collection of Essays*, ed. Robert J. Gledinning and Haraldur Bessason ([Winnipeg]: University of Manitoba Press, 1983), 108.

⁶⁰ See Schach, "Some Thoughts on *Völuspá*," 109, with further references.

⁶¹ Johansson, "The *Hauksbók*". Another conspicuous parallel between the Wood of the Cross legend and *Völuspá* is that both texts include a description of the Tree of Life. As we have seen above, Seth's visions during his visit to the earthly paradise have several elements in common with the vision of the *völva*. He saw the well from which the four rivers sprang, and the huge Tree of Life above it, extending its branches up to the sky and its roots down to the underworld. In stanza 17 of *Völuspá*, the *völva* also describes a huge tree, the world ash *Yggdrasil*, whose branches stretch to the ends of the world.

⁶² For the concept storyworld, see Prelude, 6–8.

heavenly city, anticipating eschatological peace in the countenance of God. The hope for transcendent, eternal peace is enhanced in the AM 544 4to Jerusalem map, where an inscription in the middle of the map reads *Pace Hierosolime*. The Jerusalem maps in the Icelandic encyclopaedias thus oscillate between the topography of the earthly Jerusalem, figural representation of the world [*imago mundi*] and eschatological hope.

The three encyclopaedic manuscripts may be read as handbooks for safe navigation in this storyworld, heading for Jerusalem by keeping on the track of faith and steering away from Babylon by renouncing idolatry. A compass for the journey is found on fol. 7r in AM 732b 4to. To the right of a labyrinth diagram, often considered a representation of the road to Jerusalem accommodating virtual pilgrimage,⁶³ there is a broad black line, ca 12 cm long. According to the Latin and Old Norse text besides it, this line measures a 16th-part of Christ's body length (Fig. 20.8). The reader is advised to have this measure before his or hers eyes during all their days and especially in the hour of death.⁶⁴ The measure of Christ's body hence is the authoritative measure of sanctity, a pledge so to speak, for access to the heavenly city.⁶⁵

As we have learned from scrutinizing the visual peculiarities of the Icelandic Jerusalem maps, they tend to suggest – to an even larger degree than their continental predecessors do – memory machines for (monastic) contemplation. The walls and gates seen from inside the city suggest an architectural space that is clearly sheltered and enclosed, like the mediational enclosure of the monastic cell – or the enclosure of the well-trained, educated mind, which may contain the whole of the world and the entire history of salvation.

63 Daniel K. Connolly, “At the Center of the World: The Labyrinth Pavement of Chartres Cathedral,” in *Art and Architecture of Late Medieval Pilgrimage in Northern Europe and the British Isles*, ed. Sarah Blick and Rita Tekippe (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004).

64 “Sancta hec linea sedecies ducta mensuram Christi monstrat; in quocumque die hoc signum cernis non subitanea morte peribis et saluus eris. Þessi lína er hinn 16. hlutr af hæð drottins vars Iesu Christi ok syner hversu har hann sialfr hfur verit a likams vaxt. A hverium dege eða degri sem þu ser hana fyrri augum þer þa muntu eigi braðdauðr [. . .] Ok sva ok ef þu hefir þessi lína fyrri augum þer a dauða stundu þinne, þa muntu aðláz eilifa hjialp ok miskun fyrri hit haleita nafn drottins vars Iesu Christi ok fyrri hans sialfs miskunar dom”, AM 732 b 4to fol. 7r, quoted after *Alfræði islenzk II*, ed. N. Beckman and Kristian Kálund, Copenhagen: Møllers bogtrykkeri, 1914–1916.

65 On measures of Christ and devotional practices in the late Middle Ages, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2011), 98 and Emanuele Lugli, *The Making of Measure and the Promise of Sameness*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 145–52.

Mikael Males

Chapter 21

Imagining the Holy Land in the Old Norse World

In Old Norse literature as elsewhere in the literature of medieval Europe, many images of Jerusalem and the Holy Land are to be found, not mutually exclusive, but rather adding to a range of functions and meanings. In an Icelandic twelfth-century itinerary, we encounter the pious pilgrim, admiring the blood of Christ on the ground where the cross had stood. From twelfth-century Orkney, by contrast, we have runic and poetic evidence of boastful Viking crusaders, belittling the cowards who stayed at home and viewing the concept of the Holy Land through the lens of the world of the sagas. In thirteenth-century Iceland, we find a peculiar version of the Holy Land in a local setting, fully integrated into Icelandic saga style. As late converts on the fringe of the known world, the Nordic peoples were removed in time and space from the events and sites that mattered most to salvation. In the Orcadian and Icelandic material, we see a creative negotiation of both the spatial and temporal distance. This chapter focuses on the attitudes to Jerusalem and the Holy Land found in some Old Norse sources, as well as the strategies used for making them, as it were, domestic.

The first obvious act of domestication lies in the name *Jerusalem* itself, which in Old Norse was called *Jórsalir*. This is apparently the result of a reanalysis of the name, and it is likely that the name meant something like “royal halls” or “the city of the king” at the time of imposition. This topic is treated in full in Myrvoll’s chapter in this volume, and it may suffice to note here that the adaptation of the name also amounted to an interpretation, providing some meaning to the name in the local vernacular.¹ In the following, I wish to focus on two other examples that I believe to be particularly telling of how the sagas of the North and perceptions of the Holy Land could sometimes feed into each other, resulting in a synthetic, secular yet spiritual, world. I do not think it expedient to distinguish sharply between Jerusalem and its surroundings in this context, since the sources suggest that they were seen as parts of the same holy landscape.

¹ Chapter 2 (Klaus Johan Myrvoll), 42–7.

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The “Jerusalem men” in the Orkney Mound

There is little to suggest that Jerusalem was much more than a distant name in the period before the crusades. In the twelfth century, however, we get some intriguing references to it, and what is perhaps most striking is the narrative element. The runic inscriptions in the burial chamber of the Neolithic mound of Maeshowe, Orkney (c.3000 BCE) are interesting in this regard. They were carved by Nordic intruders into the mound around 1150, at least some of which seem to have belonged to the retinue of earl Rognvaldr of Orkney (c.1103–1158), who after his death was venerated as a saint.² In the following, I give inscriptions in normalised Old Norse, with references to transcriptions and transliterations in notes. An inscription on Maeshowe’s corner stone in the north reads: *Jórsalamenn brutu haug þenna* (The Jerusalem men broke this mound).³ We seem to be dealing with pilgrims or crusaders here, and from *Orkneyinga saga* (c.1200) we know of one major expedition from Orkney to the Holy Land in the middle of the twelfth century, under the leadership of earl Rognvaldr.⁴ On the south-eastern wall, another inscription reads:

Jórsalafarar brutu Orkhaug. Hlíf, matselja jarls, reist

[The Jerusalem travellers broke Orkhaugr (the Orkney mound). Hlíf, the earl’s housekeeper, carved]

Jórsalafarar brutu Orkhaug. Hlíf, matselja jarls, reist (The Jerusalem travellers broke Orkhaugr [the Orkney mound]. Hlíf, the earl’s housekeeper, carved) (Fig. 21.1). Here, the information about who broke the mound is repeated, and this female carver specifies her position in the earl’s retinue. Earl Rognvaldr gathered men in the winter of 1150–1151 and the expedition lasted until late in 1153.⁵ *Orkneyinga saga* chapter 93 reports that Earl Haraldr Maddaðarson and his men sought shelter in the mound before Rognvaldr’s return, and if that date is correct, the “Jerusalem men” who opened the mound were probably on their way to Jerusalem, rather than returning from it, when they broke the mound.⁶ Whatever the precise date, the reference to the “Jerusalem men” implies that they were a well-known group. This makes it almost certain that we are dealing here with members of the only known

² Chapter 6 (Pål Berg Svenungsen), 123–4.

³ Michael P. Barnes, ed. *The Runic Inscriptions of Maeshowe, Orkney*, Runrön (Uppsala: Institutionen för nordiska språk, Uppsala Universitet, 1994), 114–118.

⁴ This expedition is thoroughly discussed in Chapter 6 (Pål Berg Svenungsen), 95–131.

⁵ Barnes, *Runic Inscriptions of Maeshowe*, 117.

⁶ *Orkneyinga saga*, ed. Finnbogi Guðmundsson, Íslenzk Fornrit 34 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1965) On the identity of the carvers, see Barnes, *Runic Inscriptions of Maeshowe*, 32–36, 40–41, 117–18, 89–90.



Fig. 21.1: Rune inscriptions on the SE wall in Maeshowe, Orkney, c.1150. Third line from the top reads “Jerusalem-travellers broke Orkhaugr. Hlíf, the Earl’s housekeeper, carved” [Jórsalafarar brutu Orkhaug. Hlíf, matselja jarls, reist].

major expedition from Orkney to the Holy Land, in particular since the inscriptions indicate a mid-twelfth century date on typological and linguistic grounds.⁷

Apart from providing useful information about the identity the carvers, the two Jerusalem inscriptions imply that the breaking of the mound was an achievement worthy of these intrepid crusaders. In the later *Orkneyinga saga*, the expedition is described as an heroic adventure, and the carvers may have cultivated a similar image of themselves. Indeed, a comparison with some of the other inscriptions suggests that the world of the sagas and of the Holy Land were far from mutually exclusive in the minds of the carvers. I begin with additional inscriptions. On the western corner stone, one may read:

Pat man satt, er ek segi, at fé var foert á brott. Þrim nóttum var fé brott foert, heldr en þeir br[yti] haug þenna

⁷ Barnes, *Runic Inscriptions of Maeshowe*, 47–49.

[It is true as I say, that treasure was carried away. Treasure was carried away three nights before they broke this mound]⁸

We now enter into a world that we know from later sagas, particularly those of a more fantastic streak, where the breaking of mounds and the extraction of treasure from them is a recurrent motif. The breaking of Maeshowe seems to have made the carver feel that the old stories were coming true.⁹ On two adjacent slabs in the south-eastern wall there is a remarkable constellation of inscriptions. The first of these reads:

Sjá haugr var fyrr hlaðinn heldr¹⁰ Loðbrókar. Synir hennar, þeir vöru hvatir; slíkt vöru menn, sem þeir vöru fyrir sér

[This mound was built before Loðbrók's. Her sons, they were bold. Those were real men, such as they were"]¹¹

In later sources, *loðbrók* (woolen trousers) is the nick-name of Ragnarr loðbrók, a legendary hero who is supposed to have lived in the ninth century and who had a number of famously martial sons, and there is obviously a reference to them here. Uniquely, the inscription refers to *Loðbrók* as a woman, but what matters most in this context is that the inscription ties into the conceptual world of the sagas (the actual sagas are at least half a century younger, but the narrative material apparently circulated before then).¹² Below this is the inscription about the Jerusalem travellers carved by Hlíf. Beside and under Hlíf's inscription are four inscriptions discussing the riches that the carvers thought had at one point been stored in the mound:

Útnorðr er fé folgit mikit
[In the north-west great treasure is hidden]¹³

8 Barnes, *Runic Inscriptions of Maeshowe*, 71–77. Although there are some difficulties in the reading, the meaning of the inscription is clear (*fyrr* in *fyrr heldr* seems to have dropped out).

9 Moundbreaking is generally considered a fantastic motif, and the more fantastic family sagas are considered to be young by most scholars. Daniel Sävborg has convincingly shown, however, that fantastic sagas have probably existed alongside other sagas from early on in the tradition of saga writing. Daniel Sävborg, “Den ‘efterklassiska’ islänningasagan och dess ålder,” *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 127 (2012).

10 *Heldr* is here used for *áðr*. See Barnes, *Runic Inscriptions of Maeshowe*, 184.

11 Barnes, *Runic Inscriptions of Maeshowe*, 178–86.

12 The word *brók* (trousers) is feminine, but grammatical gender seems an insufficient explanation for the wording; in all likelihood, the feminine pronoun must refer to a woman. The wording has also been explained as an oblique reference to Ragnarr's unmanliness, but I fail to see how this fits either the hero as we know him from other sources or specifically an inscription with a focus on the manliness of his sons. See Barnes 1994, *Runic Inscriptions of Maeshowe*, 185 for a discussion of this suggestion.

13 Barnes, *Runic Inscriptions of Maeshowe*, 190–93.

Pat var löngu, er hér var fé folgit mikit
 [It was long ago that great treasure was hidden here]¹⁴

Sæll er sá, er finna má þann auð hinn mikla
 [Happy is he who can find that great wealth]¹⁵

Hókon einn bar fé ýr haugi þessum
 [Hókon alone carried treasure from this mound]¹⁶

It would appear that to these carvers, entering the mound meant entering the world of the sagas, and in the sagas, the person who enters mound is the hero.

The lines of the inscriptions on the right slab are not straight, but rather, each inscription follows the angle of the inscription above it, suggesting that they were carved in sequence from top to bottom. The Loðbrók inscription is on top, then Hlíf's inscription about how the Jerusalem travellers broke the mound, then "it was long ago", then "happy is he", then "Hókon alone". We see here how the discourses about saga mounds, the actual mound, and the "Jerusalem men" (and women, including Hlíf) are interwoven, each building on the other. In some places in Norway, we also find clusters of inscriptions featuring saga motifs, such that "gold and witchcraft" [*gull ok villur*] is hidden under the rock on which the inscription is found, that travellers from the land of giants [Risaland] have hidden gold in the stone, or that a "strong giant" [*rammr jötunn*] carved the runes.¹⁷ In the Norwegian inscriptions there is no overlap between the world of the sagas and that of pilgrimage, but the apparent dialogue on the slabs in Maeshowe suggests that these were not necessarily mutually exclusive. Maeshowe is a special case, since the mound is a real-life saga motif of sorts, and breaking into it certainly is. It shares this feature with the Holy Land, where the actual localities of Scripture are found, and a pilgrimage is not only spiritual journey, it is also an adventure – not least when it also amounts to a crusading expedition, like the one from Orkney. In both instances the places visited are suggestive of a connection to a plane of existence where the limitations of everyday life are relaxed: In Maeshowe, treasure could be extracted the night *before* the mound was opened, and the Holy Land was where God had walked the earth and miracles had happened and continued to happen. Theologically, Maeshowe and the Holy Land were worlds apart, but conceptually, they partly overlapped, not least, one may assume, to those who were the protagonists of both adventures. For this reason, the progressions from the mound of Loðbrók, the Jerusalem travellers breaking the mound, and Hókon extracting the treasure from the mound makes more sense than it might first appear, and this cluster of inscriptions

¹⁴ Barnes, *Runic Inscriptions of Maeshowe*, 193–95.

¹⁵ Barnes, *Runic Inscriptions of Maeshowe*, 195–917.

¹⁶ Barnes, *Runic Inscriptions of Maeshowe*, 197–203.

¹⁷ These are the inscriptions at Hennøy, Ystines, and Hjelmeset, NlYR, vol. IV, 226–42 (Hennøy), 445–29 (Hjelmeset); NlYR, vol. V, 80–95 (Ystines).

offers a valuable insight into the conceptual world of some twelfth-century pilgrims from Orkney.

Orkneyinga saga presents us with a comparable image of what the Holy Land meant to these crusaders. In the first part of the saga, the action is set in the North and the style is relatively sober. Once they set out on the pilgrimage/crusade, however, the tone becomes less serious. In the Holy Land, they visit Jerusalem and “alla ina helgustu staði” [all the most holy places]. This matter is quickly dealt with, however, and the major event in the narrative about the Holy Land is when earl Røgnvaldr takes a bath in the Jordan, as pilgrims did. The religious significance of this act is not mentioned, but rather, Røgnvaldr and his companion Sigmundur swim across the river, tie a knot to a bush on the other side and proclaim a number of stanzas about how the loiterers at home are unlikely to make this journey. It would almost appear that they made the trip only to be able to boast of it afterwards. This is, of course, a saga account, written about fifty years later with an eye to entertainment, but the contemporary Maeshowe inscriptions, carved by members of the expedition, suggest that the author was not far off the mark. Perhaps it was because of pilgrims like these that the author of *Konungs skuggsjá* in the middle of the thirteenth century wrote that

Ef úfróðr maðr fer til Jórsala, þá trúir hann sjálfr at hann sé fróðr ok segir í frá sinni ferð ok þat flest er fróðum manni þykki enskis vert nema gabbs ok háðs.

If an unwise man goes to Jerusalem, then he thinks that he is wise and he relates his travels, and most of what he says will appear worth nothing other than contempt and scorn to the wise man.¹⁸

The author of *Konungs skuggsjá* was a learned man, presumably a cleric, and deeply concerned with Biblical history and allegory. Many of those who were able to finance a journey to the Holy Land, however, had a secular power base, and wish though he might, the author of *Konungs skuggsjá* was probably rarely in a position to make them properly understand what they had actually experienced.

Medieval attitudes to Jerusalem expressed in religious literature came in many varieties and changed over time (see, for instance, Oen’s chapter in this volume).¹⁹ Some of them may be alien to us, but at least, they generally live up to our minimal expectations of being, precisely, religious. In secular Norse literature, however, the religious aspect is often mixed with other elements, as in *Orkneyinga saga*, and in the Maeshowe inscriptions, it appears to be absent altogether. This is not to say, of course, that these people were not religious, but that a journey to the Holy Land, or the thought thereof, could serve various purposes. In the case of Røgnvaldr, the masculine framing of the Holy Land is matched by his overall attitude to learning

¹⁸ *Konungs skuggsjá*, ed. Ludvig Holm-Olsen, *Norrøne tekster* 1 (Oslo: Norsk historisk Kjeldekrift-Institut, 1983). See also Chapter 23 (Jørn Øyrehagen Sunde), 501–5.

¹⁹ Chapter 13 (Maria Husabø Oen), 245–67.

and religion. In one stanza he boasts of his bookish learning as one of his several accomplishments, which also include shooting and rowing.²⁰ The secular and masculine tenor of the stanza is unmistakable. In another stanza, he comments on the appearance of sixteen men, who are tonsured and bear no arms, and scornfully refers to them as *kollóttar meyjar* [bald girls].²¹ These are, of course, monks, and while the saga suggests that Røgnvaldr and his men could not figure out what kind of people these were, such ignorance is highly unlikely among the ruling elite at this time. Accusations for femininity between men were common, however, and this is clearly what we are dealing with here. Somewhat surprisingly, we hear that this happened when Røgnvaldr was attending a holy service. Not even then would his secular masculinity give way to a religious perception of monks. This is, of course, a literary recreation of events, but all instances discussed here involve stanzas that are attributed to Røgnvaldr and which have a strong claim to authenticity.

Jerusalem, along with other religious or ecclesiastical phenomena, could apparently be fully integrated into a secular discourse, even when the context might suggest otherwise. The fluid borders between the saga world and the pilgrimage are suggestive of a conceptual sphere where Jerusalem and the holy places were made familiar through insertion into well-known frames.²² So far, we have only examined hints of this connection between what might be viewed as two diametrically opposed yet superimposed centre-periphery relations: To these carvers, poets and authors, the North was the centre of known things to which Jerusalem was a largely unknown periphery, whereas from a religious perspective, Jerusalem was the centre to which the North was a distant and newly converted outpost. The tension between these two conceptual schemes appears to have given rise to a wish to negotiate the distance between them. One way of doing so was to go to the holy places and thus to incorporate them into the world of known things, or to read or write about them and so make them known at least at second hand. Another possibility was to map the holy topography and history onto the places and events of the North. The most thorough and interesting attempt of this kind may be the first ten chapters of the thirteenth-century *Eyrbyggja saga*. I turn now to these.

²⁰ *Orkneyinga saga*, 130.

²¹ *Orkneyinga saga*, 163.

²² This adheres to the semiotic category *imitation*, cf. Kristin B. Aavitsland's introductory chapter, "Jerusalem: Navel of the Storyworld in Medieval Scandinavia", p. 20.

The Old Testament Landscape of Pre-Christian Iceland

As Kevin Wanner has noted, the beginning of *Eyrbyggja saga*, treating the settlement of the peninsula of Þórsnes in western Iceland by the pagan Þórólfr, is replete with Pentateuch analogues.²³ Wanner focuses on purity and pollution, but as we shall see, the saga offers many additional pointers to a Christian interpretation of the local landscape and its history, and the following analysis takes an inclusive approach. It should be noted, however, that the saga appears to mix motifs of different backgrounds. Some motifs in the text probably derive from pre-Christian tradition without much adaptation, some appear to have been adapted to Christian interpretation, and some are probably invented by the author. I will not focus on the historical authenticity or otherwise of individual motifs, but it may be noted that motifs that are present simply because of the antiquarian interests of the author may not be intended to carry any secondary meaning.

In the saga, the chieftain Hrólfr lives on the island of Moster, off the west coast of Norway. He is such a great friend [*mikill vinr*] of the god Þórr that his name was changed from Hrólfr to Þórólfr (that is, *Þór-Hrólfr*). Þórólfr could not come to terms with king Haraldr hárfagri (Harald Fairhair, d. 932), and when consulting his beloved friend [*ástvinr*] Þórr about what to do, Þórólfr was told to go to Iceland. Þórólfr then dismantled Þórr's temple and took it, as well as the soil underneath the altar, with him to Iceland. Already at this point, there are a number of analogues to Moses and the Exodus.²⁴ The new monarch, Pharaoh or Haraldr, has made life intolerable for the protagonist, who has a particularly intimate relation with the deity. In the Old Testament, no one has such a close personal relation to God as Moses, and while Þórólfr is not completely unique in this regard (most notably, Hrafnkell in *Hrafnkels saga* has a very intimate relation to Freyr), this is a rare phenomenon in Old Norse literature. Furthermore Þórólfr dismantles the temple to bring it to Iceland (but see footnote 29). The Israelites constructed their portable tabernacle along the way, rather than at the point of departure, but they did so from treasures brought from Egypt (Exod 12:35–36). Hrólfr also has his name changed to Þórólfr. In Old Norse literature, people might be given nicknames or present themselves under a false name, but they do not, as a rule, add the name of a deity to a pre-existing name to produce a new one. Þórólfr later does this also to his son, who was called Steinn, but whom he dedicated to Þórr giving him the name Þorsteinn, and Þorsteinn in turn did the

²³ Kevin Wanner, "Purity and Danger in Earliest Iceland: Excrement, Blood, Sacred Space, and Society in *Eyrbyggja saga*," *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 5 (2009): 239.

²⁴ Here and below, I include Leviticus, Numeri and Deuteronomy under the concept of the Exodus, since these books belong within the same narrative frame (quotations from the Vulgate follow the Clementine version).

same to his son Grímr and called him Þorgrímr.²⁵ Whether such a practice may have existed in the pagan period is unclear, and it is of little import here: No one named Hrólfr is likely ever to have had his name changed to Þórólfr, since that name has developed out of Þór-ulfr (Þórr-wolf).²⁶ There are, however, other examples of name change instituted not for, but by the divinity in Genesis. There Abram has his name changed to Abraham, Sarai to Sarah, and Jacob to Israel (Gen 17:5; 17:15; 32:28). Moses, however, always remains Moses. Nonetheless, name change is a recurrent motif connected to the patriarchs. It thus makes sense in the context of this founding figure who, as we shall see, has so many points of contact with motifs found in the Pentateuch. Of these motifs – intolerable monarch, personal relationship with the deity, portable temple, name change to reflect devotion – only the first is a commonplace in Icelandic settlement stories, and their constellation therefore suggests Old Testament influence.

With regard to the soil underneath the altar that Þórólfr brings with him, another motif seems to have entered the mix, namely the practice of bringing soil from one holy place to sanctify another. Constantine's mother Helen is said to have sent soil from the Holy Land to Rome, and Irish saints' lives from the twelfth through sixteenth centuries report that soil was brought from Rome to local cemeteries.²⁷ This does not conform to the Exodus template, but relates more generally to a practice connected to the Holy Land in the Middle Ages. A plausible reason for the inclusion of this detail may be that Þórólfr's native Moster was the symbolic fountainhead of Christianity in Norway, since this was where the missionary king Óláfr Tryggvason later would land, erect Norway's first church, and begin the process of converting the region, then under the sway of the apostate earl Hákon.²⁸

25 *Eyrbyggja saga*, ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarson, Íslenzk fornrit 4, Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1935: 12, 19.

26 Kristoffer Kruken and Ola Stemshaug, *Norsk personnamleksikon*, 3rd ed., Oslo: Samlaget, 2013, 567, s.v. "Torolv." Hrólfr is itself a compound name, derived from *Hröd-ulfr (glory-wolf). Kruken and Stemshaug, *Norsk personnamleksikon*, 480, s.v. "Rolv." This, however, is not likely to have been known in the Middle Ages. Hauksbók's statement that such changes were part of pagan practice appears to be based on *Eyrbyggja*, *Hauksbók*. *Udgiven efter de Arnamagnæanske håndskrifter no. 371, 544 og 675, 40, samt forskellige papirshåndskrifter af Det Kongelige Nordiske Oldskrift-Selskab*, ed. Finnur Jónsson, Copenhagen: Thieles Bogtrykkeri, 1892–1896: cxxxv, 503–04.

27 Lucy Donkin, "Earth from Elsewhere. Burial in *terra sancta* Beyond the Holy Land," in *Natural Materials of the Holy Land and the Visual Translation of Place, 500–1500*, ed. Renana Bartal, et al. (London: Routledge, 2017), 118–19.

28 The Icelandic kings' saga in existence at the time of the writing of *Eyrbyggja saga* that makes the most of this motif is *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* by Oddr munkr. It is also mentioned in *Heimskringla*, *Ágrip*, and *Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagiensium*, *Færeyinga saga*. *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar eftir Odd munk Snorason*, ed. Ólafur Halldórsson, Íslenzk fornrit 25 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 2006), 212–14, 301; Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla 1–3*, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, Íslenzk fornrit 26–28 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1979), vol. 1: 293; *Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sögum*. *Fagrskinna – Nóregskonunga tal*, ed. Bjarni Einarsson, Íslenzk Fornrit 29 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1985), 22; *Monumenta*

From the retrospective viewpoint of the author, this was indeed *terra sancta*, and the pilgrim analogy was thus apt, even though it upset the Exodus template.²⁹

The choice of the god Þórr may be due to a number of factors. For one thing, the peninsula in question was named Þórsnes and the settler, whose historicity there is no particular reason to doubt, was named Þórólfr. With regard to the Biblical analogues, it is worth noting that Þórr's fishing expedition, when the god went fishing for the great sea serpent, appears sometimes to have been understood as a pagan prefiguration of how Christ defeated the Devil. This is borne out both by eleventh-century stone art in Scandinavia and England and by Norse homiletic literature, including the Icelandic Book of Homilies.³⁰ Furthermore, the author emphasises the “mighty nails” or “divine nails” [*reginnaglar*] in the effigy of Þórr.

Historica Norvegiæ. Latinske Kildeskrifter til Norges Historie i Middelalderen, ed. Gustav Storm (Kristiania: A. W. Brøgger, 1880), 17. We know that Helgafell housed a library of at least a hundred volumes in the late twelfth century, and a manuscript containing the Greater Saga of Óláfr Tryggvason is thought to have been written there, attesting to the interest in this missionary king, Ólafur Halldórsson, *Helgafellsbækur fornar*, *Studia Islandica* (Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóds, 1966), 41, 51. The Greater saga was composed after *Eyrbyggja saga*, but it draws on older material and it contains the passage where Óláfr is said to have built Norway's first church in Moster, *Flateyrbok: En samling af norske Konge-Sagaer med indskudte mindre Fortællinger om Begivenheder i og udenfor Norge samt Annaler*, 3 vols, ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon and C.R. Unger (Christiania: Mallings, 1860–1868), vol. 1: 229.

29 After writing this chapter, I have come to doubt that the dismantling of the temple and the transfer of sacred soil are exclusively external, Christian motifs. The first and most obvious point is that all large timbers had to be brought to Iceland, since they were not to be found there. Furthermore, two passages in *Landnámabók* are of specific relevance. In both S and H, we read that Órlygr, who was a Christian from the Hebrides, brought church timbers and *mold vígð* [consecrated soil] with him to Iceland (*Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson. Íslenzk fornrit 1. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1986: 52–53). It is possible that a pagan practice has here been attributed to one of the early, Christian settlers. About the *hofgoði* [temple priest] Þórhaddr on Mæri, we read that he dismantled the temple and brought the *hofsmold* [temple soil] and *súlur* [pillars] to Iceland, and that he would not allow for the killing of anything but cattle for domestic needs in all of Stöðvarfjörður (*Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson: 307–08). I cannot exclude a pagan (or pragmatic, in the case of the timbers) background for these features, but given other Christian analogues in these chapters of *Eyrbyggja saga*, I would still assume that they have been selected at least partly for their resonance within a Christian conceptual framework.

30 Three stones are likely to depict Þórr's fight with the Miðgarðsormr and are set in Christian contexts: Gosforth, Hørdum, and Altuna. On the carver of Altuna, Balli, and his work on stones carrying crosses, see Otto von Friesen, *Upplands runstenar. En allmänfattlig öfversikt*. Uppsala, 1913: 59–63. Generally, and on the influence of this motif on hagiography, see K. Brøndsted, “En kirkelig allegori og en nordisk myte,” *Historisk Tidsskrift* 2, no. 3 (1882); Otto Gschwantler, “Christus, Thor und die Midgardschlange,” in *Festschrift für Otto Höfler zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Helmut Birkhan and Otto Gschwantler (Vienna: Verlag Notring, 1968); James Marchand, “Leviathan and the Mousetrap in the *Niðrstigningasaga*,” *Scandinavian Studies* 47 (1975); Henrik Janson, “Edda and ‘Oral Christianity’: Apocryphal Leaves of the Early Medieval Storyworld of the North,” in *The Performance of Christian and Pagan Storyworlds*, ed. Lars Boje Mortensen, et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013).

Decorative nails have been found on wooden effigies from the ninth century, clearly belonging to a pre-Christian context, and the author may be aware of such an historical practice.³¹ Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that he emphasises the nails in a wooden effigy of a god whom we know to have been associated with the God who was nailed on wood. If this is intentional, it may be understood as a hint forward in history, when the truth about the crucifixion would become known, suggesting that Þórólfr had already gotten some things right, even though he did not grasp their implications. Below, we shall see a more unequivocal Christological parallel, which may support this interpretation. This would imply that the author understood his story about Þórólfr in a manner similar to how the Old Testament was understood in art and exegetical and homiletic literature, namely that it contained prefigurative pointers to the New Testament, as yet not fully revealed to the Jews under the Old Covenant, but visible in hindsight to those who had come to an understanding of salvation history through knowledge of Christ's passion.

When he arrives in Iceland, Þórólfr erects the temple again, as the Jews would do in Jerusalem. The author then launches into a description of the temple, bringing to mind the long description of the Tabernacle in Exod 36:8–39:43. The point of reference, however, is that of a Christian church:

There he had a temple built, and it was a great house. There was a door on the side wall, near the further end. Inside the door were the high-seat pillars, and they had nails in them; they were called nails of the gods/powerful nails [earlier, one of these posts is said to carry the effigy of Þórr].³² All the area inside was a sanctuary. Further in from the temple was a house looking as choirs in churches now look, and there was an altar [*stalli*] on the middle of the floor like an altar [*altari*], and on it lay a ring, fashioned with an opening and weighing twenty ounces, and upon it all oaths should be taken. The temple priest was to carry that ring on his arm to all public gatherings. On the altar, furthermore, there was to be a bowl for sacrificial blood, and in it a sprinkler for sacrificial blood [*hlautteinn*], like a sprinkler for holy water [*stokkull*], <and with it one should sprinkle the blood, which was called *hlaut*, from the bowl: That was blood from the killing of the victims that were sacrificed to the gods.> Around the altar in the annex, the gods were arranged. All men had to pay a fee to this temple, and they were obliged to follow the temple priest on all journeys, just as legal retainers now have to do for their chieftains, and the priest had to maintain the temple at his own expense, so that it would not fall into decay, and hold sacrificial feasts inside.

[Þar lét hann reisa hof, ok var þat mikit hús; váru dyrr á hliðvegginum ok nær oðrum endanum; þar fyrir innan stóðu oðndvegissúlurnar, ok váru þar í naglar; þeir hétu reginnaglar; þar var allt friðarstaðr fyrir innan. Innar af hofinu var hús í þá líking, sem nú er songhús í kirkjum, ok stóð þar stalli á miðju gólfinu sem altari, ok lá þar á hringr einn mótlauss, tvítøgeyringr, ok skyldi þar á sverja eiða alla; þann hring skyldi hofgoði hafa á hendi sér til alla mannfunda.

³¹ For a discussion of these nails, see Margaret Clunies Ross, “Reginnaglar,” in *News from Other Worlds. Tíðendi ór oðrum heimum. Studies in Folklore, Mythology and Culture in Honor of John F. Lindow*, ed. Merrill Kaplan and Timothy R. Tangherlini (Berkeley: North Pinehurst Press, 2012); Janson 2013, “Edda and ‘Oral Christianity’:” 117–8.

³² *Eyrbyggja saga*, 7.

Á stallanum skyldi ok standa hlautbolli, ok þar í hlautteinn³³ sem stökkull væri, <ok skyldi þar stökkva með ór bollanum blóði því, er hlaut var kallat; þat var þess konar blóð, er svæfð vǫru þau kvikendi, er goðunum var fórnat.>³⁴ Umhverfis stallann var goðunum skipat í afhúsínu. Til hofsins skyldu allir menn tolla gjalda ok vera skyldir hofgoðanum til allra ferða, sem nú eru þingmenn höfðingjum, en goði skyldi hofi upp halda af sjálfs síns kostnaði, svá at eigi rénaði, ok hafa inni blótveizlur.]

Unlike the analogues discussed above, the comparison between pagan and Christian architecture and practices is here explicit.³⁵ Some aspects of this description, notably the significance accorded to the high-seat pillars and the nails in them, as well as the ring for taking oaths, may reflect pre-Christian practices.³⁶ There is no obvious reason to doubt the significance of high-seat pillars in pre-Christian times, and they are referred to in several sagas.³⁷ In this settler literature, it is a topos that a chieftain would throw them overboard and follow them to a propitious spot for settlement. This is also what Þórólfr does before the passage quoted here.³⁸ Given the general prominence of high-seat pillars in the literature, it seems plausible that this topos has some ritual background, but it is again noteworthy that there is an Exodus parallel: When the Israelites are crossing the Red Sea, God leads the way in the shape of a pillar [*columna*] of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Exod 13:17–14:29).³⁹ In the Norse translation of Exodus, the word *pilar* is

³³ Thus paper manuscripts. Medieval manuscripts have *hlvtrinn*, *lutinn*.

³⁴ *ok . . . fórnat* only in paper manuscripts.

³⁵ See Klaus Bödl, *Eigi einhamr. Beiträge zum Weltbild der Eyrbyggja und anderer Isländersagas* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), 218–25.

³⁶ For a general discussion, see Bödl 2005, *Eigi einhamr*. Kabell's hypothesises that the entire concept of a ring for taking oaths is based on a misunderstanding of the word *baugeiðr* in *Hávamál* 110, but this leaves him with much to explain away, including the Anglo-Saxon source, see Aage Kabell, "Baugi und der Baugeid," *Arkiv för Nordisk Filologi* 90 (1975). For a rebuttal of Kabell and a discussion of the famous Forsaringen as a possible oath-ring, see Stefan Brink, "Forsaringen – Nordens äldsta lagbud," in *Beretning fra femtende tværfaglige vikingesymposium*, ed. Else Roesdahl and Preben Meulengracht Sørensen (Højbjerg: Hikuin, 1996). For a general background, see F.P. Magoun, "On the Old-Germanic Altar- or Oath-ring (*Stallahringr*)," *Acta Philologica Scandinavica* 20 (1949). For related motifs in the Nestor Chronicle, see Martina Stein-Wilkeshuis, "Scandinavians Swearing Oaths in Tenth-Century Russia: Pagans and Christians," *Journal of Medieval History* 28 (2002): 163–4.

³⁷ Wellendorf counts nine instances, Jonas Wellendorf, "The Interplay of Pagan and Christian Traditions in Icelandic Settlement Myths," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 109 (2010): 9. On high-seat pillars generally and their possible cultic background, see Bödl 2005, *Eigi einhamr*: 163–176; Margaret Clunies Ross, *Prolonged Echoes: Old Norse Myths in Medieval Northern Society: The Reception of Norse Myths in Medieval Iceland*, 2 vols., vol. II (Odense: Odense University Press, 1998), 122–57; Dag Strömbäck, "Att helga land. Studier i *Landnåma* och det äldsta rituella besittningstagandet," in *Folklore och filologi* (Uppsala: Almqvist och Wiksell, 1970 [1928]), 136–139.

³⁸ Similar stories are told also of saints, and it is noteworthy that the outcome is always positive, irrespective of religion, Wellendorf 2010, "Interplay of Pagan and Christian Traditions:" 12–16.

³⁹ The Exodus-motif of the pillar leading the way occurs in some of the texts discussed in Chapter 12 (Stefka G. Eriksen), 230–4.

used, but in *Heilagra þriggja konunga saga* (the saga of the three holy kings), the word *súla* is used, just as it is of the high-seat pillars.⁴⁰ Even if indebted to tradition, the literary motif may have been positively reinforced by the Biblical one, and at least in the case of *Eyrbyggja saga*, where there appear to be so many echoes of the Pentateuch, such a subtext seems quite plausible.

There are three explicit analogues to churches in this passage, namely the “house looking as choirs in churches now look” and the pagan and Christian terminology for altars and sprinklers. The author makes no explicit comparison with the tithe, but the temple fee would certainly feel quite familiar to a medieval audience. The point of comparison in the explicit references is the future situation in Iceland itself. This, presumably, reflects the teleological view of local history of the thirteenth-century author. Reflexes of the Exodus may, however, be found in the strong emphasis on the temple and its connection to the main protagonist. Moses, furthermore, also built an altar, sacrificed animals, poured their blood into bowls and sprinkled it:

then Moses took half of the blood, and poured it into bowls, and the rest he poured upon the altar [. . .] and he took the blood and sprinkled it upon the people (Exod 24: 6–8)⁴¹

The arrangement of the gods around the altar may be derived from the same Biblical passage. In Exod 24:4, we read that Moses

“built an altar at the foot of the mount [ædificavit altare ad radices montis], and twelve titles [titulos] according to the twelve tribes of Israel.”

Petrus Comestor (1100–1179) comments on this passage, summing up the views of the exegetes on these “titles.” According to one view, “titles” meant altars, presumably with the name of the tribe inscribed on them and therefore referred to as titles. According to another interpretation, the reference was only to one altar with all of the names inscribed on it.⁴² Nonetheless, a common understanding was that Moses built an altar as well as twelve other altars in connection to it. This is quite reminiscent of the main altar with the gods arranged around it in *Eyrbyggja saga*.

Just after the description of the temple, we learn that Þórólfr placed so much faith in a mountain on the peninsula that no one should look at it without washing

⁴⁰ ‘Stjörn’. *Tekst etter håndskriftene*, 2 vols, ed. Reidar Astås, Oslo: Riksarkivet, 2009) (ONP s.v. *súla*).

⁴¹ “tulit itaque Moses dimidiam partem sanguinis et misit in crateras, partem autem residuam fudit super altare [. . .] ille vero sumptum sanguinem respersit in populum.”

⁴² Peter Comestor, *Historia scholastica*: “[. . .] forsán duodecim altaria, titulos dixit. Vel potius unum ex duodecim lapidibus, et in singulis singula nomina filiorum Israel scripsit, quasi titulus tribuum duodecim.” [perhaps twelve altars, [though] he said titles, or rather one [made] from twelve stones, and he inscribed the individual names of the children of Israel on the individual [stones], as the title of the twelve tribes], Peter Comestor, *Historia scholastica*, PL, 198, col. 1168D.

first, and that nothing should be killed on the mountain (on this feature, see footnote 29). He called this mountain *Holy Mountain* [*Helgafell*], and he believed that he would go there when he died. In the place where the high-seat pillars had come ashore, he established an assembly, and this place was also so holy [*svá mikill helgistaðr*] that blood spilled in strife or human excrements might not defile it. For the latter purpose, people had to go out to a small island called Dirt-Skerry [*Dritsker*].

As noted by Wanner, we find a number of analogues to Moses and the Exodus in this landscape. The most obvious one is that of the holy mountain, corresponding to Mount Sinai in the Exodus.⁴³ Unlike Moses, however, Þórólfr does not go up on the mountain to communicate with his god. Nonetheless, the surrounding circumstances are strikingly similar. In Exodus, the people should wash before they look toward God who will appear on the mountain (Exod 19:10–11). In *Eyrbyggja saga*, they should wash before they look toward the mountain. In Deuteronomy, the Jews are required to leave the camp to relieve themselves (Deut 23: 12–14). In *Eyrbyggja saga*, they must leave the assembly place to do so. Here, however, local topography and onomastics enter the picture. In Deuteronomy, it is only specified that the Israelites must leave the camp, whereas in *Eyrbyggja saga*, it is also specified where they must go, namely to *Dritsker* (Dirt-Skerry). Presumably, the use of this particular Biblical analogue was prompted by the name of the islet.⁴⁴

The name's actual background has been debated. The saga's explanation is unlikely to have an historical background: While it is perhaps conceivable that religious sentiment could have led to a prohibition against defecating on the assembly site, it is highly implausible that members of the assembly would be required to make the cumbersome trip to the little island in order to relieve themselves. The way to today's *Dritsker* can with some trouble be traversed on foot at low tide, but not at high tide. The name may have moved and the landscape changed, but the accessibility of the saga's *Dritsker* can hardly have been much better, since it is called a *sker*, "skerry", rather than a *nes*, "peninsula." Nils Hallan proposed that *Dritsker* and comparable names derive from fishermen's habit of going ashore on an island or a peninsula to defecate, since it was hazardous to lean over the railing of a small boat.⁴⁵ It is, however, doubtful that people have ever gone ashore for this purpose, since it entails unnecessary labour. All boats needed to have a bucket, which could be used not only to get rid of excessive water, but also to throw human waste overboard, and Hallan refers to this as a common practice in preindustrial times. Furthermore, several of the names which Hallan quotes derive from the Old Norse word *þorþ* (need; the names

⁴³ For a general discussion of *Helgafell* as abode of the dead, see Wilhelm Heizmann, "Totenberg," in *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde*, ed. Heinrich Beck and et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007).

⁴⁴ Wanner, "Purity and Danger in Earliest Iceland", 239.

⁴⁵ Nils Hallan, "Tarva," *Namn og nemne. Tidsskrift for namnegranskning* 6 (1989).

are Tarv, Tarvo, Þarfar), which could designate the call of nature, but it is perhaps more likely that these names denoted places where one could go ashore in bad weather, that is, when one *needed* it in order to avoid danger. For these reasons, Hallan's explanation seems doubtful.

Matthias Egeler, without reference to Hallan, argues on lexicographical grounds that the name *Dritsker* derives from bird droppings.⁴⁶ Lexical items containing the element *drit* generally refer to bird droppings, and this supports Egeler's interpretation. At least the present-day *Dritsker*, however, does not fit the description of being visibly covered with droppings, and to the best of my knowledge, this is more commonly the case with steep cliffs, such as *Hvítserkr* (white gown) in Northern Iceland, a free-standing rock dressed in white garments by the birds. *Dritsker* is not steep, and neither was the *Dritsker* of the saga, since men walked onto it. The two other *Dritsker* in Iceland, one islet in northern Breiðafjörður and a group of islets on the northern side of the mouth of Borgarfjörður, are comparable formations, not cliff-sided. Egeler adduces only one onomastic analogue, from Ireland rather than Iceland or Scandinavia, namely the cliff-sided inlet of *Fó na gCacannaí* (creek of the droppings).⁴⁷ Egeler's interpretation therefore also remains tentative.

A final possibility, not suggested before, is that the name is metaphorical. Egeler avoids nicknames in his lexical material, but the nicknames *drithljóð* (dirt-sound) and *drityrði* (dirt-words) suggest a metaphorical use of the word.⁴⁸ In general, words meaning "excrement" could be used as the first element of derogatory compounds in Old Norse, e.g. *skítkarl* (shit-man), and *skítráðr* (giving shit-advice). Such words still fulfil this function in modern Scandinavian languages. Maritime names based on such use of the root *drit-* are attested in Norway: *Dritaren* (roughly "the shitter") in the Oslo fjord is an uneven bank where fishing equipment could easily get stuck, and *Dritarodden* (roughly "the shitter headland") appears to have caused trouble for fishermen, rather than having anything to do with any kind of excrement.⁴⁹ If this is the rationale behind the name *Dritsker*, it may be due to the fact that it blocks the way between the bay of Hofstaðir and the sea, and the tongue of land leading out to it is submerged at high tide and thus potentially dangerous in bad weather. For lack of a full survey of maritime toponyms derived from bird droppings versus derogatory toponyms in the North Atlantic and Scandinavia, it must remain somewhat unclear which of the three interpretations presented here is correct. Nonetheless, it seems safe to assume that the saga's explanation is *ad hoc*, and that a Biblical dimension of sacral purity has overruled the underlying rationale of the name.

⁴⁶ Matthias Egeler, "Constructing a Landscape in *Eyrbyggja saga*: the Case of *Dritsker*." *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 132 (2017): 105–08.

⁴⁷ Egeler, "Constructing a Landscape in *Eyrbyggja saga*": 107.

⁴⁸ ONP, s.v. *drit*.

⁴⁹ Gustav Indrebø, *Stadnamn fraa Oslofjorden* (Oslo: Jacob Dybwad, 1929), 174.

Like sagas of Icelanders generally, *Eyrbyggja saga* is thoroughly Icelandic and founded in local lore and topography, and the stylistic ideal is one of show-don't-tell. Intertextual connections to Latin and other literatures are thus not readily visible. The case of Dritsker is a good example of this, and so is the next one. According to the saga, a group of people at one point refused to go out to Dritsker and decided to relieve themselves where they saw fit. Several men fell in the fighting that ensued, with the result that the assembly site was defiled, not by faeces, but by blood. For this reason, the assembly was moved, and on the new site, people were allowed to heed the call of nature as they pleased. We also learn that the new assembly site had a ring of stones. One of these was the stone of Þórr, over which human victims were broken [*brotnir*] – “and the colour of blood may still be seen on the stone”.⁵⁰ Indeed, the red colour on the stone was visible not only in the thirteenth century, but is so still, due to its iron content (Fig. 21.2). In this regard, it is similar to another stone upon which a human sacrifice was conducted, namely the rock at Golgotha in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where Christ's cross once stood. Information about the colour of that rock would have been spread across Europe by pilgrims, and it is mentioned in Níkulás Bergsson's *Leiðarvísir* – the Icelandic twelfth-century itinerary to the Holy Land that Denys Pringle and Stefka G. Eriksen present in their chapters.⁵¹ There, we read that

the door of the church which stands in Calvary is in the south, and when you enter there is a chapel to your right where the blood came down from the cross of our Lord, and the blood is still visible [on the ground].⁵²

This was the human sacrifice around which Christian faith revolved, and *Eyrbyggja saga's* report about human sacrifices in Iceland is unique. The centrality of the Christian motif as well as the lack of local analogues suggest that the point of reference is the sacrifice which changed all of human history, and it should be noted that the stone is named after Þórr, the god who in other contexts served as an analogue to Christ. We have now left the Old Covenant of Moses and entered the New, and this is underlined by the fact that the Old Law is abandoned: Everyone is now free to defecate where they see fit. When connected to the local variety of the crucifixion, this humorous point becomes rife with meaning.

But which meaning exactly? Even by the largely associative standards of monastic exegesis, the referential scheme seems to become very messy at this point. The sacrifice postdates the sacrifices that Þórólfr made in his temple, so that we,

⁵⁰ “ok sér enn blóðslitinn á steininum,” *Eyrbyggja saga*, 18.

⁵¹ Chapter 11 (Denys Pringle), 203–6; Chapter 12 (Stefka G. Eriksen), 218–43.

⁵² “sunnan eru dýrr á kirkju þeiri er stendr í Calvarie loco, ok er inn kemr er til hægri handar stúka er blóðit kom niðr af krossi dróttins, ok sér enn á blóðit,” *Alfraedi Ízlensk: Íslandsk encyclopædisk litteratur*, 4 vols, ed. Kristian Kålund, I. Cod. Mbr. AM. 194, 8vo, Copenhagen: S.L. Møllers bogtrykkeri, 1908–1918.



Fig. 21.2: The reddish stone with Helgafell (The Holy Mountain) in the background. The red area on top of the stone is barely visible in the picture.

in the parallel history of the Bible, should have reached the point of Christ's crucifixion here. The abandonment of the Old Law points in the same direction. One should therefore have expected the prefigurative mode of the local Moses and Exodus to have been left behind. But how could it have been superseded by anything less than the advent of the Gospel itself, which was still far off in the future according to the saga narrative? The text gives us no clue whatsoever in this regard. We must probably conclude that narrative about local history operated with a more open-ended scheme of prefiguration than what one may generally find in religious texts. The text prefigures mainly through analogy to the Exodus, as one would expect given the settlement context. Motifs from the New Testament, however, seem to fulfil a comparable function. They become written into what is, in effect, the Old Testament landscape of pre-Christian Iceland. Indeed, it would appear that the landscape itself was a decisive factor in which elements were drawn into the analogy. The prohibition against defecation in the camp is not a prominent feature in the Pentateuch, but the name of the little island, and possibly the author's sense of humour, made it so. Calvary is central indeed to the Christian worldview, but it could not have been connected to local topography in this way

if there had not been a red stone by the assembly site. The name of the mountain was *Helgafell* (the holy mountain), and it was thus eminently well suited to serve as a local version of Mount Sinai.

We see here that perceptions of landscape worked in two ways. Some of the most significant localities of the Holy Land were grafted onto the local landscape, presumably because of their religious importance, but also based on what names and topographical features were available in the area. The Holy Land was thus metaphorically translated to Iceland. With Dritsker, however, a blank spot within holy topography is filled. In the Pentateuch we never learn where the Israelites went to defecate, but in the local variety of the Exodus we get a designated spot. Somewhat at odds with most description of holy topography, however, the religious significance of the landscape does not induce the author to refrain from using his sense of humour: I have as yet encountered no reader of *Eyrbyggja saga* who does not find the description of the conflict over Dritsker amusing. This curious blend of saga style and exegetical discourse is comparable to the Orcadian material discussed above, but when the Holy Land is imported to Iceland, rather than actually visited, the discourse becomes even more adapted to local conventions.

But why did the author opt for Moses and the Exodus as his main models? First of all, of course, it makes sense that a settler nation would look for their Moses figure. Nonetheless, I am not aware of any equally close analogues to Moses in Old Norse literature, and the rarity of the motif suggests that more specific circumstances may have been at play. I would suggest that the known details of the historical Þórólfr may have influenced the choice of motif. In the saga's account, Þórólfr first held sway over Moster, and as noted above, this was where the conversion of Norway was thought to have begun. From Moster, Þórólfr followed Þórr's lead to Þórsnes, where his pious feelings were specifically directed toward the mountain Helgafell. This was the future site of an Augustinian convent and the resting place of Guðrún Ósvífrsdóttir (c.970–c.1060).⁵³ As described in *Laxdæla saga*, a text known to the author of *Eyrbyggja saga*, she was the first nun in Iceland.⁵⁴ Þórólfr thus moved between two well-known places of significant “firsts” in the history of Christianity in Norway and Iceland. The second of these, furthermore, was the site of an important religious centre. The fact that Þórólfr moved between two places which would later become imbued with religious significance may be part of the reason why he was chosen to serve as the local Moses, since the points on the map themselves indicated that the journey was of religious importance. The centrality of the holy mountain – Sinai or Helgafell – may be another reason for the choice of this analogy. This is far from a perfect match, of course, since Egypt was not holy

53 Jón Jóhannesson, *A History of the Old Icelandic Commonwealth* (Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba Press, 1974 [1956]), 195–7.

54 *Laxdæla saga*, ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit 5, (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1934), 228–9; *Eyrbyggja saga* 1935: 180.

and Sinai lay along the way, not at the final destination. Exegetical interpretation, however, tended to be generous regarding what analogies could be found and largely indifferent to logical flaws, unless they supported the argument.

Grafting the Holy Land onto the Local Topography: The Issue of Authorship

The considerable admixture of what appears to be monastic exegetical speculation connected to Helgafell and its surroundings in the saga strengthens the assumption of several scholars that it was most likely produced at the convent there.⁵⁵ This interpretation runs counter to the view of some scholars that Sturla Þórðarson (1214–1284), the nephew of Snorri Sturluson (1179–1241), is the author of the saga.⁵⁶ This assumption, however, is based on equivocal evidence. First of all, the author knows the geographic area well, but that would be true also of an author active in the convent. Second, there is some verbal overlap between poetry in Sturla's *Íslendinga saga* and in *Eyrbyggja saga*. The most significant similarities, however, are between two poems named *Hrafnsmál*.⁵⁷ Both poems are in the rare metre *Haðarlag*, and the name of the poems, the rare metre and the verbal overlaps show that Sturla paraphrased the older poem. We may thus conclude that the author and Sturla both knew the same poem. This may indicate that they are the same person, but another explanation is possible. Sturla's version of *Landnámabók* shows affinity to *Eyrbyggja saga*, particularly in the description of Þórólfr. This, as well as the poetic overlap, may be taken as indications that Sturla is the author of *Eyrbyggja saga*. It may also mean, however, that Sturla had access to *Eyrbyggja saga* and traditions relating to it, such as, perhaps, the entirety of *Hrafnsmál*. He was an important literary scholar with good connections, and he certainly procured many texts for historiographical purposes. As a child, he appears to have made repeated visits to the vicinity of Helgafell together with his father.⁵⁸ As an adult, he mostly lived at Staðarhóll in the Dalir region, at the bottom of Hvammsfjörður which extends to

55 *Eyrbyggja saga*, xliii–lvii; *Die Saga von den Leuten auf Eyr*, ed. and trans. Klaus Böldl, Munich: Diederichs, 1999; Wanner 2009, “Purity and Danger in Earliest Iceland:” 231–2, 234, 243, 245 and further references there.

56 Peter Hallberg, “*Eyrbyggja sagas* ålder – än en gång,” *Acta philologica Scandinavica* 32 (1979); Elín Bára Magnúsdóttir, “*Eyrbyggja saga*”: *efni og höfundareinkenni*. *Studia Islandica* 65 (Reykjavík: Bókmennta- og listfræðastufnun Háskóla Íslands, 2015).

57 *Eyrbyggja saga*, xlix–li; Magnúsdóttir, “*Eyrbyggja saga*”, 77–9.

58 *Eyrbyggja saga*, lii–liv.

the east from Þórsnes.⁵⁹ It therefore seems likely that he may have been influenced by *Eyrbyggja saga* or material connected to it, but it does not follow that he must have been its author. Third, Peter Hallberg has found similar ratios of the use of some words in texts known to be authored by Sturla (*Íslendinga saga* and *Hákonar saga*) and in *Eyrbyggja saga*. He studies common adverbs and other words that authors would probably have used more or less unconsciously, thus attempting to preclude intertextual influence as an explanation. This appears to be a sound method, but his results are inconclusive, as he himself admits.⁶⁰ Finally, Elín Bára Magnúsdóttir has compared the use of more marked verbal expressions in the same works, but this entails that intertextual influence becomes an equally plausible explanation as authorship.⁶¹ In sum, apart from arguments relating to topographical knowledge, which are moot for the present discussion, only Hallberg has attempted to use a methodology that makes intertextual influence an unlikely explanation, and his results are inconclusive. From this perspective, intertextual influence and authorship are equally plausible explanations, and scholars agree that Sturla was influenced by *Eyrbyggja saga*, whether he wrote it or not.⁶²

The thorough alignment of the opening of *Eyrbyggja saga* with the Exodus is another matter. Some factors suggest such a deep engagement with religious texts and discourse that the author is most likely to have belonged to the regular clergy. The prohibition against defecating in the camp is found in Deuteronomy and is in no way central to the Pentateuch. The oblique reference to the Passion by means of the red stone is indicative of an ongoing concern with specific places in the Holy Land. The connection of the Passion to the abolishment of the Old Law bears witness to a highly developed sense of the dynamics of salvation history. These motifs are considerably more exegetical in their nature than what one may generally encounter in Old Icelandic secular literature, and they suggest that the author was active in a setting where exegesis was cultivated. Sturla does not fit this bill, neither through his known biography nor his texts. Furthermore, some topographic bias may be detected in Sturla's *Íslendingabók*, primarily for Reykholt, where he was raised, and for Staðarhóll, where he lived as an adult.⁶³ The opening of *Eyrbyggja saga*, by contrast, focuses on minor topographical details in the direct vicinity of

59 Helgi Þorláksson, "The Bias and Alleged Impartiality of Sturla Þórðarson," in *Sturla Þórðarson. Skald, Chieftain and Lawman*, ed. Jón Viðar Sigurðsson and Sverrir Jakobsson (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 205–206.

60 Hallberg, "Eyrbyggja sagas ålder – än en gång," 208–9.

61 Magnúsdóttir, "Eyrbyggja saga", 173–200, 41–51, 306–39.

62 See, for instance, *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, : lxiii–lxvi

63 Helgi Eorláksson, "The Bias and Alleged Impartiality of Sturla Þórðarson", in *Sturla Þórðarson. Skald, Chieftain and Lawman*, eds Jón Viðar Sigurðsson and Sverrir Jakobsson (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 205–06.

the convent. For these reasons, I find it likely that *Eyrbyggja saga* was composed at Helgafell and later used by Sturla.

It would appear, then, that one of the reasons for composing *Eyrbyggja saga* was to supply the convent at Helgafell with its own Old Testament and its own holy landscape, showing that its place in salvation history and in the physical world had been planned all along.⁶⁴ This is similar to but also quite different from what we find in the Orcadian material. In both cases, perceptions of the Holy Land blend with those of saga narrative and in both instances, features in the landscape are at the centre of attention: the burial mound of Maeshowe and the Jordan in the Orcadian material, Helgafell, Dritsker and the red stone in *Eyrbyggja saga*. In Orkney, however, the Holy Land is in the here and now, and this was of course true in so far as these crusaders actually went there. This experience seems to have gone hand in hand with a feeling of living the saga: a rare experience indeed. Both religious and secular history have here been moved into the present. In *Eyrbyggja saga*, by contrast, the movement is not through time but through space. Here, history remains in the past, but the significance of the Holy Land is mapped onto the local landscape. We here see two strategies of domesticating the Holy Land, as it were, producing quite different results, but both predicated on the same narrative world of the sagas and both bringing the Holy Land closer, either in time or in space.

⁶⁴ This corresponds to the semiotic category *contiguity*, cf. the introduction in Chapter 1 (Kristin B. Aavitsland), 20.

Margrethe C. Stang

Chapter 22

Enemies of Christ in the Far North: Tales of Saracens, Jews and the Saami in Norwegian Medieval Painting

Within the limited corpus of Norwegian medieval painting, a surprisingly large number of images portray Muslims and Jews in the context of Christian narratives of opposing faiths. In this chapter, I wish to shed light on these images and discuss them in their cultural and religious context. In recent years, a number of scholarly articles have addressed the question of different ethnic and religious groups and their representation in medieval Scandinavia. I will argue that the portrayal of Muslims and Jews in this corpus reflects the role of these minorities within the storyworld of the Jerusalem code, not in physical reality, and that as literary figures they emphasise the medieval Jerusalem as, among other things, a city of the mind. To demonstrate this, I contrast the depictions of Jews and Muslims with representations of the Saami people of Scandinavia, a minority that must have had a palpable presence in Nordic society, but that is largely invisible in medieval Norwegian storyworlds.

In the thirteenth century, Norway was a country on the edge of Christendom. The archdiocese of Nidaros was the northernmost in the world, and one of the geographically largest, spanning modern Norway and Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Isles. At its zenith, it even included the Hebrides and the Isle of Man. Norway's primary international contacts were, in addition to her Scandinavian neighbours, England, France, Scotland and North German principalities. There were no known Jewish communities in medieval Scandinavia,¹ and the region was, of course, far from the Christian-Muslim borders of Europe. Trade, warfare and pilgrimage may of course have brought some Scandinavians into contact with both Jews and Muslims. On the other hand, there were indigenous Saami and Inuit communities within the Norwegian realm. Moreover, from the twelfth century onwards, Danes, Swedes and Teutonic Knights launched several crusades to convert – and conquer – Finns, Wends and other Baltic peoples.

¹ Yvonne Friedman, *Reception of Medieval European Anti-Jewish Concepts in Late Medieval and Early Modern Norway*, ed. Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Hess, *The Medieval Roots of Antisemitism: Continuities and Discontinuities from the Middle Ages to the Present Day* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

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When King Haakon IV Haakonsson (1204–1263) founded a royal chapel in what is today the city Tromsø in 1252, it was called *Sancta Maria juxta paganos*, thus claiming the territory for Christianity and defining it as a border against the pagans of the North. However, it would seem that this was a fluid and porous border, with trade, cultural and religious contact between Norse and Saami inhabitants.² It is probable that there were groups of Saami population in large parts of the country, from the Arctic to the mountain regions of central Norway. The sources are generally silent regarding encounters between the pagan and Christian populations in Norway, perhaps underplaying certain aspects of what must have been an ethnically and religiously diverse society. From written sources, the general impression is that of a country fully integrated into Western Christendom. As we shall see, visual sources largely support this impression.

The relationship between Christians and Muslims, Christians and Jews and Norse and Saami have large and complex historiographies. This chapter can merely scratch at the surface of these relationships, which also are fraught and where the scholarship often is politicised. In the following, I hope to shed light on the imagery that these relationships generated in a remote corner of Europe a long time ago. Hopefully, it will inspire further scholarship in an expanding field of research.³

Norwegian Medieval Painting

The corpus of Norwegian medieval painting is relatively small. In contrast to many other European countries, it consists mostly of panel painting and mural painting. Panel painting is the most common. Preserved mural paintings are less prevalent than in Sweden and Denmark, and the few examples that do exist are painted on both on plaster and on wood. There are almost no preserved manuscript illuminations. Practically all surviving paintings originate from relatively modest churches in rural parishes, and are datable to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Scholars generally agree that most art in Norway until the mid-fourteenth century was produced domestically. Although written sources are scanty, evidence suggests that there were workshops producing sculpture in stone and wood and panel painting in all episcopal centres (Nidaros, Bergen, Stavanger, Oslo and Hamar) (Fig. 22.1). From

² Bjørn Bandlien, "Trading with Muslims and the Sámi in Medieval Norway," in *Fear and Loathing in the North: Jews and Muslims in Medieval Scandinavia and the Baltic Region*, ed. Cordelia Hess and Jonathan Adams (Berlin – Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 40.

³ See for instance Cordelia Hess and Jonathan Adams, eds., *Fear and Loathing in the North: Jews and Muslims in Medieval Scandinavia and the Baltic Region* (Berlin – Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015); Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Hess, eds., *The Medieval Roots of Antisemitism: Continuities and Discontinuities from the Middle Ages to the Present Day* (New York – London: Routledge, 2018) and Lars Ivar Hansen and Bjørnar Olsen, *Hunters in Transition: An Outline of Early Sámi History*, The Northern World (Leiden: Brill, 2014).



Fig. 22.1: Map of dioceses in medieval Norway, showing cathedral cities and the church sites mentioned in this chapter.

the mid-thirteenth century, there appears to have been considerable English stylistic and iconographic influence on Norwegian sculpture and painting. This influence has been observed by both English and Scandinavian scholars, including Aron Andersson, Martin Blindheim, Nigel Morgan and Paul Binski.⁴

The evidence for this influence has been found through traditional art historical scholarship or connoisseurship, with one significant exception. In 1248 the English

⁴ Aron Andersson, "English Influence in Norwegian and Swedish figuresculpture in wood 1220–1270" (Doctoral Thesis, University of Stockholm, 1949); Martin Blindheim, *Main Trends of the East-Norwegian Figure Sculpture in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century* (Oslo: Jacob Dybwad, 1952); Nigel J. Morgan, "Iconography," in *Painted Altar Frontals of Norway, 1250–1350*, ed. Erla B. Hohler, et al. (London: Archetype, 2004); Paul Binski and Marie Louise Sauerberg, "Matthew Paris in Norway: The Fåberg St Peter," in *Medieval Painting in Northern Europe: Techniques, Analysis, Art History*, ed. Jilleen Nadolny (London: Archetype Books, 2006).

Benedictine monk and artist Matthew Paris (c.1200–1259) was sent to Norway to reform the Benedictine house at Holm (Nidarholm) on an island outside Nidaros. He also met King Haakon IV in Bergen, and there passed on an invitation to the Norwegian king from the Louis IX of France (1214–1270) to join in the Seventh Crusade. It is estimated that Matthew stayed in Norway for a year and a half, returning to England at the end of the sailing season of 1249. Several scholars have pointed out a strong resemblance between a painted tabernacle door from Fåberg (a rural parish in Hamar diocese) and Matthew Paris' fluid and crisp manuscript paintings.⁵ Some have claimed that the painting, which shows St Peter, must have been imported from England together with the rest of the tabernacle, while Paul Binski supports the idea that it was painted by Matthew while in Norway, probably at Nidarholm. Whether this was indeed the case or not we shall never know, but the case of the Benedictine's visit is a key piece of evidence for personal as well as artistic contacts over the North Sea in the thirteenth century.

It is probable that some craftsmen immigrated from England to major Norwegian towns, perhaps initially as hired craftsmen on Royal or Episcopal projects. Scholars agree that the paintings that have survived to our time are products of relatively small independent workshops. There are no indications that these panels were made in monastic workshops. The iconographical programme of each panel was probably decided in the workshop in a discussion between master craftsman and lay or ecclesiastical patron. Motifs were collected in booklets, which one must assume were copied, compiled and circulated between craftsmen around the North Sea region. One such book, the Icelandic drawing book, survives as a fifteenth century manuscript. The existence of such motif collections are an often overlooked factor in explaining why certain motifs gained popularity.

Images of Turks and Saracens

Two altar frontals from Nedstryn (c.1275–1300) and Dale II⁶ (c.1275–1300) depict Turks and Saracens as the antagonists of Christians. The Nedstryn panel has the Legend of the Exultation of the Cross as its subject matter, while the Dale panel shows two lesser-known Marian legends, one of which is the Legend of the Turk's Head. Although the texts on which these picture cycles are based in principle refer

⁵ See Binski and Sauerberg, "Matthew Paris in Norway".

⁶ The panel in question is Bergen Museum MA 9, known as the "Dale II" frontal, as it was believed that it was one of two altar frontals preserved from the parish church at Dale in Luster, Sogn og Fjordane. However, research has shown that the frontal almost certainly originates from Vanylven parish church, Møre og Romsdal (see Erla B. Hohler, Nigel J. Morgan, and Anne Wichstrøm, *Painted Altar Frontals of Norway*, vol. 1 (London: Archetype, 2004), 94–97). In order to avoid (further) confusion, I refer to the frontal in question as "Dale II."

to two different ethnic groups, there was much confusion regarding the definition of Saracens and Turks in contemporary sources. In our context, they may both be characterised with the more modern term Muslim.

The legend of the Turk's head is among the more obscure Marian legends, and tells the story of a knight who fell in love with a Turkish princess.⁷ The girl's father objected to the liaison and banished the knight from his kingdom, which in turn led to both the knight and princess dying from grief. They were buried together, and from their tomb a voice was heard saying: "Those who see me shall die, those who follow me shall conquer." When the grave was opened, a monstrous head was discovered. This head was used as a weapon by the Turks, killing anyone who laid eyes on it. When the Turk army reached Constantinople – or *Miklagard* in the Old Norse text – the Christians within its gates prayed for the Virgin Mary's protection and placed an image of her on the city walls. Confronted with a stronger image, the monstrous head lost its power and the Turkish army was defeated. This legend is apparently based on the historical siege of Constantinople in 717–718, albeit much embellished. The iconography of the Dale II altar frontal is extremely rare; medieval illustrations of this legend are practically unknown, and this is the only known example of this legend depicted on an altar (Fig. 22.2).

The Exultation of the Cross is on the other hand a relatively well known legend, although there are few existing iconographic parallels to the Nedstryn frontal.⁸ The quality and state of preservation of this panel are exceptionally high. In eight medallions, encircled by explanatory texts in Old Norse, the legend is told in great detail. The five first scenes deal with the battle between the Byzantine emperor Heraclius (610–641) and the Persian king Chosroes (579–628), over the Cross, which Chosroes according to legend had plundered from Jerusalem. In our context, it is worth mentioning that in the Norse version, Heraclius is the King of Jerusalem, thus the link to the Holy City is emphasised and the connection to Byzantium is obfuscated. Likewise, Chosroes is Saracen, not Persian. The final three medallions are concerned with Heraclius' pride and humiliation before being allowed to re-enter Jerusalem with the Cross (Fig. 1.2).⁹

In both the Dale II and the Nedstryn panel, the Muslims have been given an appearance that distinguishes them from their Christian opponents. Their skin is noticeably darker than the Christians', in the Dale case the skin had a blue tinge, with cheeks modelled in red, while the Nedstryn Saracens have greyish skin. Their noses are often more prominent. This is particularly true of the men; the Nedstryn

⁷ *Maríu Saga. Legender om Jomfru Maria og hendes jertegn*, ed. Carl R. Unger, Kristiania, 1871.

⁸ The legend is known in the vernacular from the Old Norse Homily, dating from c.1200. *Acta et processus canonizationis b. Birgitte*, ed. Isak Collijn, Samlingar utgivna av Svenska fornskriftsällskapet, Ser. 2, Latinska skrifter, Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell boktryckeri, 1924–1931.

⁹ See the analysis of the Nedstryn panel in the introductory chapter "Jerusalem as the Navel of the Storyworld of Medieval Scandinavia" (Chapter 1, Kristin B. Aavitsland), 25–28.



Fig. 22.2: Altar frontal from Dale II/Unknown church. Detail showing the monstrous Turk's head used as weapon. University Museum of Bergen.

panel also portrays women, and although their skin has the same greyish tinge as the men's, they are otherwise quite similar to those of their Christian counterparts.

Regarding dress, one must distinguish between armour and civilian clothing. Armour features heavily in both panels; in the Dale frontal all the Turks are shown in military garb. Their panels show both sides as military forces with men, horses and equipment of equal strength and quality; the enemy is strong.

There is a more marked attempt at differentiation when it comes to civilian clothes. On the Nedstry panel, three medallions show scenes from Ctesiphon, the capital of the Persian kingdom. When Chosroes returns with his loot, he is greeted at the gates of the city by two men wearing long, unbelted gowns and pointed, conical hats that strongly resemble Jews' hats. As mentioned above, their skin tone is dark and their features are orientalisised, with heavy brows, hooked noses and thick, red lips. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that one of them has blond hair and beard. Behind the city walls, a crowd has gathered. We primarily see women wearing wimples, the rest of their bodies are hidden.

In the following scene, Chosroes with the Holy Cross is being worshipped by four of his subjects, two men and two women. The men appear to be identical to the two who greeted their king at the city gates in the previous scene. The women are dressed in long gowns and elaborately draped cloaks. These clothes seem to resemble the formal garments worn by female saints, rather than contemporary women's clothing. Like the men's flowing gowns, the clothes set them apart, but without any apparent negative connotations. Their headdresses reflect contemporary fashion, one woman wearing a wimple under her veil, the others respectively a fillet, barrette and snood. All four throw their hands up in adoration, the men simultaneously tearing the pointed hats from their heads. Above them, Chosroes sits in his palace with its "glass dome," pretending he can control the sun and moon and letting it "rain" from the gargoyles depicted. The four Saracens are the image of gullible idolatry as they worship their apparently miracle-working king (Fig. 22.3).

In both panels the non-Christians carry distinctive insignia. On the Dale panel, the Saracens carry a black arrowhead as their symbol, while the Nedstry Saracens carry a black toad. In the fourth scene, the Battle of Niniveh, we see Heraclius slaying Chosroes' son Rhahzadh by thrusting his sword through the latter's shield; the shield is decorated with a black toad, and Rhahzadh's blood can be seen gushing from the toad's belly. The use of the toad here can hardly be coincidental; in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries toads were considered demonic animals.¹⁰

In both panels, these black, negative insignia are contrasted with the Christians' cross-inscribed shields and banners. The red cross on white background identify those who carry them as crusaders. This is not surprising in the Nedstry panel, where the

¹⁰ Joyce E. Salisbury, *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1994), 134–135.



Fig. 22.3: Altar frontal from Nedstryn. Detail showing scene 3: Saraens worshipping Chosroes and 4: the battle of Niniveh. University Museum of Bergen.

Holy Cross itself is at the centre of the narrative. The crusader theme is less apparent in the Dale panel, particularly as the legend in question has been complicated by the love story between the princess and the knight. Nevertheless, the focus of the visual story is on the conflict between Saracens and Christians. The four scenes show a compressed narrative which boils down to a battle between the demonic Turk's head and the holy image of the Virgin.

The Turk's head itself is worth closer examination. It is a monstrous apparition, an enormous humanoid head placed on a pair of pig's feet. Its skin is dark brown, it is completely bald and its facial features are horribly caricatured with large ears, protruding eyes, a bulbous nose and thick lips. The Turkish soldiers move it on a wheelbarrow-like contraption, and the Christian soldiers fall like skittles at the mere sight of it. It is interesting to note that in addition to the more generalised catalogue of foreign and evil features, the monster has pig's feet. They are open to several interpretations. On one hand they refer simply to the fact that the monster is not just a deformed human, but a combination of beast and human and thus in the problematic category of hybrids, creatures that transgress god-given borders.¹¹ While the pig historically had been a treasured animal in Germanic countries, by the later Middle Ages its place in the hierarchy of domestic animals was near the bottom.¹² In Muslim and Jewish

¹¹ Salisbury, *The Beast Within*, 140.

¹² Salisbury, *The Beast Within*, 27.

culture, the pig was an unclean animal, surrounded by taboos. Perhaps the employment of pig's feet on the monstrous Turk's head is a more or less conscious attempt to associate the enemies of Christ with an animal that was abhorrent to that group, a parallel to the widespread phenomena of the *Judensau*.¹³ Because there apparently are no preserved visual parallels to the Dale II frontal, we do not know if the monster we see on it was an established mode of depiction or a unique flight of fancy. The monstrous head on pig's feet is therefore a solitary phenomenon in the depressingly large catalogue of imagery of religious defamation.

Historian Bjørn Bandlien has discussed how Saracens are portrayed in the Norse sagas, observing that they are often shown to be noble and valiant. However, *blámenn*, or black-skinned men (literally “blue men”), were recognised as a subcategory of Saracens and they were shown to be very fierce warriors, sometimes even monstrous or demonic.¹⁴ As we have seen from the few, but very interesting painted examples, this observation fits well with the visual portrayals of Saracens. The Nedstryn frontal portrays the Saracens army as strong and the soldiers as valiant, although the citizens of Ctesiphon are shown to be gullible and somewhat ridiculous. This differentiation mirrors the function of non-Christians in this storyworld. The brave Muslim soldiers serve to emphasise the skill and bravery of the triumphant Christian army. On the other hand, the civilian Muslims' gullibility functions as a contrast to the implicitly true faith of the Christians – the faith of Heraclius and his men, the citizens of Jerusalem and also the men and women worshipping at the altar of Nedstryn Church.

Muslims as brave opponents also feature in the example from Dale. There are no civilian Turks in the images, but the grotesque head is effectively contrasted with the beautiful and even more powerful Marian statue in the final showdown at the city gates of Constantinople. The dark skin colour and exaggerated facial features of the monstrous head could be an allusion to the more vicious *blámadr* aspect of the Saracen. However, just like in the Nedstryn case, the main function of the Saracen idol is as a stark contrast to the true Christian faith.

Images of Jews: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

Images of Jews are everywhere in Christian iconography. Christ, his family and his disciples were Jewish, as were many of their adversaries. What is interesting in our

¹³ The motif of the *Judensau* shows a sow suckling one or several Jews. It originated in German-speaking regions in the thirteenth century, primarily in architectural sculpture. For a thorough exploration of the motif and its history, see Isaiah Shachar, *The Judensau: A Medieval Anti-Jewish Motif and Its History*, Warburg Institute surveys (London: The Warburg Institute, 1974). A rare example of a sculpted *Judensau* outside German-speaking regions can be found in the chancel of Uppsala Cathedral.

¹⁴ Bandlien, “Trading with Muslims and the Sámi in Medieval Norway,” 37.



Fig. 22.4: Painted chancel vault from Ål church. King Herod and the Massacre of the Innocents. Museum of Cultural History, Oslo.

context are the instances when this Jewishness is emphasised in some way, either good or bad. When these different modes of depiction have been identified, we may examine what function this emphasis on difference, on Jewishness, does. I will also explore depictions of the personified Synagogue, *Synagoga*, in Norwegian painting.

In Nativity cycles, three Jewish men have important roles: Joseph, Simeon and Herod. In the Norwegian material, it is particularly Joseph and Simeon who occasionally are singled out as Jewish, Joseph with a *pileum cornutum* or pointed Jew's hat and Simeon, in the Presentation in the Temple, with a tallit or prayer shawl over his head. Although the foreign headgear gives the two men a slightly exotic appearance, it is hard to interpret this otherness as negative. There is only one example of the Massacre of the Innocents in our material, and this is the ceiling paintings from Ål church. There, Herod is portrayed wearing the same belted tunic, cloak and crown as any Christian ruler, including Norway's patron saint King Olav. His skin colour is the same pink shade as his young victims, and his features are neutrally painted; he might even be characterised as handsome (Fig. 22.4).

The apparent neutrality of these images contrast vividly with the way Jews are depicted in Passion cycles. In about half of the preserved examples, Christ's tormentors and killers are identified as specifically Jewish. The ways in which this alterity is shown are many, such as exaggerated physiognomy, darkened skin and exotic headgear.

Many of the paintings give Christ's tormentors exaggerated physiognomy, such as bulging eyes, hooked or bulbous noses, thick lips and protruding teeth. An interesting example is the altar frontal from Hauge, where four medallions showing Passion scenes flank a large octofoil showing the Crucifixion. The two medallions to the left show respectively the Flagellation and the Carrying of the Cross (Fig. 22.5). While the two men accompanying Christ in the former scene are shown with disproportionately large heads, furrowed brows and hooked noses, in the latter scene their heads are of a normal size and their facial expressions are neutral.

In some images, there is a distinct difference in skin tone between the good and the evil. The paintings on the wooden vault from Ål church, two men accompanying Christ at the Carrying of the Cross are shown with grotesque, almost simian features, such as flattened, hooked noses, cruelly twisted mouths and a greyish skin tone. In addition to this, they are both wearing pointed Jew's hats. Their skin contrasts effectively with Christ's rosy flesh. However, the distinctive, dark skin tone is not used on the torturer in the Flagellation, nor Synagoga in the Crucifixion scene. Interestingly, in a Crucifixion scene from Eid (c.1275–1300) all the torturers have been given darker skin except Longinus.¹⁵ This is probably due to Longinus' more redemptory role later in the



Fig. 22.5: Altar frontal from Hauge. Detail showing the Flagellation and the Carrying of the Cross. University Museum of Bergen. Photo: Svein Skare©Universitetsmuseet i Bergen.

¹⁵ Unn Plahter et al., *Painted altar frontals of Norway 1250–1350: An Art-historical and Technical Study of the 31 Painted Panels Preserved*, 3 vols. (London: Archetype Publishers, 2004): vol. 2, 121.



Fig. 22.6: Altar frontal from Røldal, detail showing Christ's tormentors with "African" physiognomy and a winged helmet. University Museum of Bergen.

Passion narrative as subject to a healing miracle. As mentioned above, neither is King Herod in the Massacre of the Innocents from the same suite of images.

The Røldal frontal is unique in that it shows one of Christ's tormentors with what may be characterised as African physiognomy (Fig. 22.6). The two men are depicted with very dark skin, short, tightly curled hair, bulbous noses and thick lips. This is an example of the more general association of dark skin with evil merging with a more specific identification of Christ's tormentors as exotic and foreign-looking. Perhaps this is an instance of iconographic contamination, where the idea of the *blámadr* as a particularly aggressive Saracen is transposed to Jewishness.

The presence of winged headgear in many of the paintings is interesting. It is a relatively rare occurrence in contemporary European iconography, found primarily in English and French manuscript illuminations in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, with some isolated instances in German art. This relatively marginal iconography crops up in four of nine preserved Passion frontals from Norway.¹⁶ Their quality and style are completely different, and there is no suggestion of a direct connection between the four artefacts.

Ruth Mellinkoff points out that the symbolism of winged headgear is unclear, and became part of a catalogue of attributes of foreignness and evil.¹⁷ It is used to signify paganism, Saracens or Jews (also hunters and foresters), and she mentions a Parisian example where one of St Stephen's

¹⁶ Kinsarvik, Nes, Røldal, Tingelstad.

¹⁷ Ruth Mellinkoff, "Demonic Winged Headgear," *Viator* 16 (1985): 370.

executioners is depicted as an African wearing a winged helmet.¹⁸ Nevertheless, in the Norwegian material it is used exclusively for the torturers of Christ, either at the Crucifixion or the scenes directly preceding the Crucifixion (the Flagellation and Carrying of the Cross). It does not occur in other torture scenes (i.e. saints' martyrdoms), or in legends where Jews or Saracens are shown as enemies of Christ. The winged hat or helmet seems thus to have taken on a more specific meaning in the Norwegian context. The preserved material suggests that in Norway in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the winged hat was an exclusive identifier of Christ's torturers and executioners.

The more conventional Jewish headgear, the pointed, funnel-shaped hat or *pileum cornutum*, also turns up in several images, some of which have been mentioned already. On an altar frontal from Bø, the *pileum cornutum* is worn both by Christ's tormentors and by the High priest. As pointed out previously, Joseph is sometimes shown wearing a variant of the *pileum cornutum* in Nativity scenes. Interestingly, the *pileum cornutum* occurs on approximately the same number of artefacts as the winged helmet, but there is a significant difference: while the winged helmet is only worn by one of Christ's torturers, there can be several bearers of the pointed Jew's hat. Although the material is limited, this points to a possible interpretation of the winged hat as a mark of distinction, albeit a negative distinction.

The personified Synagoga occurs on three Crucifixion scenes in the Norwegian material. Two of these are mural paintings placed directly above an altar in neighbouring mountain parish churches, Torpo and Ål, while the third is found on an altar frontal from a church from Kinsarvik, a busy coastal village in Western Norway.¹⁹

The history of the iconography of Ecclesia and Synagoga may be traced back to the fifth century, but gained popularity in the thirteenth century. In this tradition, Church and Synagogue are represented by an opposing pair of young women, where Ecclesia is shown to be triumphing over Synagoga. The women carry attributes such as a Eucharistic chalice or the tablets of the Law, and Synagoga is often portrayed blindfolded or with a broken banner to underline her submissive status. Although stylistically very different, the Synagogas of Torpo and Kinsarvik share several iconographical similarities. In both versions the woman is shown wearing a long dress and cloak that is identical in shape (but different in colour) to the one worn by the opposite Ecclesia figure. Synagoga carries a broken banner, an inverted chalice and her crown is slipping from her head. The major difference between the two is that while the Torpo version is blindfolded and dramatically weeping, the Kinsarvik Synagoga is shown with closed eyes, but no blindfold. The Ål Synagoga differs, not only from the

¹⁸ Mellinkoff, "Demonic Winged Headgear," 370.

¹⁹ The mural from Torpo church is still in situ, while Ål church was demolished in the 1880s and the chancel vault with decorations preserved in the Museum of Cultural Heritage, Oslo.



Fig. 22.7: Painted chancel vault from Ål church: The Crucifixion with Synagoga personified. Museum of Cultural History, Oslo.

Norwegian parallels, but also from most European versions, in that she is not dressed similarly to the opposing Ecclesia, but is shown wearing a sarong-like drapery on her lower body, hiding one breast but exposing the other provocatively (Fig. 22.7). While Ecclesia in the Ål painting is shown with a chalice in her hand, ready to catch the blood of Christ, Synagoga is holding a severed goat's head in her hand. This attribute of Synagoga is relatively rare, but not unknown; for instance, it may be seen on the north porch of Erfurt cathedral. The goat may plausibly be interpreted as a symbol of animal sacrifice, the Jewish equivalent of the Eucharist.²⁰ Seen in context with the semi-nude body and wantonly flowing hair of Synagoga, the animal's lascivious connotations are also relevant. Synagoga's state of undress is very rare in the comparative material, but a close parallel could be found in the now lost mural paintings in Vang church, another neighbouring parish.

Voluptuous or sensual depictions of Synagoga are not unusual in Gothic art. As art historian Sara Lipton has pointed out, "On the rare occasions when high medieval artists attempted to express the more obdurate and dynamic carnality of Jewish law

²⁰ Kristin B. Aavitsland, "The Church and Synagogue in Ecclesiastical Art. A Case from Medieval Norway," *Teologisk Tidsskrift* 5 (4) (2016): 334.

in gendered terms, they did so by means not of the Jewish female but the female personification of Judaism, Synagoga.”²¹ The obvious vulgarity of the Ål depiction is however very unusual, and begs the question of whether the craftsman may have incorporated elements from the iconography or the mortal sin of Luxuria into his composition. The asymmetrically draped garment may be associated with draperies of classical statues of Venus, perhaps a sign of a conflation or contamination of non-Christian imagery.

Legends of the Virgin were extremely popular throughout medieval Europe, and Norway was no exception. They were translated into the vernacular and distributed widely; many copies still survive. Some of these legends have survived as visual expressions. The Miracle of the Jewish Boy of Bourges appears to have been particularly popular and has survived in two fragmentary paintings (the altar frontals from Arnafjord and Årdal II). The legend tells of a Jewish boy who, while playing with his Christian friends, enters a church and there happens to see an image of the Virgin. When the boy’s father, who is usually identified as a baker, hears that his son has been to church he is enraged and throws the boy into his baker’s oven. In the oven, the boy is miraculously saved by the Virgin, who wraps her cloak around him. Later, the boy and his mother are converted to Christianity. The father’s fate is more uncertain; in three of four Norse versions he is outlawed from the community, while in the fourth he himself is thrown into the oven and burnt alive, with no divine intervention.²² In one of the Norwegian fragments, we see the boy in a brick oven, embraced by the Virgin in a blue mantle. The boy is shown in profile, with an exaggerated nose, but otherwise his features and skin tone are neutral. In the other fragment, we only see part of the curved top of the oven and a glimpse of the boy’s mother as she horrified watches the drama. The legend was popular throughout Europe and scenes from it may for instance be found on a mural painting in the parish church of Chalfont St Giles in Buckinghamshire (c.1330) and in the monumental stained glass rose window (the “Dean’s Eye”) of Lincoln Cathedral (c.1225).²³

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, we know of no Jewish minorities in Norway or in Scandinavia in the Middle Ages. But in contrast to the exotic Saracens and Turks, there lived Jews in countries bordering on Scandinavia, both along the Baltic and the North Sea coast. In our context, the Jews of eastern England are of particular interest. By 1189, there were at least 24 Jewish communities in towns and cities from Exeter to York, in addition to London.²⁴ Many of the largest and most

²¹ Sara Lipton, *Dark Mirror. The Medieval Origins of Anti-Jewish Iconography* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2014), 220.

²² *Mariu Saga*, 71–2, 987–8, 89–90.

²³ Morgan, “Iconography,” 56.

²⁴ Joe Hillaby, “Jewish Colonisation in the Twelfth Century,” in *The Jews in Medieval Britain. Historical, Literary and Archaeological Perspectives*, ed. Patricia Skinner (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2003), 15.

prosperous of these were located on the east coast, with easy access to Continental ports. It is therefore no coincidence that the persecution of English Jews also chiefly happened in these towns. These areas were also the locus of Blood Libel charges that sparked saint's cults: William of Norwich (1144), Harold of Gloucester (1168), Robert of Bury St Edmunds (1181), and Hugh of Lincoln (1255). In March 1191, around the entire community of 150 Jews was massacred in Clifford's Tower in York. Blood Libel charges involved accusations that Jews sacrificed Christians (especially Christian boys) as part of their religious rituals. The Blood Libel myth spread throughout Europe in the course of the medieval and post-medieval period.²⁵

Many of these towns were important sources of artistic and cultural influence to Norway; scholars agree that the cathedrals of Lincoln and York have close stylistic parallels to the cathedral in Nidaros, and that is probable that masons from these cities emigrated to Norway.²⁶ The highly influential Archbishop Eystein of Nidaros (c.1120–88) fled the country in 1180 and spent the next three years in exile in England, staying in Lincoln and Bury St Edmunds. Three generations later, Matthew Paris travelled from Bury to Norway to reform Nidarholm monastery, as mentioned previously. In other words, there is ample evidence for considerable social and cultural contact between the eastern coast of England and the western coast of Norway in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and it is highly unlikely that the persecution of English Jews would have passed unnoticed. Archbishop Eystein's stay at Bury coincided with the alleged murder of Robert of Bury, although it is probable that the cult was established a few years later. Matthew Paris included a multitude of anti-Jewish myths, from money clipping, usury, desecration of the Crucifix and Blood Libel to the myth of the Wandering Jew in his *Chronica Majora* shortly after returning from Norway.²⁷

Bearing this in mind, it is tempting to see Matthew Paris' visit to Norway as a smoking gun. It could theoretically explain the relatively high occurrence of negative portrayals of Jews and Judaism in the corpus of artworks from a region with no Jewish population.²⁸ However, this would be to over-emphasise the role of an

²⁵ For a recent and insightful study of the English cases and their origin, see E.M. Rose, *The Murder of William of Norwich: The Origins of the Blood Libel in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

²⁶ See Chapter 14 (Øystein Ekroll), 290–3.

²⁷ Stephen D. Benin, "Matthew Paris and the Jews," in *Proceedings of the Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies, division B: The History of the Jewish People*. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1990), 67; Anthony Bale, "Fictions of Judaism in England before 1290," in *Jews in Medieval Britain Historical, Literary and Archaeological Perspectives*, ed. P. Skinner (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2003), 137; Rose, *The Murder of William of Norwich*, 87.

²⁸ I have myself suggested this previously, without mentioning Matthew specifically. Margrethe C. Stang, "De fremmende i norsk middelaldermaleri. Jøder og muselmaner blant fjord og fjell," in *Transformasjoner i vikingtid og norrøn middelalder. Møteplass middelalder*, ed. Gro Steinsland (Oslo: Unipub, 2004).

individual. The relationship between Christianity and Jews, real or imagined, in medieval Europe has received much scholarly attention over the past decade. This research shows how antagonism towards Jews and Judaism to a large extent was an integral part of medieval Christianity.²⁹ The cruel and evil Jew played a vital role in the minds of parishioners in village churches all over medieval Europe, and it seems to have been of little importance whether the commissioners and viewers of these images had seen a Jew or not.

The fictional quality of these allegations has not passed unnoticed by scholars. Historian Anthony Bale characterises the alleged ritual murder of Christian boys as “a textually generated event [. . .], rather than as a historical ‘crime’ with victims, criminals and a body of evidence (although if we are looking for victims, it was the Jews who were usually punished for crimes they almost certainly did not commit).”³⁰ In other words, the narratives of Blood Libel are not tales of the meeting of two competing religions or worldviews, but stories firmly rooted in one religious culture – Christianity. “In short, the allegation of ritual murder, and the ensuing devotion to the martyr’s body, was primarily a way of crafting a devotional Christian polity rather than a way of persecuting England’s Jews.”³¹ In this perspective, it is not surprising if these stories were retold and transmitted on the other side of the North Sea, along with other stories of desecrations of the Host, Jewish money lenders and boys being thrown in baker’s ovens.

Many legends and exempla using Jews as antagonists of Christianity were translated into Norse, and written sources show that “Jew” was used as a derogatory term in the late Middle Ages. The Norwegian philologist Bjarne Berulfsen discussed the many translated anti-Jewish texts in a pioneering article in 1958, where he characterised their content as “imported goods.”³² Thus, he implied that because there were no Jewish minorities in Norway or Scandinavia, the antagonism expressed in these translated legends cannot be interpreted as “real” and was not understood by readers in medieval Norway. A similar point of view was recently expressed in a discussion of the *Judensau* sculpture in Uppsala Cathedral. Because there were no Jews in thirteenth century Sweden, the imagery could not have been understood by or offended anyone.³³

²⁹ See for instance David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (London: W.W. Norton & Company Ltd., 2013).

³⁰ Bale, “Fictions of Judaism in England before 1290,” 131.

³¹ Bale, “Fictions of Judaism in England before 1290,” 132–3.

³² Bjarne Berulfsen, “Antisemittisme som litterær importvare,” *Edda* LVIII (1958).

³³ Anna Nilsén, *The Gothic Sculpture of Uppsala Cathedral. On Spiritual Guidance and Creative Joy* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 23. See also Margrethe C. Stang, “Anna Nilsén, *The Gothic Sculpture of Uppsala Cathedral. On Spiritual Guidance and Creative Joy*: Book review,” *Journal of Northern Studies* 10, no. 1 (2016).



Fig. 22.8: Detail of the Trondheim altar frontal, showing Thorir Hund slaying St Olav at the Battle of Stiklestad. Nidaros Cathedral, Trondheim.

Berulfsen's interpretation is perhaps typical of the 1950s, both in the sense that "anti-Jewish ideas and the cultures that produced them were static and unchanging"³⁴ and that Anti-Semitism, medieval and modern, was a Continental phenomenon. As Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Hess have pointed out, the high frequency of anti-Jewish imagery in preserved Norse texts could be interpreted to show that certain concepts about Jews and Jewishness had "saturated the public's consciousness."³⁵ One might argue that one did not need to see a Jew in order to believe in one. After all, medieval Christianity wholeheartedly embraced phenomena such as fire breathing dragons and angels with burning swords, which one must assume

³⁴ Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Hess, "Encounters and Fantasies: Muslims, Jews and Christians in the North," in *Fear and Loathing in the North: Jews and Muslims in Medieval Scandinavia and the Baltic Region*, ed. Cordelia Hess and Jonathan Adams (Berlin – Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 13.

³⁵ Adams and Hess 2015, "Encounters and Fantasies:" 12.

were very real to most believers. Just as with the Turks and Saracens, the Jews of Norse writing and imagery remain products of the imagination and of the large corpus of Christian texts: they are true inhabitants of the Christian storyworld with a particular role to play in the drama of salvation.

Juxta paganos: The Saami and the Norse

While most medieval Norwegians had never met a Muslim or Jew, it is becoming increasingly apparent that there must have been a marked Saami element in many areas of medieval Scandinavia. However, this group of more or less nomadic people have left few traces in written sources; these tend to associate Saami with magical practices and beliefs. There are even fewer visual sources. There is only one surviving medieval painting that may be interpreted to show a reference to Saami culture. The panel in question is the Trondheim frontal, perhaps the most iconic of Norwegian medieval images (Fig. 14.5). It shows the martyrdom of St Olav, patron saint of Norway, at the Battle of Stiklestad in 1030. In the climactic battle scene, we see Olav in the middle of a tumultuous fight, with his Christian army to the left and the pagan army to the right. It is a tightly knit composition, with a knot of clashing swords at its centre (Fig. 22.8). To the right, we see a man dressed differently from the rest of the pagan army. He is wearing a shaggy, grey coat instead of chain mail, and is stabbing the dying King Olav with his lance. This is Thorir Hundr.³⁶

Thorir Hundr (born c.990) plays a crucial role in the narrative of St Olav's martyrdom. He was a powerful landowner from Northern Norway, and one of three chieftains that, together with the Danish King Knud (995–1035), lead the revolt against King Olav. In one of the earliest sources to Olav's martyrdom, the skaldic verse *Erfindrárpa* (c.1040), we learn that he was given a coat of reindeer skin by the Saami ("the Finns"). The coat apparently had magical properties, and gave Thorir the courage to strike blows at a king. In later texts, the role of Thorir was much embellished, so that Snorri in the early thirteenth century could cast him as a Nordic Longinus. According to Snorri, Olav was killed by three men and three weapons, Thorstein Knarresmed with an axe, Kalf Arnesson with a sword and Thorir Hundr with a lance. It is worth noting that the Trondheim altar frontal follows Snorri's version very closely in this scene, including the placing of the wounds on the saint's body. The blows of the king's men's swords glanced off Thorir's magical coat, but his hand was unprotected and was wounded. Just as Longinus' blindness was healed by the water and blood flowing from the wound in Jesus' side, Thorir's hand was healed when he touched Olav's body after the battle. According to the saga, he was the first to be convinced of Olav's sanctity. Nothing is known of the fate of the historical Thorir, but

³⁶ See also Chapters 12 (Stefka G. Eriksen), 223, and 14 (Øystein Ekroll), 275.

remarkably, Snorri lets Thorir travel to Jerusalem after 1030. He states that the chief-tain was never heard of again. Another saga, *The Legendary Saga of St Olav*, lets Thorir witness an angel carry the saint's soul to heaven.

In the saga, Thorir is not Sami. Nevertheless, the story of the reindeer coat implies a political alliance with the Saami or something darker: an alliance with the black magic of the Saami pagans. Philologist Else Mundal has examined the perception of Saami in Norse literature, and tentatively concludes that medieval authors believed that the contemporary Saami religion was the same as that of their Norse ancestors, i.e. the cult of Thor and Odin.³⁷ In other words, the Saami and the pagan army that opposed St Olav at Stiklestad shared the same religion. In light of this, it is interesting to note that on the Trondheim frontal, the pagan army has been given darker skin than the Christian army, and all the pagans have coarse features and bulbous noses.³⁸ However, Thorir Hundr's skin is lighter than his companions'. This should surely be interpreted as a parallel to how Longinus in some versions has lighter skin than the rest of Christ's tormentors.

Snorri's claim that Thorir travelled to Jerusalem and presumably died there is also interesting in this context. In placing Thorir in the Holy Land, the converted pagan becomes a physical link between Northern Norway, the periphery of the known world, and its very centre. In this narrative, the former enemy of St Olav and Christianity becomes a proto-crusader and a powerful symbol of redemption.

In 1241, King Haakon IV received papal dispensation from an earlier crusade pledge; in return he was to fight pagan neighbours in his own kingdom.³⁹ In the following decades, one may detect an acceleration of Christian expansion in the North, with churches being built as far north as Vardø in 1307.⁴⁰ However, due to lack of written sources and ambiguous archaeological evidence, it is difficult to assess the character of this expansion. It is probable that there was considerable cultural contact between Norse and Saami populations and that some Saami converted to Christianity, but there are few signs of missionary activity or even "crusading."

In the 1380s, a priest translated a miracle story from Latin to his native Icelandic. The miracle had allegedly occurred a generation previously in the borderlands of

³⁷ Else Mundal, "The Perception of the Saamis and Their Religion in Old Norse Sources," in *The Perception of the Saamis and Their Religion in Old Norse Sources*, ed. Juha Pentikäinen, Religion and Society (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), 113.

³⁸ There are two parallels to this scene in contemporary Norwegian material, the frontals from Kaupanger and Årdal I. In the former, there is no difference in skin tone or facial features between the opposing armies. In the latter version, Olav's martyrdom is depicted in a highly stylized manner. The two executioners have darker skin and coarse, heavily caricatured features, but there is nothing to distinguish them ethnically or religiously from the Christians. See Margrethe C. Stang, "Paintings, Patronage and Popular Piety: Medieval Altar Frontals and Society, c.1250–1350" (PhD Thesis, 2009).

³⁹ Hansen and Olsen, *Hunters in Transition*, 158.

⁴⁰ Hansen and Olsen, *Hunters in Transition*, 158.

Northern Norway, the region called Finnmark, the marsh between Norway and the Saami lands. A priest sailed north to this region.⁴¹ The story emphasises that the Saami of this region were “completely pagan,” thus implying that other regions were Christianised. While the priest celebrated Mass in a tent, a Saami shaman watched by the entrance, and when the host was elevated, the shaman suddenly ran from the tent. When the priest later came to look for the man, he found him lying on the ground, unconscious. When he awoke, he told that he had seen a child in the hands of the priest, “bright and shining”. The sight had filled him with immense fear and he had lost consciousness. The text tells us that the miracle was celebrated with much bell-ringing and the singing of *Te Deums* in the churches of Nidaros.

The miracle of the Saami shaman is probably not an accurate historical account of Norwegian mission to the North. The story itself bears close resemblance to a number of similar stories, dispersed throughout Western Europe.⁴² The Child in the Host is a leitmotif in Eucharistic miracles, where the observer of the Child initially is a doubter that, because of his sceptical or even heretical position, becomes a powerful witness to the dogma of transubstantiation. Miri Rubin has shown how this doubting spectator often is cast as a Jew, a woman or another group that may be identified as Other.⁴³ The exemplum from Finnmark should be read in light of this.

Mundal has shown how the Norse may have believed that the Saami worshipped the Old Norse gods, and points out that this, however erroneous, gives the Saami a special role and status within the Norse world view:

By identifying the religion of the Saamis’ – more or less – with their own old heathen religion, the Norwegians and the Icelanders came to identify the religion of the Saamis with a part of their own glorious past, towards which they, as Christians, naturally had an ambiguous attitude, not entirely negative, creating an exception to the official view of the church.⁴⁴

Perhaps some of this ambivalence is reflected in the two examples mentioned: that of Thorir Hundr as Longinus and of the shaman as witness. They may be read as attempts to write the North into the Christian storyworld by applying a similar storyline to the conversion of the North. Incidentally, the use of Judaism as a vehicle for coming to terms with the alterity of Saami religion did not end with the Middle Ages. In the early eighteenth century Norwegian missionary Thomas von

⁴¹ *Alfraeði Ízlensk: Íslandsk encyclopædisk litteratur*, 4 vols, ed. Kristian Kålund, I. Cod. Mbr. AM. 194, 8vo, Copenhagen: S.L. Møllers bogtrykkeri, 1908–1918.

⁴² Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 135.

⁴³ Miri Rubin, “The Eucharist and the Construction of Medieval Identities,” in *Culture and History 1350–1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing*, ed. David Aers (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 57.

⁴⁴ Mundal, “The Perception of the Saamis,” 113.

Westen (1682–1727) referred to the coast of Northern Norway where “every cottage and sod house [is] a Synagogue for Satan.”⁴⁵

Concluding Remarks

Within the quite limited material under scrutiny in this chapter, there has been found a multitude of images depicting non-Christians. Some of these images are benign, such as the depictions that show Joseph with a distinct Jewish identity. Some emphasise the valour of foreign warriors; as we have seen, this is typical of depictions of Muslims. Muslims are also depicted as explicitly idolatrous. The most virulent imagery is however found in Passion cycles, where the torturers and executioners of Christ invariably are shown as evil, and often as explicitly Jewish. It is worth noting that there often is an element of arbitrariness in the placement of negative attributes and features. The painted vault from Ål is a good example of this, where some scenes within the same cycle show Jews as heavily caricatured, while other scenes depict Jewish characters in a neutral manner (Figs 22.5 and 22.7).

I believe some of this arbitrariness can be explained by the fact that most craftsmen were heavily dependent on models; there is little reason to believe that the iconography found in rural parish churches was particularly innovative. If one assumes that the craftsmen had a limited number of models to hand, this also helps explain why some rather obscure motifs such as the winged helmet crop up disproportionately often. The semi-nude Synagoga with the goat’s head in hand must have been found in a motif collection in use by an itinerant craftsman operating in the Hallingdal/Valdres region, leading to the chancel decorations in both Ål and Vang.

It is highly probable that these motifs had travelled to Norway from the south and west, most plausibly from workshops in the cities of eastern England such as Norwich, Lincoln and York. Perhaps this origin contributed to the harshness of some of the imagery, but this point should not be overstated. Imagery that demonises Judaism and casts certain Jews as torturers, executioners, traitors and harlots was deeply interwoven in the European mindset of this period. The images merely reflect the worldview of commissioners and beholders in rural parishes throughout western Europe, the presence or absence of actual Jews within their communities seems to be of little consequence.

In this perspective, it has been intriguing to observe the lack of images showing the Saami population in medieval Norwegian painting. The relationship between

⁴⁵ “Det finnes Finne-Fjorder, hvor ikke een eneste mand var frie fra at offre til Dievele; alle Fielde vare Guder, hver Huus og Gamme var Satans synagoge.” Thomas von Westen 1723, cited from Hans Hammond, *Den Nordiske Missions-Historie i Nordlandene, Finmarken og Thrundheims amt til Lappers og Finners Omvendelse* (Copenhagen: Gyldendals Forlag, 1787), 443.

Norwegians and Saami was something that had to be incorporated into the storyworld, a process that apparently was slow and complicated. The two stories mentioned in this chapter, where a Saami magician was witness to the Child in the Host and Thorir Hundr's involvement in Saami magic are examples of how the Saami presence was gradually inscribed in a Christian storyworld.



Fig. 23.1: Sculpture at the right jamb of the south chancel porch, c. 1225, Nidaros Cathedral.

Jørn Øyrehagen Sunde

Chapter 23

The Virtues Building Jerusalem: The Four Daughters of God and Their Long Journey to Norwegian Law in the Thirteenth Century

From the late twelfth to the late thirteenth century, the Norwegian state was fundamentally transformed. A legal revolution was a major part of this transformation, turning law and the system of conflict resolution into an instrument of governance.¹ The ambitious aim was to ensure that all acts of governance, even in remote courts that normally would be beyond the control of the king and his administration, would please God and unleash his blessings rather than his wrath. To achieve this transcendent aim, the allegory of the Four Daughters of God played a central role. This chapter will show how the allegory was employed in Norwegian law, and how it connects to Jerusalem as an authoritative model of just rule.

Jerusalem as a *Topos* in the *King's Mirror*

The allegory of the Four Daughters of God, which has its origins in the Psalms, went through several transformations from *Midrash Rabba* to sermons written in the Parisian abbey of St Victor. In thirteenth-century Norway, it has left traces in the decoration of the Nidaros Cathedral and the teachings in *Konungs skuggsjá* (the King's Mirror), before it was included in one of the about 220 chapters in the Norwegian Code of 1274, to be read aloud before any major decision was made in a court in the Norwegian realm. As argued below, the allegory is intimately related to Jerusalem as a model of government for the ruling king, and for all adjudication – as an act of governance – in the king's name.

The city of Jerusalem was a *topos* known to the makers of the Norwegian Code of 1274. This can be deduced from the references to Jerusalem found in the *King's Mirror*, written in Old Norse probably in the late 1250s.² This text was used at the king's court for educational purposes, and thus must have been well known to King

¹ Sverre Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom. State Formation in Norway, c.900–1350* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2010), 220–5.

² Sverre Bagge, *The Political Thought of the King's Mirror* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1987), 12–15.

Magnus VI the Law mender (1238–1280), who was in charge of lawmaking. It must also have been familiar to the aristocrats participating in the King's lawmaking project in the 1260s and early 1270s.

There are five references on four different occasions to Jerusalem in the three parts of the *King's Mirror*. In Part I on the Merchant, the land of Jerusalem [*iorsala land*] is referred to as an example of places in the south where warmth in the summer is as harmful as cold weather is in the winter in the north.³ In Part II on The Man at Court, two references are made to the ignorant man who goes to Jerusalem [*iorsal*] and gains no wisdom from the journey to the Holy City, and on his return tells stories that the learned only find ridiculous.⁴ In Part III on the King, reference is made twice to the city of Jerusalem. Firstly, there is the depiction of how God in his wrath punished Israel with a plague after King David had acted unjustly (2 Sam 24:15–18). As the plague in the shape of God's angel with a flaming sword approached Jerusalem [*iorsala borgar*], David asked the angel to punish him rather than the people of God.⁵ Secondly, there is the depiction of how King Solomon decided that Shimei would only be safe from rightful punishment as long as he stayed in the city of Jerusalem [*iorsalaborg*], which he left three years later and was subsequently captured and killed by the king (1. Kgs 2:36–46).⁶

The references to Jerusalem in Parts I and II of the *King's Mirror* are geographical and of no symbolic significance. In the example in Part I, Jerusalem is in some manuscripts mentioned alongside Apulia in Italy as an intolerably hot place in summer,⁷ and it would have made no difference if Apulia was mentioned alone. In Part II, the reference to Jerusalem could instead have been to Rome, for instance, without the meaning of the passage being changed at all. However, in the two references to Jerusalem in Part III of the *King's Mirror*, a biblical *topos* applies, besides being geographical and historical. Not only were David and Solomon, kings of Israel with their seat in Jerusalem, role models for the young princes intended to read the *King's Mirror*, but the theme of the two stories is about the "political" virtues of justice, peace, truth, and mercy.

God's wrath was unleashed by King David's unjust act, and a plague tormented his realm. It is, however, first when the plague approaches Jerusalem that David is forced to speak the truth of his own injustice, and steps out of the city and forward to take the punishment he deserves. The reference to King Solomon describes a very different situation. The king holds back a just judgment and grants undeserved

³ *Konungs skuggsiá*, trans. Ludvig Holm-Olsen, *Norrøne tekster* 1, Oslo: Norsk historisk Kjeldekrift-Institutt, 1983.

⁴ *Konungs skuggsiá*, 39.

⁵ *Konungs skuggsiá*, 115.

⁶ *Konungs skuggsiá*, 117.

⁷ *Kongespeilet*, trans. Anton Wilhelm Brøgger (Oslo: De norske bokklubbene, 2000); *Kongsspegelen*, trans. Alf Hellevik (Oslo: Det norske samlaget, 1965).

mercy for Shimei to enjoy peace as long as he stays in Jerusalem. When Shimei nonetheless leaves the city, he also abandons the merciful peace granted to him, and is thus captured and killed. Implicitly, the historical Jerusalem of the biblical kings is construed as an ideal state that mirrors the Heavenly Jerusalem, and is hence tied to justice, peace, truth, and mercy. This effects how the two kings act.

The key issue in Part III of the *King's Mirror* is the following: how can the Norwegian realm be turned into a Jerusalem of justice, peace, truth, and mercy? Parts I and II, that together makes up a little more than half the text, are aimed at very practical issues, and deal with, for example, how to sail from Norway to Iceland and how to dress and speak at court. The essence of the two parts is how to have success as a merchant and a man at court. Part III is also practically aimed, dealing with how to govern the realm. However, the practical advice is not for the prosperity and progress of the king, but for the benefit of the realm: "kingship was established and appointed to look after the needs of the whole realm and people rather than for sports and vain amusements," is plainly stated in the *King's Mirror*.⁸ Law, and the application of law, is one main instrument to achieve this. When the Lord in Gibeon appeared before Solomon in a dream and told him to ask for whatever he wanted, Solomon replied that he wanted a discerning heart and the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, and to govern rightfully (1. Kgs 3:5–9). The king's prayer in the *King's Mirror* is along the same lines, asking the Lord for the ability to pass just judgments. Notably, the king here considers his people holy, and clearly casts himself as the wise and yet humble Solomon:

Thou has appointed me to judge and govern Thy holy people. Therefore, I pray Thee, give more heed to the needs of Thy holy people, which Thou has appointed me to rule over, than to my merits; but give me the right understanding, self-control and sense of justice, eloquence, purpose, and good intentions, so that I may be able to judge and determine the cause of rich and poor in such a way that Thou will be pleased, while they will rejoice that justice is done among them.⁹

The king's duty is to protect his realm from God's wrath by punishing the unrighteous and untruthful, but also by granting mercy and securing peace. In the *King's Mirror*, this duty is being taught to princes and young aristocrats at court, and the two stories of King David and King Solomon serve as didactic *exempla*. As we have seen, Jerusalem also serves as a symbol in this context.

Even though we can detect the use of Jerusalem as a *topos* in the *King's Mirror*, the Holy City plays no prominent role in the text. Far more important are justice, peace, truth, and mercy. They are not simply abstract virtues, but construed as personifications, in accordance with medieval literary practice. They are variably

⁸ *The King's Mirror (Speculum regale – Konúngs skuggsjá)*. (New York-Oxford: The American-Scandinavian Foundation/London: Humphrey Mildford-Oxford University Press, 1917), 297.

⁹ *King's Mirror*, 294.

called the Four Daughters of God and the Four Sisters. We encounter them for the first time in the *King's Mirror* when God makes a pact with Adam:

Four sisters were called to witness this covenant, divine virgins, who should hear the laws decreed and learn all the terms of the agreement: the first was named Truth, the second, Peace, the third, Justice, and the fourth, Mercy. And God spoke thus to these virgins: "I command you to see to it that Adam does not break this covenant which has been made between Me and him: follow him carefully and protect him as long as he observes these things that are now decreed; but if he transgresses, you shall sit in judgment with your Father, for you are the daughters of the very Judge."¹⁰

God summoned the Four Daughters once again when Adam had violated the pact: "Since the law has now been broken, I want those virgins whom I appointed keepers of our covenant to sit in judgment with us."¹¹ Then each of the Four Sisters spoke, and gave a contribution to the verdict from their individual perspectives – truth, peace, justice, and mercy. "[W]hen the sentence had been passed in Adam's case, the sisters all came to a friendly agreement; Mercy and Truth embraced while Justice and Peace kissed each other with loving gestures."

This concluding passage displays the very origin of this allegory, the Biblical Psalm which reads: "Mercy and Truth have met each other, Justice and Peace have kissed" [*misericordia et veritas occurrerunt, iustitia et pax deosculatae sunt*] (Ps 85 (84)). The idea in both Psalm 85 (84) and in the allegory is that perfect harmony – the ideal state of things – is achieved when these virtues come together in unity. According to the *King's Mirror*, it was the king's duty to bring them together in his courts:

it is as much the king's duty to observe daily the rules of the sacred law and to preserve justice in the holy judgments as it is the bishop's duty to preserve the order of the sacred mass and all the canonical hours.¹²

As the Church upheld the world order through the liturgy, the king performed a similar task through his judgments. Hence, it is a most terrible disaster when there

come failure in the morals, the intelligence, or the counsels of those who are to govern the country. For something can be done to help a country where there is famine, if capable men are in control and there is prosperity in the neighbouring lands. But if dearth comes upon the people or the morals of the nation, far greater misfortunes will arise.¹³

The whole aim of the *King's Mirror* is to teach the future king, and those who will govern the realm in his service, how to perform governance in a way that will please God. The stories of King David and King Solomon, and several other stories, are pedagogical tools to ensure that morals and welfare will be upheld by – among

¹⁰ *King's Mirror*, 252.

¹¹ *King's Mirror*, 255.

¹² *King's Mirror*, 298.

¹³ *King's Mirror*, 194–5.

other things – just judgments. It is, therefore, all about building Jerusalem – the city that cannot endure injustice and demands the truth, as in the story of King David, and where mercy is granted and peace enjoyed, as in the story of King Solomon.

The Origin of the Allegory of the Four Daughters of God

On this backdrop, we can understand why the Four Daughters of God deserves a place in the *King's Mirror*. They are the very tools to build Jerusalem, i.e. a polity conditioned by divine virtues. The long, winding and surprising journey of Four Daughters of God from the Bible to Norwegian governance underlines the determination to transform the Norwegian lands into a realm governed by “the sacred law and [. . .] the holy judgments”.¹⁴

The Four Daughters of God and their reception in Jewish and Christian cultural history have fascinated a number of scholars, but has never been a hot research topic. Richard Heinzel (1838–1905) and Wilhelm Scherer (1841–1886) published short pieces on the Four Daughters of God in *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* in 1874 and 1877.¹⁵ Hope Traver's dissertation *The Four Daughters of God – A Study in The Versions of this Allegory* is the first and only major work on the subject, published in 1907.¹⁶ Traver also published a short piece in 1909¹⁷ and an article on the subject in 1925.¹⁸ Traver's work seem to have been unknown to Laurence Marcellus Larson (1868–1938), who translated the *King's Mirror* into English in 1917, as in a footnote in his translation, he searches for the sources to the allegory on the Four Daughters of God.¹⁹ Rudolf Meissner (1862–1948) also seems to have been fascinated by the allegory when he translated the *King's Mirror* into German in 1944,²⁰ and in his 1943 article “Der Sündenfall im norwegischen Königspiegel,” he uses the work of Heinzel, Scherer, and Traver to detect its origins.²¹ Nonetheless, the first to

14 *King's Mirror*, 257.

15 Richard Heinzel, “Vier geistliche Gedichte,” *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* 17 (1874); Wilhelm Scherer, “Die vier Töchter Gottes,” *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* 21 (1877).

16 Hope Traver, *The Four Daughters of God – A study of the Versions of this Allegory, with Especial References to those in Latin, French and English* (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Co., 1907).

17 Hope Traver, “The ‘Four Daughters of God’,” *Modern Language Notes* 24, no. 6 (1909).

18 Hope Traver, “The Four Daughters of God – a Mirror of Changing Doctrine,” *Publication of the Modern Language Association* 15, no. 1 (1925).

19 *King's Mirror*, 257.

20 Rudolf Meissner, “Der Sündenfall im norwegischen Königspiegel,” *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 23 (1943).

21 Meissner, “Der Sündenfall im norwegischen Königspiegel.”

place the *King's Mirror* version of the pan-European allegory of the Four Daughters of God into a Norwegian, historical context was Einar Molland (1908–1976) in his 1972 article “‘Les quatre filles de Dieu’ dans Le Miroir royal Norvégien.”²² Molland’s article was translated into Norwegian and published in 1974 as “‘Guds fire døtre’ i Kongespeilet”,²³ and again *post mortem* in 1996. Molland was as ignorant of Meissner’s and Larson’s efforts, as Larson was of Traver’s, and he was also ignorant of the fact that Mattias Tveitane (1927–1985) had been working simultaneously on the article “The ‘Four Daughters of God’ in the Old Norse King’s Mirror.”²⁴ Tveitane had knowledge of Larson’s work, but not of Traver’s and Meissner’s, and neither was cognizant of the ongoing work of Molland. Hence, simply relating these efforts to investigate the Four Daughters of God in a Norwegian context advances current scholarship.

In his quest for “den Mythus von den vier Töchteren Gottes” in 1874, Heinzel starts out with Psalm 85 (84) as the origin.²⁵ Scherer finds in 1877 that this short passage was developed in the Jewish *Midrash Rabba*.²⁶ This is observed independently by Larson in 1917.²⁷ Molland, who on the other hand was acquainted by the work of Scherer, elaborates on the subject and quotes this Jewish source from the early Middle Ages.²⁸ The *Midrash Rabba* reads:

R. Simon said: When the Holy One, blessed be He, came to create Adam, the ministering angels formed themselves into groups and parties, some of them saying, “Let him be created,” whilst others urged, “Let him not be created, thus it is written, Love and Truth fought together, Righteousness and Peace combated each other” (Ps.lxxxv, n) [. . .] What did the Lord do? He took Truth and cast it to the ground. Said the ministering angels before the Holy One, blessed be He, “Sovereign of the Universe! [. . .] Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.”²⁹

This is quite far from the description of the Four Daughters of God in the *King's Mirror*. Firstly, they were construed as daughters of God, and not as angels. Secondly, they were called upon initially to witness the pact God made with Adam, and then to judge when the pact was violated – not to discuss the very creation of man. Thirdly, the Four Daughters of God was not in conflict even though they

²² Einar Molland, “‘Les quatre filles de Dieu’ dans Le Miroir royal Norvégien – Exégèse médiévale de Ps 84, 11,” in *Epektasis. Mélanges patristiques offerts au Cardinal Jean Danielou*, ed. J. Fontaine and C. Kannengiesser (Paris: Beauchesne, 1972).

²³ Einar Molland, “‘Guds fire døtre’ i Kongespeilet,” in *Strejftog i kirkehistorien.*, ed. Peder A. Eidberg, et al. (Oslo: Kirkehistorisk Samfunn, 1974).

²⁴ Mattias Tveitane, “The ‘Four Daughters of God’ in the Old Norse King’s Mirror,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 73 (1972).

²⁵ Heinzel, “Vier geistliche Gedichte,” 43, who uses the old numbering system and hence refers to Ps 84.

²⁶ Scherer, “Die Vier töchter Gottes,” 415.

²⁷ *King's Mirror*, 257.

²⁸ Molland, “‘Les quatre filles de Dieu’,” 158–9.

²⁹ *Midrash Rabba*, ed. H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, London: Soncino Press, 1939.

represented different views. Fourthly, they fused into a harmonious unit without force or assistance. Even without this evidence, it would have been surprising if the allegory of the Four Daughters of God had travelled directly from *Midrash Rabba* to the *King's Mirror*. Rather, Molland's investigation displays that a model for the *King's Mirror* was created through a reception of this section in the *Midrash Rabba* by historical actors related to the abbey of St Victor outside the medieval walls of Paris.

It can be disputed,³⁰ but Molland finds – in the tradition of Traver – that the first to use this Jewish tradition in a European-Christian context was Hugh of St Victor (c.1097–1141), in charge of the school at the abbey of St Victor around 1133–1141.³¹ In Hugh's version of the allegory, God descends to Earth to judge man, accompanied by Truth. On Earth, they are met by Mercy, who pleads man's case. Truth and Mercy cannot come to a common understanding, even after they are commanded to do so by God. God hence decides that Truth shall take hold in man's heart and Mercy shall return to Heaven with God, and in this way both Truth and Mercy shall see the case from the other side. As Truth later leaves man's heart and herself returns to Heaven, Justice awaits in Heaven and looks down and witness the coming of Truth. They both ask God for Peace, and Peace then descends to man.

We find Hugh of St Victor's version of the allegory of the Four Daughters of God in a compilation of miscellaneous texts, which probably predates his death in 1141. In the previous year, Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) gave another version in one of his sermons. Bernard had a close relationship to William of Champeaux, who established the monastery of St Victor, and he corresponded with Hugh on the question of baptism.³² In Bernard's version of the allegory, God has equipped man with four virtues – Mercy, Truth, Justice, and Peace – which man loses with the Fall. They are also mentioned as two pair of twins, as sisters, and Mercy addresses God as Father. After the Fall, the twins Truth and Justice accuse man, while the other twins, Mercy and Peace, argue for man to be spared. God calls the Four Sisters to Heaven, and there they are sent to Christ who most cleverly unites them.³³

Molland also found the idea that Christ ensures harmony between the Four Daughters of God in a version of the allegory by Peter the Venerable (1092–1156) in his *Tractatus contra Petrobrusianos* from around 1137 and 1140. In this version, there is a conflict between Justice and Truth on one side, and Mercy and Peace on the other. The conflict originates from the Fall of Man, and through the death of

30 Elbert N. S. Thompson, "Concerning the Four Daughters of God," *Modern Language Notes* 23, no. 8 (1908): 233–4.

31 Arne Odd Johnsen, "Om St. Viktorklosteret og Nordmennene. En skisse," *Historisk Tidsskrift* 33 (1943–1946): 420.

32 G.R. Evans, *Bernard of Clairvaux* (Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 98.

33 Molland, "'Guds fire døtre' i Kongespeilet," 39–40.

Christ, they are united.³⁴ We also find the Four Daughters of God in a version of the allegory by Stephen of Tournai (1128–1203), where they argue for and against man in a court where the devil is prosecutor. Yet another version is authored by Pope Innocent III (1161–1216).³⁵ However, these two last versions seem not to be linked to the text in the *King's Mirror*. The same applies for the use of the allegory in the theological poem *Chateau d'Amour* by Robert Grosseteste (c.1175–1253) from sometime between 1230 and 1253, even though Tveitane finds this text a possible source for the Norwegian version of the *King's Mirror*.³⁶ Rather than following the allegory of the Four Daughters of God further through the centuries,³⁷ we need to return to St Victor in the twelfth century to find the model that most probably influenced the reception of the allegory in Norway.

Pierre la Mangeur (1100–1179), better known as Petrus Comestor, was initially a canon at the St Victor abbey and ended his career as chancellor at Notre Dame in Paris, in charge of the school of theology from 1164 to 1168.³⁸ It was in this capacity he wrote his famous biblical commentary *Historia Scholastica*, completed in 1171.³⁹ There was a close relationship between Notre Dame and St Victor,⁴⁰ and Petrus Comestor returned to the abbey in his later years, where he was buried in 1179. He left behind a number of sermons. Traver first discovered a sermon dealing with the Four Daughters of God after the acceptance of her dissertation, but included some information about it in the published version, since it was “so curious that it should not be omitted”.⁴¹ Molland finds two of Petrus Comestor's sermons to be relevant for the allegory's reception in Norway, in which the Daughters of God are presented as assisting God during the creation of man, and at the judgment of Man after the Fall. As punishment, the four virtues abandoned man, but then Mercy and Truth, and Justice and Peace were reunited with man through the sacrifice of Christ.⁴²

Molland concludes that the allegory of the Four Daughters of God found in the *King's Mirror* is in the tradition of Hugh of St Victor,⁴³ while yet stressing that it might

³⁴ Molland, “‘Guds fire døtre’ i Kongespeilet,” 41.

³⁵ Molland, “‘Guds fire døtre’ i Kongespeilet,” 42.

³⁶ Tveitane, “The ‘Four Daughters of God’ in the Old Norse King's Mirror,” 803–804. See also Traver, *Four Daughters of God*: 29–31.

³⁷ Molland, “‘Guds fire døtre’ i Kongespeilet,” 43–5.

³⁸ John W. Baldwin, *Masters, Princes and Merchants – The Social View of Peter the Chanter & His Circle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 156. Another prominent figure at Notre Dame, Peter Chanter, had extensive experience as a judge. There is no evidence that Peter Comestor did; Baldwin, *Masters, Princes and Merchants*, 7–9.

³⁹ Thomas E. Marston, “A thirteenth-century Manuscript of Comestor's *Historia Scholastica*,” *The Yale University Library Gazette* 30, no. 2 (1955): 60.

⁴⁰ Johnsen, “Om St. Viktorklosteret og Nordmennene,” 413.

⁴¹ Traver, *Four Daughters of God*, 17 n.13.

⁴² Molland, “‘Guds fire døtre’ i Kongespeilet,” 41–2.

⁴³ Molland, “‘Guds fire døtre’ i Kongespeilet,” 46–7.

be related to the allegory as presented by Petrus Comestor.⁴⁴ I do not follow Molland in his reasoning. In Hugh's version, the Four Daughters of God are virtues, whereas in the versions of Bernard of Clairvaux and Petrus Comestor, they are simultaneously virtues, sisters, and Daughters of God. With Hugh, the main characters are Truth and Mercy, while Justice and Peace play a secondary role. With Bernard of Clairvaux and Petrus Comestor, on the other hand, all four play an equally prominent role. If we return once again to Hugh's version, Truth and Mercy are in conflict with each other, while in Bernard of Clairvaux's version Truth and Justice are in conflict with Mercy and Peace. In Petrus Comestor's version, there is no conflict between any of them. While they represent different views, these views are part of a larger harmony and cause no controversy. Lastly, according to Hugh, harmony is established by God intervening in the conflict between the Four Daughters of God. In Bernard's version, harmony is established by Christ. In the version of Petrus Comestor, an effect of Christ's death and resurrection is also harmony, but this is not achieved by Christ personally.

Against this background, the most likely model for the allegory of the Four Daughters of God in the *King's Mirror* is not that of Hugh of St Victor, but the versions by Bernard of Clairvaux and Petrus Comestor. Of these two versions, the one by Petrus Comestor stresses the harmony between the Four Daughters of God, and hence most closely resembles the version in the *King's Mirror*. However, as stressed by Sverre Bagge, we must keep in mind that the "source may be some lost version, or he [the author of the *King's Mirror*] may have borrowed freely from one or more of the extant versions."⁴⁵ The fact that the allegory of the Four Daughters of God was either based on a model used by Petrus Comestor that is applied in no other context than the Norwegian one, or more freely composed in a Norwegian context, is of great interest. Its uniqueness may indicate that the application of the allegory in this specific context responded to a specific need. It may be conceived of as guidance for the king and his civil servants in their pursuit to fulfil the will of God. They were aware that one day they themselves would be judged according to the same standards that God had demanded of them when judging.⁴⁶ Not only the welfare of the realm, but their own salvation was also at stake.

The Four Daughters of God in a Norwegian Context

As we cannot know for certain what model the allegory of the Four Daughters of God in the *King's Mirror* was based on, we can also not be sure of how this model

⁴⁴ Molland, "Guds fire døtre' i Kongespeilet," 42, 46.

⁴⁵ Bagge, *The Political Thought of the King's Mirror*, 54. See also Tveitane, "The 'Four Daughters of God' in the Old Norse King's Mirror," 804.

⁴⁶ *King's Mirror*, 360.

came to exercise influence in a Norwegian context. However, we can still make reasonable conjectures.

All three Norwegian archbishops between 1161 and 1214 spent time at the abbey of St Victor.⁴⁷ Archbishop Eystein Erlendsson (c.1125–1188) visited St Victor in 1161, while Archbishop Eirik Ivarsson (c.1130–1205) and Tore Gudmundsson (c.1140–1214) had both been canons at the abbey. Eystein was at St Victor too early to have met Petrus Comestor there, and through him personally become acquainted with his sermons in which the Four Daughters of God appear. However, his two immediate successors as head of the archbishopric of Nidaros could very well have done so. It can be claimed as a likely scenario that a young Norwegian canon sought out the older and renowned Petrus Comestor at the abbey, copied a manuscript with the sermons for study, brought them home to the edge of Christendom, and as archbishop caused Petrus Comestor's sermons to be far more widespread than they otherwise would have been. However, we have to keep in mind that there is a series of other possibilities.

Firstly, Archbishop Eystein might have met Petrus Comestor in Paris during his stay at St Victor just outside the city walls. After all, Petrus was head of the school of theology at Notre Dame and a celebrated theologian and exegete. Secondly, St Victor was a place of learning not only for Norwegian archbishops, but for Scandinavian clergy in general. Others stopped by the abbey, like *magister Godefridus et magister Walterus* who travelled to Rome on behalf of the Norwegian archbishop in the late 1160s.⁴⁸ Hence, a whole series of persons may possibly have brought a manuscript with the sermons of Petrus Comestor to Norway. Thirdly, there were also several Norwegian laymen of high rank visiting St Victor in the late twelfth century. The sister of Archard (c.1100–1171), abbot at St Victor 1162–1171, was married to a Norwegian aristocrat, probably the governor Salmund Sigurdsson.⁴⁹ In a letter from the 1160s, she raises the issue that many Norwegians misuse the hospitality of the monastery by claiming friendship with her husband.⁵⁰ Either, Salmund himself, his wife, or son,⁵¹ or any of these unknown, parasitic guests may well have brought a manuscript with the sermons of Petrus Comestor to Norway, thereby making the allegory of the Four Daughters of God known here. Fourthly, we can imagine several persons, known and/or unknown, clergy and/or non-clergy, Norwegian and/or non-Norwegian, who in the second half of the twelfth century travelled to Norway with a manuscript containing the sermons of Petrus Comestor for a variety of purposes. Fifthly, it is also possible that no manuscript of Petrus Comestor's sermons was brought to Norway

⁴⁷ For the relations between Nidaros and St Victor, see Chapter 14 (Øystein Ekroll), 183.

⁴⁸ Johnsen, "Om St. Viktorklosteret og Nordmennene," 410; DN: 19, 46.

⁴⁹ Arne Odd Johnsen, "Om nordmenns studiereiser i middelalderen," in *Strejftog i kirkehistorien. Kirkehistorisk samfunn 40 år*, ed. Peder A. Eidberg, et al. (Oslo: Kirkehistorisk Samfunn, 1996), 56.

⁵⁰ Johnsen, "Om St. Viktorklosteret og Nordmennene," 409–10.

⁵¹ Johnsen, "Om St. Viktorklosteret og Nordmennene," 410.

at all, but that the allegory was instead transmitted orally, and later written down in Norway. This could explain why the allegory of the Four Daughters of God in the *King's Mirror* does not exactly resemble any other known version. However, the most likely scenario remains that either the archbishops Eirik Ivarsson or Tore Gudmundsson was the source of knowledge of the Four Daughters of God in the version of Petrus Comestor in Norway. Possible evidence in support of this hypothesis is some worn sculptures at the archbishop's cathedral at Nidaros.

As we have seen, the allegory of the Four Daughters of God was linked to the Fall of Man in the version of Petrus Comestor. The Fall of Man is also the main theme in the decorations of the south chancel porch at Nidaros Cathedral, usually dated to about 1225, and substantially researched by Margrete Syrstad Andås. This portrayal of the Fall of Man is far more elaborate than is usual in the Late Romanesque period, and Andås concludes that "[T]his must be considered a significant break with an otherwise very fixed tradition and it should therefore be taken to indicate a clear intention from the side of the Cathedral".⁵² Andås also finds on the south chancel porch not only a more elaborate portrayal of the Fall than usual, but also four worn figures that might be the Four Daughters of God (Figs. 23.1 and 23.2). The south chancel porch was a judgment porch, where a whole series of actions related to judgment (what we today would classify as judicial judgments) was carried out. Thus, in this porch and room for public action, you find both the story of the Fall of Man as well as a possible portrayal of the Four Daughters of God who witnessed the pact and participated in the judgment when the pact was violated.⁵³

The pictorial program of the south chancel porch is likely to have been commissioned, or at least sanctioned, by the archbishop. If the four worn figures actually represent the Four Daughters of God, the archbishop must have favoured the allegory and known of the role the Four Daughters of God played in the Fall of Man in Petrus Comestor's sermons. The south chancel porch was completed around 1225, and might have been ordered by Archbishop Tore Gudmundsson before his death in 1214. As we have seen above, he had been a canon at St Victor, possibly at the same time when Petrus Comestor had returned to the abbey of his youth. However, there is seemingly an element missing in the south chancel porch – in Petrus Comestor's version of the allegory, Christ restores the relation between the four virtues and man, yet he is absent in the cathedral's sculpted south portal. However, on the keystone in the vault above the scene of the Fall of Man and the worn figures that might be the Four Daughters of God, we find Christ. He holds a book in his left hand and raises his right. In each of the four corners of the vault is one of the four

⁵² Margarete Syrstad Andås, "Art and Ritual in the Liminal Zone," in *The Medieval Cathedral of Trondheim. Architectural and Ritual Constructions in their European Context*, ed. Margarete Syrstad Andås, et al., Ritus et Artes (Brepols: Turnhout, 2007), 98.

⁵³ Andås, "Art and Ritual in the Liminal Zone," 96, 105–11.



Fig. 23.2: Sculpture at the left jamb of the south chancel porch, c.1225, Nidaros Cathedral.

evangelists. The resurrected Christ from the sermons of Petrus Comestor, who restores the harmony, is guarding “the sacred law and [. . .] the holy judgments,” and makes the scene in the south chancel porch complete.

Before continuing, it should be noted that even if the version of Petrus Comestor was more suited for use in a judgment portal than the versions of Hugh of St Victor and Bernard of Clairvaux – because the judicial aspect was more prominent – it was nevertheless less suited than the versions of Stephen of Tournai and Robert Grosseteste. In both their versions, the legal aspect is a striking feature of the allegory. At the same time, none of the latter two were linked to the abbey of St Victor, the major source of learning for Norwegian clergy and others in the second half of the twelfth century. Of what was present in the intellectual discourse at St Victor, the version of Petrus Comestor seems to be the best choice for a judgment porch. This underlines the essence of the convoluted reception history of the Four Daughters of God we have now witnessed: it is likely that it travelled to the edge of

Christendom to serve a purpose, and that the role it came to play in Norwegian law and state formation was not by chance but intended.

The Four Daughters of God in a Judicial Context

As we have seen, the allegory of the Four Daughters of God originates in Psalm 85 (84). It was further developed in Jewish exegeses, then in a European-Christian tradition, before it travelled to Norway to be used in the judgment porch at Nidaros Cathedral in the 1220s, and then finally to become a textual image of the good judgment in the *King's Mirror* about 1250. The motives for choosing, reworking, and transmitting the image from Psalm 85 (84) have varied, and the allegory has served different purposes. However, in a Norwegian context the allegory primarily seemed to have served the purpose of illustrating good judgments.

An illustration of a poor judgment, not drawn from the stock of biblical imagery but rather from the legendary history of Themar in Ireland, was probably already well established in Norwegian intellectual life in the High Middle Ages. Themar – Tem, Temere⁵⁴ – in the *King's Mirror* is Tara/Temuir/Teamhrach/Teamhair, the legendary seat for the Irish high kings.⁵⁵ In the *King's Mirror* the story of the kingdom of Themar is applied twice – first in Part I, when the marvels of Ireland are dealt with,⁵⁶ and for a second time in Part III, when the theme is governance in general and adjudication in particular.⁵⁷ The essence of the story is that the otherwise just king makes himself guilty of injustice due to friendship and enmity. By this, he disturbs the whole world order, and his throne, his castle, and the very land in his realm is turned upside down, and the realm is deserted. We have to keep in mind that there was a close connection between Norway and Ireland for centuries until the beginning of the twelfth century. It is quite telling that in the *King's Mirror* there is a section on the wonders of Iceland, Greenland, and Ireland, which hence were counted as a part of the Norwegian cultural sphere. Accordingly, this made the transmission of the story of the misjudgement in Themar from an Irish to a Norwegian context quite natural. It is probably a version of a well-known story from the Irish book of law *Senchas Már*, where it is said that when King Fachtna Ulbrethach gave a false judgment, the fruit fell off the threes and the cows would not give milk.⁵⁸ It is also linked to the poem *Audacht Morainn*, in which

⁵⁴ *Konungs skuggsiá*: 24, 102, 04.

⁵⁵ Brage Thunestvedt Hatløy, “Den eldre Gulatingslova i komparativ kontekst. Eit materielt og rettskulturelt blikk på den eldre Gulatingslova i lys av irsk mellomalderrett og Frostatingslova” (Master Thesis, University of Bergen, 2016), 5; Meissner, “Der Sündenfall im norwegischen Königspiegel,” 280–1.

⁵⁶ *King's Mirror*, 113–5.

⁵⁷ *King's Mirror*, 308, 12, 14.

⁵⁸ Hatløy, “Den eldre Gulatingslova i komparativ kontekst,” 5.

the judge Morann teaches the prince the virtue of judging.⁵⁹ However, *Audacht Morainn* teaches the blessings of the right verdict rather than the course of the false verdict. However, despite the story of Themar being well established in Norwegian intellectual life in the High Middle Ages, it was not transmitted from the *King's Mirror* to the Code of 1274. Instead, it was the allegory of the Four Daughters of God that would serve a guide to the art of adjudication.

The allegory of the Four Daughters of God travelled a long way from the Psalms to the *King's Mirror*. However, as we have now seen, it also had to find its place next to an existing tradition on explaining the art of adjudication. The question then to be addressed is: what did the allegory have to offer that made it valuable? The thirteenth century was a period of restructuring of governance in the Norwegian realm after the civil wars between 1130 and 1217, after the abolition of slavery, which must have caused poverty and a vagabond problem, and after the breakdown of the kingship society, which must have caused a vacuum in regulation. At the same time, the dominating ideal image of the king was a king whose realm mirrored the heavenly order. To obtain a restructuring of governance that would please God, it had to be done by paying attention to the “the sacred law and [. . .] the holy judgments.” The story of Themar informed the king of what not to do. The allegory of the Four Daughters of God offered the king more positive guidance. And who could better guide the king than those who had assisted God himself when making the pact with Adam, establishing the governing rules – and when God judged Adam after the Fall, applying the governing rules?

Bringing the Four Daughters of God into the Norwegian realm and into the courtroom of ecclesiastical law, as is seen in the judgment porch at Nidaros Cathedral, would be getting halfway there. The Gelasian doctrine of the two swords is a particular theme in the *King's Mirror*. The separation of governing power between Church and King is explained by using the image of the two swords and an image of two staves.⁶⁰ However, most elaborate and original is the image of the two halls.⁶¹ In one hall, the bishop sits, and in the other the king has his high seat and judges in “temporal matters.”⁶² The author of the *King's Mirror* is far more concerned with the totality of power in governing the realm to the satisfaction of God, than with the border between ecclesiastical and royal power.⁶³ When the Four Daughters of God, a conventional ecclesiastical image both of judging and of the tool to pass good judgments, are brought into the *King's Mirror*, it would therefore

⁵⁹ Fergus Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 2001), 284; Fergus Kelly, “Introduction,” in *Audacht Morainn* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1976), XIII.

⁶⁰ Bagge, *The Political Thought of the King's Mirror*, 114–6.

⁶¹ Bagge, *The Political Thought of the King's Mirror*, 117.

⁶² *King's Mirror*, 258–9.

⁶³ *King's Mirror*, 364.

be necessary to ensure that “the sacred law and [. . .] the holy judgments” would govern the entire Norwegian realm, and not just the cases heard in the judgment porch of Nidaros Cathedral.

The Four Daughters of God in the Code of 1274

In general, Bagge finds that the treatment of law bears no evidence of the author of the *King’s Mirror* being a judicial *feinschmecker* (epicure).⁶⁴ The author’s legal insight does not extend much further than acknowledging the need for new and better law in the Norwegian realm. It is difficult to read Part III of the *King’s Mirror*, comprising almost half the manuscript, without getting that message.

As already mentioned above, the *King’s Mirror* was aimed at the princes and young aristocrats at court. Prince Haakon (1232–1257) fell ill and died in 1257. His 19-year-old brother Magnus stepped up and was crowned as King Magnus VI to rule together with his father, King Haakon IV (1204–1263). Up to this point in his life, Magnus might have had quite different plans, as the younger brother. He may even have been planning to spend his life in the hall opposite his brother’s hall before 1257. According to a Scottish chronicle, Magnus attended teaching at the Franciscan abbey in Bergen in his youth.⁶⁵ When King Magnus VI died in 1280, he was buried in the Franciscan church, of which he and his father had been patrons. In his testament, he gave donations to all the poor in his realm. His Code for the Norwegian Realm of 1274 is also concerned with the wellbeing of the poor, and his legislative project can be seen as an attempt to put God’s will into action in his Norwegian realm.⁶⁶ From the extant sources, King Magnus VI appears to have been a pious king with close connections to the Franciscans.⁶⁷ Under any circumstance, we must imagine that the allegory of the Four Daughters of God must have made an impression on him, because he put it in all of his Codes of law.

The *King’s Mirror* warns that a poorly governed realm will fall into chaos. It might be said that the story of the Fall of Man in the *King’s Mirror* is also the story of the fate of a realm governed by poor laws and morals. We have already seen the discussion on the disastrous consequences of “failure in the morals, the intelligence, or the counsels of those who are to govern the country” in Part II. We can imagine that the *King’s Mirror* was not only an instrument for teaching princes and

⁶⁴ Bagge, *The Political Thought of the King’s Mirror*, 66–8.

⁶⁵ Knut Helle, “Magnus 6 Håkonsson Lagabøte,” NBL.

⁶⁶ Jørn Øyrehagen Sunde, “Above the Law – Norwegian Constitutionalism with the Code of 1274,” in *Constitutionalism before 1789: Constitutional arrangements from the High Middle Ages to the French Revolution*, ed. Jørn Øyrehagen Sunde (Oslo: Pax, 2014), 165–70.

⁶⁷ Jørn Øyrehagen Sunde, “Kong Magnus VI Lagabøter og hospitalet i Stavanger,” *Stavanger Museums årbok* 126 (2017).

young aristocrats at court, but for preparing the ruling elite in general for the legislation to come that would prevent this kind of moral fall.

Legislation on a broad scale as an instrument of governance of all spheres of society was a new idea in the High Middle Ages. The first code issued for an entire realm in Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire was *Liber Augustalis* for Sicily in 1231, and the second was *Las Siete Partidas* for Castile in 1265.⁶⁸ The later King Magnus VI's sister, Kristina (1234–1262), married Prince Felipe of Castile (1231–1274) in 1258. About 100 persons from the Norwegian court travelled to Castile with the princess in the fall of 1257, and could there witness the ongoing legislation. King Alfonso X (1221–1284) had, as part of the preparation for the new code, issued *Especulo* and *Senearia*, where the concepts behind the legislative activity was explained.⁶⁹

Whether Part III of the *King's Mirror* was inspired by the Castilian *Especulo* and *Senearia*, or if it just coincidentally served the same purpose in the Norwegian legislative project of the 1260s and 1270s, we cannot know. However, the legislative activity in Norway must have started about the time the members of court returned from Castile: King Haakon IV died in 1264, but King Magnus VI treats his father as co-legislator in the Code of 1274.⁷⁰ The Code of 1274 was based on the regional codes made for the four Norwegian legal provinces in 1267–1269, and the Icelandic Code of 1271 called *Jarnsiða*. The four regional codes have been lost, after they were replaced by the Code of 1274. However, a copy of *Jarnsiða* still exists. In this manuscript, the allegory of the Four Daughters of God comes first in a lengthy provision on how to judge. Since *Jarnsiða* was a part of the same legislative project as the regional codes, the allegory might have marked the beginning of these law books as well.

In the Code of 1274, in the Code of the Norwegian Cities of 1276, and in the Icelandic Code of 1281 called *Jónsbók*, the allegory of the Four Daughters of God was included in a provision in the book regarding what today is classified as crime and tort.⁷¹ However, the content of the provision is general and regards adjudication in all kinds of cases. Hence, in most of the 39 copies preserved from the Middle Ages of the Code of 1274, the provision is given a title that ties it to all judgments. It starts with a demand on judges: they should investigate (*mæta*) the case carefully, because God will punish the judge who misjudges, especially the one who judges too strictly:

There are sufficient examples that God has avenged harshly because they have judged too leniently, and even more severely because they have judged too strictly. And that is why the

⁶⁸ Jørn Øyrehagen Sunde, "Daughters of God and counsellors of the judges of men – a study in changes in the legal culture in the Norwegian realm in the High Middle Ages," in *New Approaches to Early Law in Scandinavia*, ed. S. Brink and L. Collinson, Acta Scandinavia (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 134–5.

⁶⁹ Sunde, "Daughters of God," 133–4.

⁷⁰ Sunde, "Magnus Lagabøtes Landslov," SNL.

⁷¹ Sunde, "Above the Law," 131–2.

judges should choose to be mild if they can, because it is difficult to strike the right balance.⁷²

The harsher a punishment, the more important it is to consult the Four Daughters of God, referred to in the Code of 1274 as the ‘Sisters’:

But the more difficult it is, the more blessed are those who manage to please the four sisters, who shall be present in all just judgments that delight God and seem well measured to man.⁷³

Each of the Four Daughters have a separate task when it comes to guiding the judges:

This is Mercy and Truth, Justice and Peace. Mercy shall guard the judgment from anger and hatred. Truth shall see to it that lies are not told. Justice shall see to it that the judgment is not imbalanced by injustice. The task of Peace is to hold back so that a too rash and harsh judgment does not corrupt justice.⁷⁴

But the provisions do not operate only with the Four Daughters of God guiding the judge, but also with equally as many bastards (*horbornum*), which are Fear, Greed, Hate, and Friendship:

And to guard against misjudgements, one must be familiar with the pitfalls, and keep in mind that there are four reasons for false judgments. Either they are made of fear – if one fears the one on trial, or of greed – if one takes bribes, or of hatred – if one hates the one on trial, or of friendship to assist those one is in company with.⁷⁵

The provision is not intended to be only of a symbolic character. The last section reads:

That is why it is best if this chapter is read aloud when a sentence is to be passed in a major case.⁷⁶

72 The translation here and in the following footnotes is my own. The original text reads: “Finnazt oc nog dōme til þerss at þeir hafa lotet harðar hemdir af guðj er van dōmt hafa en þo hinir harðare er of dōmt hafa oc þui skal domen hueruítma til hins bætra fōra at þeir vita iam vist hvarveggia þui at allmíot er mundangs hof”, ms Holm Perg 34 4to (*Landslog Magnúss Hákonarsonar*), fol. 28v.

73 The original text reads: “en þui miorra sem er þa ero þeir þui sælle er suo fa høft þeira ííí systra hofe sem J ollum rettom domom eigu at uera suo at guði likar en monum høfer,” ms Holm Perg 34 4to (*Landslog Magnúss Hákonarsonar*), fol. 28v.

74 The original text reads: “En þat er Miskum oc Sannynddi Retvisi Friðsem Miskum a at va razt at eigi kome grimd eða hæipt J doma Sannvnddi a at gøyma at eigi verði lygi fram boren Rettvisi a at varazt at eigi verði með rangyndum hallat rettom dome. Friðsemj a at varð ueita þar til er retrr domr fællr a at eigi verði með reiðj akafr afellis domr alagðr,” ms Holm Perg 34 4to (*Landslog Magnúss Hákonarsonar*).

75 The original text reads: “En at menn varezt þui meirr ranga doma þa ma varlla illt varazt nema víti oc þui minizt menn a at með fíorom hattom verða ranger domar Annat hvart með rætzllo at menn ottazt þann er hann skal dōma vm Elligar með fegirnþ þar sem maðr sinkir til nockor rar mutu eða með hæift þar sem maðr hatar þann er hann skal dōma vm eða með vinatto þar sem maðr vill væita lið felaga sinum,” ms Holm Perg 34 4to (*Landslog Magnúss Hákonarsonar*), fol. 28v–29r.

76 The original text reads: “oc er æ þui bætr er þersse capituli er optar lesen þar sem vm stor mal skal dōma”, ms Holm Perg 34 4to (*Landslog Magnúss Hákonarsonar*), fol. 29r.

We have no evidence of the actual reading aloud of the provision. However, this part is not missing in any of the preserved 39 medieval manuscripts of the Code of 1274, which might indicate reading aloud was an undisputed part of the Code. In more than 70 of the about 220 chapters in the Code of 1274 there is a reference to a more open-ended judgment that should be made. The need for guidance in this is already great, made even greater by demanding that judges should not follow the black letter of the Code when it was too strict or too lenient, but should pass a judgment that would be just in the eyes of God:

The judges are appointed to measure cases and misdeeds, and to temper the sentence according to the circumstances, as the men at the *ting* and the person providing justice finds most truthful in the face of God and their own conscience. And not, as has been stated by the fool, that they judge only according to law.⁷⁷

The central role of open-ended law can be claimed to have been present already prior to 1274, where negotiation played a central role in Norwegian law. The new element is the guidance offered with the allegory of the Four Daughters of God. At the same time, it has to be admitted that the description of the role of the Four Daughters of God when passing a judgment is vague, and one might wonder how much guidance they gave in actual practice. However, let us look at a specific case, a provision on repayment of debt for example. According to the Code of 1274 VIII-5, a poor person who loses all his property by fire or shipwreck or another kind of accident shall pay his debt when God makes him able to do so. However, how does the judge decide what ‘another’ accident [*oðrum misfellum*] is, or when God will have made the debtor able to repay his debt [*guð ler honom efni til*]? Let us imagine that a river has flooded the fields of the debtor and left it covered by sand and stone. Truth would then state that covering fields is not the same as the total destruction of a fire or a shipwreck. Mercy would state that a flood of this kind deprives a man of his income in exactly the same way. Justice would state that the creditor’s well-being and prosperity is dependent on the repayment of the debt. And Peace would end the exchange of arguments by stating that a too hasty repayment of the debt would devastate the debtor, leave him a poor beggar who in the end could easily resort to crime, and hence disturb the peace which all in society benefit from, including the creditor. In this way, the judge would acquire four coordinates with which to navigate in the specific case. When consideration of all four virtues was made, the judgment would represent harmony between Truth, Mercy, Justice, and Peace.

⁷⁷ The original text reads: “En þui er domren til nemdr at þa skal ranzsaka oc meta saker oc misgermingar oc tempra suo domen eptir mala voxtum sem þing menn oc ret· taren sia sannazt firir guði eptir síni samvizku En eigi sem margr snapr hefir svarat her til at þeir dōma ecki annat en log þui at sanlega skulu þeir þui firir suara sem log,” ms Holm Perg 34 4to (*Landslog Magnúss Hákonarsonar*), fol. 28v.

This was an ambitious aim, and not met in all cases. However, we have reason to believe that the Code of 1274 was widespread and enjoyed high esteem, because around 1350 there might have been as many as one manuscript of the Code per 1150 inhabitants in the Norwegian realm. With the Code of 1274, the allegory of the Four Daughters of God was also communicated. If they were actually consulted in all judgments, the idea was that it would unleash God's blessing rather than his wrath, and promote the building of Jerusalem in Norway's green and pleasant land.



Fig. 24.1: Altar shrine with St Erik of Sweden (to the right) and St Olav of Norway (to the left), mid-fifteenth century. Noticeably, the scenes from the two saints' lives depicted on the wings correspond with each other; the two royal martyrs are construed as saints of the same kind. From Länna Church, Sweden. Statens historiska museer, Stockholm.

Biörn Tjällén

Chapter 24

Zion in the North: Jerusalem and the Late Medieval Histories of Uppsala

The clergy of Uppsala referred to the site of their cathedral as the Mountain of the Lord, *mons Domini*. This is a curious place name, and it raises questions about how the Uppsala clergy thought and talked about their church and its role in the Swedish nation. The name referred to the topographical fact that the church was built on a ridge that raised it above the surrounding plains. But it was also a biblical topos – *mons Domini* was a synonym of Zion and thus a reference to a whole set of ideas about the relations between God, man and human society. This chapter, however, suggests that the *mons Domini* place name was only one expression of a broader discursive development: in the self-fashioning of the Swedish archdiocese, two cities that were historically and geographically separated – Jerusalem and Uppsala – were becoming discursively entangled.

The following pages trace the development of the Zion motif in three texts that evince this self-fashioning of the Uppsala institution: the versified office for St Erik, king and martyr (compiled in the late thirteenth century)¹; the versified office for the so-called patrons of the realm (c.1474)²; and the first national history of Sweden, the *Chronica regni Gothorum* (c.1471).³ They are all historiographical texts – the fact that two of them were hagiographies does not change the fact that they describe the history of the Swedish realm. They are all from the cathedral of Uppsala. And finally, they all use the motif of Jerusalem – or its metonymy, Zion – to merge the Swedish history of Uppsala with the universal history of salvation.

¹ *The Historia of St. Erik: King and Martyr, and Patron Saint of Sweden*, ed. Ann-Marie Nilsson, Bromma: Reimers, 2000. Nilsson's edition reconstructs the liturgy for St Erik, including the *vita* and other readings, the poetic parts of the versified office and musical notation, as this ensemble would have appeared towards the end of the thirteenth century.

² The text is edited in Sven Helander, *Ansgarskulten i Norden* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1989), 259–65.

³ The text is edited in *Ericus Olai. Chronica regni Gothorum. Textkristische Ausgabe*, ed. Ella Heuman and Jan Öberg, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1993.

St Erik: Rex, Martyr and Builder of Zion

Major Christian feasts were celebrated universally, and the Psalms, which formed the core of the Divine office, were the same everywhere as well. The calendar of the saints, however, varied significantly between dioceses. Cults of historical individuals from the locality served to bring the great Christian mysteries closer to home and allowed distinct traditions and identities to develop. In the cult of Swedish saints, clerics could express how God intervened in the history of their own realm. And no cult was more significant in this respect than that of St Erik, the twelfth-century *rex et martyr* who became one of the most prominent saints of Sweden's later Middle Ages.⁴ As a royal saint, the discourse on Erik described two roles: that of a Swedish king who ruled his people, and that of a saint who succoured them. It rolled out two types of history: the history of salvation and the history of the Swedish realm. In the texts for Erik, these multiple roles and histories – celestial and terrestrial – had to be conjoined and reconciled into one single narrative. The motif of Zion was a versatile narrative device that helped achieve this unity.

Erik was one of three Scandinavian kings who were venerated as saints in the Middle Ages. Compared to Norway's St Olav (d. 1030) and Denmark's St Knud (d. 1086), St Erik was a latecomer.⁵ He was killed c.1160, and extant calendars attest that veneration begun in the Uppsala diocese before the end of that century. The establishment of a new native and royal cult fit well with the needs of Uppsala at this time. In 1164, the rather peripheral church was made the metropolitan church of a new Swedish province, more or less independent from the former archbishopric of Danish Lund.⁶ A Swedish royal cult would manifest prestige, attract donations and hence support Uppsala in its new-found position of ecclesiastical leadership. The initiative to disinter the dead king and promote his veneration must have had support from his dynasty; with all likelihood, Knut Eriksson, who was Erik's son, heir and ruler from 1167–1195/96, was an enthusiastic supporter.⁷ However, no proper texts survive from these early days of the cult. Erik's *vita* and versified office are products of the second half of the thirteenth century.⁸ At this second stage of cult development, the Uppsala church and Erik's relics were transferred from its old site to a new location, and a new cathedral built on an elevated ridge overlooking the

⁴ For a recent overview of the cult development, see Christian Oertel, *The Cult of St Erik in Medieval Sweden: Veneration of a Royal Saint, Twelfth–Sixteenth Centuries* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016).

⁵ For medieval royal saints in general and Scandinavian royal saints in particular, see Chapters 5 and 14 (Øystein Ekroll), 86–93 and 270–98.

⁶ The archbishop of Lund would have the right to consecrate the Swedish archbishop elect, but this practice was soon contested by the Swedes.

⁷ Ingrid Lundegårdh, "Kampen om den norrländske Olavskulten," in *Helgonet i Nidaros. Olavskult och kristnande i Norden*, ed. Lars Rumar (Stockholm: Riksarkivet, 1997).

⁸ Nilsson provides an account of the coming into being and potential authors of the texts, *Historia of St. Erik*, 16–22.

river Fyris. The place name, Uppsala, was transferred as well. The first phase of the cult had been supported by Knut Eriksson, and this second phase had the support from the royal dynasty of Bjällbo, who were heirs on their maternal side of the old dynasty of Erik.⁹

Erik's versified office is the product of the ecclesiastical milieu around Uppsala. And Uppsala, including both the old and the new sites of the cathedral, is the centre stage for the historical events that these texts describe. According to the *vita*, it was in Uppsala that St Erik was elected king, that he enacted his important deeds as ruler, and that he was martyred.¹⁰ But behind the surface of this rather provincial historical stage, the readers and singers that performed and attended the liturgy of Erik would catch a glimpse of a city much more splendid. By the means of a considered set of scriptural allusions, the author or authors of the proper texts made the mud and masonry of Uppsala refract Zion. How exactly was this done, and what type of relation between Uppsala and Jerusalem did the authors imply?

The main account for Erik's life, his *vita* or legend, was intoned in short passages at the canonical hour of Matins on his feast days. It presents a straightforward narrative of events that take place in Uppsala. However, after only a few readings, these events are paralleled with similar occurrences in Jerusalem. The author established this link to Biblical history with the conventional statement that King Erik imitated the holy kings of the Old Testament. While the *vita* presents three chief areas of Erik's activity as a ruler – law-making, crusading and building a church in Uppsala – it appears to rate his generosity to Uppsala the highest. If Erik was anything like the holy kings of the Old Testament, then, it was primarily because he contributed to the church:

He followed the examples set by the holy kings of the Old Testament. First by the construction of churches and by the renewal and augmentation of the divine service . . . First and foremost, by the means of great and painstaking work, he endeavoured with care to complete the Uppsala church, which had been founded and built up a bit by the kings of old, who were his forefathers, and to station ministers there for the divine service.¹¹

Erik followed the example of Old Testament kings. But which king or kings did he imitate? A reader versed in Scripture would probably come to think of Solomon and his building of the temple. But if the reader did not catch this reference right away,

⁹ Lundegårdh, "Kampen om den norrländske Olavskulten," 118–26.

¹⁰ Whether the account of the *vita* and the rest of the office is historically accurate in its description of Erik and his reign is a different matter entirely, and will not be discussed in this chapter.

¹¹ "Imitatus namque sanctorum veteris testamenti regum exempla. Primo ad edificacionem ecclesiarum et divini cultus reparacionem ac ampliacionem . . . Nam upsalensem ecclesiam ab antiquis regibus suis scilicet progenitoribus fundatam et aliquantulum edificatam primo et pre ceteris aggrediens ac ministros divini cultus inibi ponens opero pregrandi et laborioso sollicitè studuit consummare." *Historia of St. Erik*, 127. All translations in this chapter are my own.



Fig. 24.2: Uppsala Cathedral. Detail of woodcut by Olof Rudbeck. Illustration in Olof Rudbeck's *Atlantica*, 1679. Upplandsmuseet, Sweden.

he was prodded to do so by the explicit references that were made in the proper texts of the versified office, in the hymns, responsories, antiphons and capitula. These texts were made to intersperse the readings of the Psalms, which constituted the bulk of the divine office, but they also functioned as commentary and a clarification, a sort of exegesis, which brought out the spiritual significance of the historical account of the *vita*. Most significant in this respect was the capitulum, which was read for Vespers and Lauds. The text derived from the Wisdom of Solomon (*Sapientia*), and concerns temple building. Solomon speaks:

You Lord have chosen me to be the king of your people and judge of your sons and daughters, and told me to build a temple on your holy mountain, and in the city where you dwell an altar, like to the holy tabernacle that you had prepared from the beginning.¹²

The capitulum was there to remind the reader that Erik's church building in Uppsala was not an isolated event: Solomon – king of God's chosen people – was called to build a temple on the Lord's holy mount (*in monte sancto tuo*). It was followed by a hymn that continued to stress the likeness between Erik and Solomon in their cares for their respective institutions of worship: "Like peaceful Solomon, the magnificent king [Erik] multiplied the ministers for the divine service and rebuilt the temple."¹³

The historical account of the *vita* referred explicitly to Erik as a church builder in twelfth-century Uppsala. But in the liturgy, this story came wrapped in hymns and readings that alerted the reader not just to the specific parallel of Solomon and Jerusalem's temple, but also to the fact that the story could be read in many ways.

¹² The text used as capitulum was Sap 9:7–8. "Tu domine elegisti me regem populo tuo et iudicem filiorum tuorum et filiarum et dixisti aedificare templum in monte sancto tuo et in civitate habitationis tuae aram similitudinem tabernaculi sancti tui quod praeparasti ab initio." *Historia of St. Erik*, 134.

¹³ "Ministros rex magnificus / cultus Dei multiplicat / ut Salomon pacificus / et templa reedificat." *Historia of St. Erik*, 47.

The authors of this poetry were adept in biblical exegesis, and they expected their readers to interpret accordingly. They were used to search for the eschatological, moral or allegorical significance that lay hidden under the literal or historical surface of a text,¹⁴ and to identify typological relations that may seem far-fetched to a modern reader.¹⁵ To the medieval readers, a wide array of allegorical meanings of the building of the Jewish temple were possible, but in the specific context of St Erik's *vita* the building of the temple foreshadows the spread of the church. Erik's office celebrates the spread of the church in the specific institutional guise of Uppsala. It was a liturgy that established a figurative or typological connection between Solomon and Erik and Jerusalem and Uppsala, one city and one king foreshadowing the other. But what does this tell us about how the Uppsala clergy thought of themselves and their church?

St Erik rebuilt the old cathedral church in Uppsala, but he was martyred at a different location, after hearing mass in a parish church called Holy Trinity nearby. It was there that he was overpowered and beheaded by his enemies and thus, according to the *vita*, “chang[ed] his temporal realm for that of heaven.”¹⁶ As mentioned above, by the time that St Erik's *vita* was compiled in the thirteenth century, the old Uppsala cathedral had been abandoned and a new cathedral built at the site of the parish church near the place of Erik's death. The fact that Uppsala was used as a name for two consecutive sites is confusing for modern readers, and an aside in the *vita* indicates that medieval readers found it puzzling too. Right at the peripeteia of Erik's martyrdom in the narrative, the author felt the need to clarify the exact location of the event:

And on that day, he [Erik] attended mass in the church of the Holy Trinity, at what is called Our Lord's mountain [*monte qui dicitur domini*], where the cathedral now is established.¹⁷

It must have been a particular moment, each year, when this passage was intoned in the cathedral. Erik's death had happened right there, near the *mons Domini*, the Lord's Mountain, where the celebrants read and sang to his glory. The new Uppsala

14 Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale: les quatre sens de l'écriture*, vol. 1 (Paris: Éditions Mouton, 1959).

15 Dennis P. Quinn, “Typology/Figura,” in *International Encyclopaedia for the Middle Ages-Online. A Supplement to LexMA-Online* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006).

16 “Sique ille de bello ad pacem victor transiens: regnum terrenum in celeste feliciter commutavit.” Here, another hymn comments on the death, with yet a reference to Old Testament kingship, but also to Zion: Erik is a “novus David”, who dies manly and enters holy Zion. From heaven he shall rule in triumph and come to the aid of many people. *Historia of St. Erik* 2000: 62. “Novus David viriliter / agens dum mundo moritur / sanctam Sion feliciter / regnatus ingreditur. / Victor regnans in ethere / magnis fulgens miraculis / miro virtutum munere / multis succurrit populis.” *Historia of St. Erik*, 129.

17 “Cumque illa die in ecclesia sancte trinitatis in monte qui dicitur Domini vbi nunc metropolitana fundata est ecclesia missarum sollempniis interesset . . .” *Historia of St. Erik*, 128.

cathedral was indeed built on a ridge that accentuates its prominence in the landscape even today. But the new epithet for this hill, the *mons Domini*, was a curious blend of place name and biblical topos. As synonym of Zion, the Lord's Mountain, or the Mountain of God, or the Holy Mountain, appears ubiquitously in the Psalms, which were read throughout the week in the divine office and therefore always familiar, and in the prophets. It appears in the passage from Wisdom of Solomon that was read at Erik's feast, where it forged a link between events in the Bible and events in Uppsala. And at least by the late thirteenth century, *mons Domini* was present right there at the ecclesiastical city on the hill. It is an interesting name. It indicates that the exegetical habits of figurative thinking and allegorical reading had rubbed off on the local topography and ecclesiastical institution.

Patrons of a Swedish Zion

By the mid fifteenth century, the cult of St Erik had changed character, from a local Uppsala concern to a high-ranking feast in all Swedish dioceses. Also, the artistic renditions of the saint had changed: he now appeared armed and iron clad, and he fronted the seal of the realm as a Swedish *rex perpetuus*. The context that explains this transformation was the national political mobilization from the 1430s that came with the strife and intermittent ruptures of the personal union between Denmark, Norway and Sweden.¹⁸ With the battle of Brunkeberg in 1471, Sweden effectively withdrew from the union, though a definite break would not come until the 1520s. The path of independence was echoed in the nation's cult life. In 1474, Uppsala introduced another high-ranking feast to be celebrated in the whole Swedish province. It was devoted to a group of saints who were considered the special patrons of the realm, and included Erik, but was spearheaded by the first missionary, St Ansgar.

The theme of the versified office for this *festum patronorum regni Suecie* is the fulfilment of the history of salvation through the mission and conversion of the remote Swedish nation. In the texts for St Erik, the image of Jerusalem's temple had served as a narrative bridge that linked the history of Uppsala to the greater story-world of salvation. The office for the patron saints does not mention Uppsala by name, though it is argued below that this particular location was implied. What is certain is that author of the office made consistent use of the motif of Jerusalem, and more particularly Zion, to frame the history of the nation within the history of salvation.

Hans Helander, who edited this "national anthem of the medieval Swedish liturgy," remarked that the text, in fact, pays little attention to the biographies of the

¹⁸ Nils Ahnlund, "Den nationella och folkliga Erikskulten," in *Erik den Helige: historia – kult – relikier*, ed. Bengt Thordeman (Stockholm: Nordisk rotogravyr, 1954).

patrons. Compared to the Office of St Erik, the office of the patrons is an institutional history focused on the church and the salvation of the nation. Instead of biographies, it presents a set of more general motifs that relate the narrative of salvation. Thus, it presents Sweden as the lost sheep, and it depicts a Sweden summoned to the great heavenly banquet in the eleventh hour; but, as Helander would note, most important for the telling of this story was the motif of Zion.¹⁹ Three antiphons in the office hone in on the progression of salvation through time and space.²⁰ They describe an expanding movement, from Zion and the Jewish people in the middle of the world to the peoples of the north who arrive late and meet up in the end:

Ant. 4. The king of the heavens chose the middle of the world [to be] incarnate and living on earth. Once salvation was wrought, he spread the benefits from there to those living in foreign lands.²¹

Ant. 5. From Zion, the law and the word of the Lord issued forth, so that gradually the gentiles are won for his name.²²

Ant. 6. From the far north the totality of the nations arrives with saints and patrons. Salvation, born among the Jews, was spread afar, bestowing the gift of life.²³

The antiphons provide an historical account of the expansion of the church, in the sense that they describe a development over time. However, this is a history that has been foretold. When antiphon 5 declares that the “law and the word” of the Lord has spread from Zion to Sweden, this is not only a historical description but a statement that the prophesy of Isaiah has been fulfilled.²⁴ It is a story of the expansion of the church from Zion to foreign lands; but it unfolds within the meta-history of salvation, and in this larger narrative, Jerusalem is the origin but also the end, as the Heavenly Jerusalem. This last idea is expressed by a responsory that envisions how Zion is founded and ornamented with the help of the Swedish patrons:

¹⁹ Helander, *Ansgarskulten i Norden*, 183, 226.

²⁰ Helander, *Ansgarskulten i Norden*, 226, 61.

²¹ My prose translations of these liturgical poems aim to account for their central narrative content. Inevitably the result are texts that, at best, approximate their originals. “Rex celorum incarnatus / et in mundo conuersatus / elegit terre medium; / hic, salutem operatus, / ad extremos incolatus / diffudit beneficium.” Helander, *Ansgarskulten i Norden*, 261.

²² “Dum de Syon lex exiuit / verbumque vocis domini / succesiuè acquisiuit / gentes suo nomini.” Helander notes a parallel with Isaiah, Cf. Is. 2:3. “. . . quia de Sion exhibit lex et verbum Domini de Hierusalem”. Helander, *Ansgarskulten i Norden*, 261.

²³ “Ab extremis aquilonis / intrat, sanctis cum patronis, / plenitudo gentium; / salus ex Iudeis nata / ad extremos dilatata, / vite confert premium.” Helander, *Ansgarskulten i Norden*, 261.

²⁴ Helander notes the parallel with Is a 2:3. “. . . quia de Sion exhibit lex et verbum Domini de Hierusalem”. Helander, *Ansgarskulten i Norden*, 184.

Resp. Zion, founded with saphire and jasper, and ornamented by Christ with the glorious men who have fought for him.²⁵

Which Zion is built and where? This is liturgical poetry and not historical prose, and the meaning is vague and may allow for multiple interpretations. The gemstones in the description bring the Heavenly Jerusalem to mind,²⁶ in contrast to the historical Jerusalem that is the concern of the previous antiphons. But the responsory is not just about the above and beyond. It speaks about the contribution made by saints active in Sweden. Hans Helander argued that the office of the patrons was to be taken quite literally, as an expression of the patriotism and institutional pride that was characteristic of the Swedish archdiocese at this time. The office, then, declared that through the works of the patrons a Zion had been built in Sweden. This Swedish Zion followed the example of the historical Zion and would be fulfilled in the heavenly Jerusalem. But what about Uppsala? The poem does not say, though Helander considered it likely that it implied a lead role for the Uppsala cathedral.²⁷ Fortunately, we have a third and final text from Uppsala, and one that is more explicit about how the clergy at the Swedish diocese talked and thought about the relationship between their own cathedral and Jerusalem.

The Zion of the *regni Gothorum*

The author of the office for the Swedish patrons was unknown until Hans Helander remarked that the motif of Zion was also prominent in another historiographical text written about the same time by a canon in Uppsala, Ericus Olai (d. 1486): *Chronica regni Gothorum*.²⁸ This was the first major national history of Sweden, and it was completed after the Brunkeberg battle in 1471, which means that if Ericus was indeed also the author of the office for the patrons, he worked on the two texts at the same time, or he had recently brought his magisterial history to a close when he addressed the theme of the conversion and the early missionaries and saints. As can be expected, there are great generic differences between the *Chronica* and the office for the patrons, but they are both, in their respective ways, histories of the realm, and they have, as Helander noted, one significant motif in common: both

²⁵ “Fundans Syon in saphiris, / propugnansque iaspidibus / gloriosis ornat viris / Christus pro se certantibus.” Helander, *Ansgarskulten i Norden*, 226.

²⁶ Cf. Rev 21:19.

²⁷ Helander, *Ansgarskulten i Norden*, 226.

²⁸ Helander 1989, *Ansgarskulten i Norden*: 229. Some of the following can be found in Biörn Tjällén, *Church and Nation: The Discourse on Authority in the Chronica regni Gothorum* (Stockholm: Stockholm University, 2007).

use Zion as a narrative device to connect the particular history of the realm with the broader sweep of the history of salvation.

The *Chronica regni Gothorum* is a national history in the sense that it recounts the history of the Swedish realm from its origins until the time of the text's composition. For a story of this kind it has a curious introduction. It does not start with a description of the country or of its first king. Instead, it begins with a dense paragraph that asserts the universal social order: Ericus explains that the church (that is, the social body at large) is divided into laity and clergy, and that the government of this body is shared between spiritual and temporal authorities.²⁹ He then proceeds with a brief account of the spread of the church, from its foundation in Jerusalem, where both priestly and royal authority were present, to Uppsala, a northern seat of bishops and kings.³⁰ These first pages of the *Chronica* are illustrative of the level of learning and the social and political attitudes in existence at the Uppsala cathedral, but they are heavy reading and hard to account for in modern prose. It is perhaps no surprise that later editors sometimes ignored them.³¹ In this prologue, Ericus proceeded as a theologian rather than as an historian.³² The text is heavy with references to Scripture and frequently interrupted by an authorial voice preoccupied with Biblical exegesis.

"The prophet reminds us," Ericus says with a reference to Psalm 86, "that the church militant was founded on holy mountains."³³ This psalm of course said nothing about the church, but it was common to interpret it as if it did; the *Glossa ordinaria* suggested that the "holy mountains" could refer to the apostles.³⁴ But Ericus explicitly rejects this manner of interpreting which sought to uncover a deeper and "mystical" meaning of the text [*sensu quodam mistico*]. He preferred an approach

29 *Ericus Olai*, I,1–3; Tjällén, *Church and Nation*, 57–64.

30 The bulk of this narrative, save the more detailed account about Uppsala, covers no more than one and a half page in the modern edition, at *Ericus Olai*, I,1–23.

31 The omission of these sections from the early modern prints of the *Chronica* was also a result of their Catholicism and hierocratic tenor, as discussed in Biörn Tjällén, "The Spiritual and Temporal Office of the King: Confessional Anxieties in the Seventeenth-Century Editions of the *Chronica regni Gothorum*," in *Hortus troporum: florilegium in honorem Gvillae Iversen*, ed. Erika Kihlman and Alexander André (Stockholm: Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, 2008).

32 On Ericus's education, career, theological works and teaching, see Tjällén, *Church and Nation*, 30–5.

33 "Fundamenta vero militantis ecclesie in montibus sanctis propheta rememorans . . ." *Ericus Olai* 1993: I, 4. Cf. Ps 86:1. "Fundamenta eius in montibus sanctis / diligit Dominus portas Sion / super omnia tabernacula Iacob / gloriosa dicta sunt de te civitas Dei." The similarity was suggested by the editor, *Ericus Olai Chronica regni Gothorum II: Prolegomena und Indices*, ed. Jan Öberg, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1995.

34 *Glossa ordinaria*: Psalmus LXXXVI: "Basilii & Theodoretus . . . Montes vero sancti supra quos fundamenta iecit, Salvatoris nostri sunt Apostoli."

that he considered more literal [*sensu accipi literali*].³⁵ When God said “here I will dwell, for I have chosen it” (Ps 131:14), it meant just that: God chose the physical location of Mount Zion. Jerusalem was in the middle of the world [*in medio terre*], and it was there that the Lord appeared to mediate between God and man and to work salvation.³⁶ Focusing on the historical/literal aspects of this place, Ericus also noted another significant feature: by God’s decree, the holy city of Jerusalem was a seat of both priestly and royal power. If the psalm, then, had prophesied that the church militant would be founded on holy mountains and Zion was the first of these mountains, surely the topographical and institutional features that pertained to this location were significant. Ericus’s conclusion was that when God spread the church from this point of origin, he did so by multiplying the features of Zion, which was his dwelling place, all over the world.³⁷ That meant that prominent places (hilly or perhaps in other respects notable) that housed priestly and royal authorities had a particular role to play. And with their function as a new Zions came the place name: “God preordained that every distinguished place where episcopal and royal government [. . .] would be assembled should take on the name of Zion.”³⁸

Ericus’s procedure is exegetical and his account of the spread of the church militant is essentially a story about the spread of salvation. But it is not ahistorical; it is chronological and focused on the expansion of the church as an institution. Ericus identified the old and the new law as two great phases in this history, and God had chosen Jerusalem and Rome as the respective and consecutive centres of these phases.³⁹ The choice of Rome was providential, because the fact that the empire had gathered all realms under the rule of one facilitated the progress of salvation.⁴⁰ The early expansion of the church was the story of proselytising apostles like Peter.⁴¹ But

35 Ericus might have been influenced by Nicholas of Lyra (d. 1349), author of the *Postilla litteralis super totam Bibliam* that accompanied the *Glossa ordinaria* in late medieval Bibles. Lyra championed the *duplex sensus litteralis*, according to which there could be a Jewish sense and a Christian sense of one and the same passage, very different from one another but both equally literal. This meant, for instance, that the literal sense of the Song of songs was not necessarily that it was a poem about carnal love, but about “desire for supernatural felicity.” See Mary Dove, “Literal Senses in the Song of Songs,” in *Nicholas of Lyra. The senses of Scripture*, ed. Philip D.W. Krey and Lesley Smith (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 129–30 and literature there referred to. Lyra’s comment about the “holy mountains” in Ps 86, however, differs from Ericus’s interpretation; Lyra says that the mountains refer to Sion and Tabor, where Christ preached or taught, etcetera.

36 Cf. *Prelude*, 5.

37 *Ericus Olai*, I, 5–7.

38 “‘Hic’, inquit, ‘habitabo, quoniam elegi eam’, vt Syon nomine omnis locus accipiatur insignis, in quo episcopalia gubernacula et regalia moderamina . . . collocanda sunt, Deus prouiderat ordinanda.” *Ericus Olai*, I, 6.

39 *Ericus Olai*, I, 16–17.

40 *Ericus Olai*, I, 8–9.

41 *Ericus Olai*, I, 11–14.

then it had been the story of the multiplication of cathedral churches. This too was preordained, as Ericus attests with another passage from Scripture: John's vision of the heavenly throne surrounded by twenty-four lesser thrones was significant – the lesser thrones denoted important bishoprics.⁴²

Ericus was more or less aware of the historical paths that had shaped the church, but he was convinced that these paths were preordained and thus retraceable through attention to Scripture. With exegetical skill, he seemed to think, they could be followed, from Jerusalem in the middle of the world to the cathedral churches in countries far removed. His account of the expansion of the church is very similar to the one sketched in the versified office for the Swedish patrons. Helander was certainly right to suggest that the two texts were written by the same author.

By the help of yet another paraphrase of a psalm, Ericus restates what he had said from the start: that the church was founded on holy mountains. What had started at mount Zion had then spread all the way to the North – that is, to the latitudes that he had set out to chronicle. And there too, those special churches should be known by the name of Zion:

The church, which is the city of the great king, was founded with joy all over the world, in every place chosen by the Lord, which is in his holy mountain, Mount Zion. It goes by the name of Zion, also in the northern parts of the world [*apud latera aquilonis*].⁴³

The psalm that Ericus was loosely paraphrasing here of course says nothing in literal terms about the church, and nor does it say anything about locations in Scandinavia. It calls to praise the Lord in his holy mountain, Zion, which is founded on “the northern side of the city of the great king.” Ericus's paraphrasing was in tune with the needs of his project. He read the psalm as a prophecy not just of the foundation of the church in general, but of a church in the North.

What else could be found *apud latera aquilonis*? Certainly Sweden and Uppsala! In the sentence immediately following the quote above, Ericus slides effortlessly from the vast tableau of salvation history to his more local concern, and the actual topic of the *Chronica*:

In the northern parts of the world (*in lateribus aquilonis*) there is a great country once famous under the name of Gothia but now more commonly called Sweden, in the midst of which there

⁴² *Ericus Olai*, I, 20–22. Cf. Rev 4:4.

⁴³ “Fundatur igitur exultatione universe terre catholica per orbem ecclesia, que est civitas Regis magni, in omni loco, quem elegerat Dominus, in monte videlicet sancto eius, qui est mons Syon, hoc est Syon nomine appellatu, eciam apud latera aquilonis.” *Ericus Olai*, I, 23. Cf. Ps 47:3. “Magnus dominus et laudabilis nimis / in civitate dei nostri in monte sancto eius / fundatur exultatione universe terre / montes Sion latera aquilonis / civitas regis magni.” Ericus does not mention the fact that he is paraphrasing Scripture.

is a beautiful and prominent place, more distinguished so to speak because of its comeliness in the centre (*caput*) of the realm, and the first to be inhabited after the Flood.⁴⁴

And another few lines into the *Chronica*, Ericus articulates the name of this Zion in the North: Uppsala. But, just as stated in the old *vita* of St Erik, Uppsala was not the name of choice among the clergy that staffed its cathedral. With the conversion to Christianity the hill that had housed the cult of three heathen gods (Oden, Thor and Frej) had been transformed into the property of the Lord, a fact that was expressed through the genitival compound that served as its new name, *mons Domini*:

From the beginning and in the native language, this place is called Uppsala, but after the filthy gods were done away with and the church of the Holy Trinity built there, it is called the Lord's Mountain [*mons Domini*].⁴⁵

The matter of the conversion from heathendom, and the rich imagery of the hill in Uppsala and its part in this drama, apparently brought Isaiah's description of Zion (Is. 2) to Ericus's mind. As mentioned above, Ericus paraphrased this description from Isaiah in his office for the Swedish patrons, where he described Zion as the place from whence the law and the word would issue forth. It was difficult from that poetical text to tell if he spoke of the Heavenly Jerusalem to come, or of the building of a Swedish Zion. In the *Chronica*, however, Ericus makes it clear that a Zion existed in Sweden. Isaiah too had talked about Zion as the *mons Domini*, and he had prophesied that at the end of time people would discard their idols and climb this mountain to be taught the ways of the Lord. Ericus quotes some of Isaiah verbatim, and then articulates his understanding of how the prophesy applies to Uppsala:

Though this prophesy may be fulfilled in a general and mystical sense with the realm of Christ and the church, it is truthful also according to the letter about this place, which by its proper name is called *mons Domini*, [and] where the Uppsala church is founded . . .⁴⁶

44 "Extat enim in lateribus aquilonis regio quedam amplissima Gochia quidem famosius sed Suecia nunc wlgarius nominata, in cuius quasi medio locus quidam amenus et eminens tamquam insignior ob sui decenciam in caput regni a primo mox regionis incolatu post diluuium exstiterat constitutus." *Ericus Olai*, II, 1.

45 "Locus autem a primordio natiua lingua patrie Vpsala dicebatur sed postmodum, eliminata deorum spurcicia et edificata ibidem sancte Trinitatis ecclesia, mons Domini deinceps est vocatus." *Ericus Olai*, II, 4.

46 "Que prophecia etsi de regno Christi et ecclesia vniversaliter et mystice sit impleta, de loco tamen, qui proprio nomine dicitur mons Domini, in quo fundate est Vpsalensis ecclesia, eciam habet ad literam veritatem . . ." *Ericus Olai*, II, 24. This passage ends with a concluding reference to Rev 22:17.

Conclusion

At least from the end of the thirteenth century, the clergy at the Swedish archdiocese called the site of their metropolitan church the *mons Domini*. The cathedral of Uppsala is indeed situated on a ridge, which makes it a significant landmark above the surrounding plains. But the moniker of mountain of the Lord was still a curious place name, partly a recognition of the natural topography and partly a biblical topos that brought Zion and the larger biblical Jerusalem cluster to mind. The place name was, in fact, only the most explicit expression of a broader discursive entanglement, which linked Uppsala with the image of Jerusalem.

Through tracing the discursive entanglement of these two cities, as it developed in three texts that chronicle the history of the church in Sweden, we can observe how the Uppsala institution appropriated the image of Jerusalem to promote itself but also to understand its own role within wider society. The earliest example examined is the late thirteenth-century *vita* and versified office of St Erik, Swedish king and martyr. This text indicates that this tradition of discursive entanglement may have been of a considerable age by the time when the two latter texts were compiled, towards the end of the fifteenth century. In these – the office for the Swedish patron saints and in the *Chronica regni Gothorum* – this entanglement was more explicitly expressed.

The blurring of the discursive boundaries between their own ecclesiastical institution and the authoritative example of Zion seems to have been part of a self-image that was cultivated at the Uppsala diocese. It is unlikely that this type of appropriation of the Jerusalem commonplace was unique to the Swedish cathedral, but the task of making such wider comparisons fall outside the remit of this article. Why did the Uppsala clergy, or any other clerical community, want the two cities entangled in this way? On the one hand, Uppsala's appropriation of Zion was part of its institutional self-fashioning. Jerusalem was singled out by God as the seat of priestly and royal authority over the chosen people, and indeed a place central to the mediation between God and man by the way of the incarnation. It was a convenient short hand for expressing Uppsala's claims to leadership on the level of the realm. But beyond these institutional ambitions, it served another and more existential end. It helped the Swedish clergy connect the history of their realm, and indeed their daily work in the cathedral, with the greater storyworld of the history of salvation.

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Index of Manuscripts

Cambridge

Corpus Christi College, Parker Library
– Parker MS 16 (*Chronaca Majora*) 185

Copenhagen

Copenhagen University, Arnamagnæan
Manuscript Collection
– AM 47 fol 226
– AM 194 8vo 203, 226–232, 235, 238, 470, 497
– AM 325 II 4to (*Ágrip*) 162
– AM 489 4to 235
– AM 544 4to (*Hauksbók*) 215, 425, 428,
435–453
– AM 567 4to 235
– AM 589 a 4to 224, 235
– AM 732b, 4to 424–425, 433, 435, 439, 443,
451–453
– AM 736 I, 4to 224, 425–427, 431, 435, 440,
443, 446–448
– AM 736 II 4to 226

Royal Library (Det konglige bibliotek)

– GKS 1005 (*Flateyjarbók*) 226, 232

The Hague

National Library of the Netherlands (Koninklijke
Bibliotheek)
– KB 76 F 5 430

London

British Library
– BL Add MS 49598 64, 359
– BL MS Harley 612 262

Oslo

Norwegian State Archives (Riksarkivet)
– NRA lat. fragm.NBS1054–1059/NBS 343
– NRA Ms. 29 211

Rome

Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana,
– BAV MS Fondo S. Maria Maggiore 2 53
– BAV Ottob. lat. 90 261

Stockholm

Royal Library (Kungliga biblioteket)
– Holm Perg 5 226
– Holm Perg 34 4to (*Landslog Magnúss
Hákonarsonar*) 517–518
– MS A 14 261

Index

- Aachen 67, 73, 83, 92, 98, 119, 142, 200, 201, 314, 375
Aalborg 206
Aal Church, Jutland 56, 412
Aaron, biblical figure 52, 398, 404, 445
Aavitsland, Kristin B. 1–9, 13–41, 74, 98, 102, 109, 125, 127, 158, 170, 191, 215, 221, 224, 225, 229, 248, 273, 299, 302, 308, 309, 322, 381, 385, 396, 405, 412, 413, 425–453, 461, 475, 481, 490, 530
Abbo, abbot of Fleury 71, 72, 80, 81
Abraham, patriarch, biblical figure 3, 4, 206, 400, 401, 404, 463
Acre 32, 41, 127, 135, 136, 200, 202, 204, 205, 212–214, 216, 217, 232, 427
Adam, biblical figure 231, 385, 443–446, 504, 506, 514
Adam of Bremen 68, 191, 203, 271, 273, 302, 329
Adams, Jonathan 60, 101, 477, 478, 494
Adémar of Chabannes 73, 81, 82
adjudication 501, 513, 514, 516
Adso of Montier-en-Der 73
adventus 60–71, 83, 349, 408
– *adventus Christi* 406
– *adventus Domini* 27
– *adventus imperatoris* 27
aedicula, *see* tomb of Christ (*aedicula*)
Ælfifu/Alfiva of Northampton 274
Ælfric of Eynsham 64, 70
Æthelred II, King of England 70, 78
Æthelwold of Winchester, St 64
Africa 14, 115, 118, 177, 237, 238, 440
– Blálánd 14
– Serkland 14, 115, 118
agency 8, 20, 21, 142, 314, 375, 386, 387, 389, 390, 392
Agnestad 331–335
Ágrip af Nóreg's konungasögum 163
Alain of Lille 405
Albert of St Mary in Stade 202
Al-Bīra 204
Ål Church 487, 489
– painted vault from 486, 490, 498
Alexander III, pope 136
Alexandra, Princess of Denmark 151
Alexios Komnenos (Alexios Comnenus), Byzantine emperor 148
Alfonso Pecha of Jaén 246
Alfonso X, King of Castile 122, 516
Al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah, Fatimid Caliph 28
Al-Idrīsī, Muḥammad 210
Al-Kamil, Sultan of Egypt 31
allegory 3, 5–6, 18, 34, 50–52, 102, 219, 228, 229, 231, 233–235, 239, 241–243, 301, 315, 316, 343, 357, 415, 434, 438, 442, 460, 501, 504–516, 518, 519, 525, 526
All-thing, *see* *Alþingi*
Alþingi 16
Alps 73, 80, 114, 206, 356
altar 12, 25–28, 35, 36, 52, 92, 148, 153, 154, 168, 184, 210, 275, 277, 278, 280, 288–291, 295–298, 303, 308, 317, 318, 322, 340, 348, 351–354, 356–359, 362, 366, 368, 373, 374, 388, 401, 405, 407, 416, 422, 431, 462, 463, 465–467, 479–482, 484, 485, 487–489, 491, 494–496, 520, 524
altar frontal (panel) 291, 359, 479, 484, 487, 489, 491
– from Årdal (Årdal II) 491
– from Dale (Dale II) 480–482, 485
– from Lisbjerg 35, 36, 308
– from Nedstryn 25–28, 480, 481, 483–485
– from Røldal 384, 392, 488
– from Skaun 357, 358
– from Tresfjord 340, 358
– from Trondheim (St Olav altar frontal) 296–298, 494–496
altar retable 405, 422
Amatus of Montecassino 77
Ambroise 193
ambulatory 207, 278, 293–295, 328, 329
amulet 382, 390
anargyroi, *see* Cosmas and Damianus, saints
Anastasis 294, 295, 429
Andås, Margrete Syrstad 35, 36, 41, 64, 143, 159, 163, 320, 341–374, 511
Andersson, Aron 246, 375, 479
Andres Nikulasson, crusader 32
animation (of matter) 299, 386–392
Anna Brade 416

- Anne of Kiev, Queen of France 76
 Annunciation 71, 72, 198, 398, 403
 Ansellus 201, 202
 Ansgar, St 526
 Anthony, St 88
 Antichrist 29, 72, 73, 75, 78, 81, 438, 441
 anti-judaism 19, 493
 Antioch 26, 32, 82, 117, 118, 203
 antiphon 64, 348–350, 369, 524, 527, 528
 Anund Jacob, King of Sweden 84
 apocalypse 4, 5, 71–75, 78, 96, 256, 411, 429,
 449, 450, 452, *see also* Revelation
 (Book of)
 apse 87, 210, 251, 303, 306, 311, 312, 328–331,
 373, 397–399, 404, 406
 Apulia 77, 78, 108, 116, 502
 Aqsa Mosque, *see* Jerusalem
aquilo (the north wind) 21, 22
 Arabia 4
 Aradus (al-Ruwād) 212
 arcade 198, 295, 305, 307–314, 322, 323, 353
 arch 18, 22, 35, 52–54, 292, 294, 303–312,
 314, 317–323, 353, 373, 398, 402, 407
 archard 510
 archbishopric (arch see) 18, 22, 34, 37, 66, 92,
 93, 148, 271, 279, 281–282, 291, 510, 522
 architecture 1, 4, 5, 19, 20, 31, 35, 36, 39, 41,
 64, 125, 130, 143, 201, 206, 234, 235, 249,
 253, 254, 259, 271, 286, 292–294,
 299–323, 326–329, 349, 350, 368, 395,
 396, 409, 413, 414, 416, 431, 452, 453,
 466, 485, 511
 Arch of Titus, relief 53, 54
 Årdal Church 491, 496
 Arildson, Hans 167, 168, 187
 Ark of the Covenant 49, 52, 54, 316
arma Christi 142, 382, 383
 Armenia 212
 Arnafjord Church 491
 Arnamagnæan Manuscript Collection,
 Copenhagen 203, 215
 Arngrímr Brandsson 222
 art history 1, 87, 149, 238, 305, 307, 308, 338,
 381, 387, 401, 418, 479, 490
 Ascalon 204, 206, 222
 Asia 14, 237, 440
 Ås monastery 182
 Assisi 257, 376
 – San Damiano 257
 Assmann, Aleida 49, 50, 316
 Assmann, Jan 19, 344, 345
 Astrid, Queen of Norway 274
auctor 247, 262
auctoritas, *see* authority
Audita tremendi, crusading bull 1187 135–137
 Augustine of Hippo, bishop, St 50, 444
 Augustinian Canons Regular 33
 Augustinus, *see* Eystein Erlendsson,
 Archbishop of Nidaros, c.1120–88
 authority 2, 8, 17–19, 28, 29, 31, 33, 37, 40–41,
 53, 54, 59, 60, 66, 67, 69, 70, 72, 73, 84,
 85, 92, 101, 108, 117, 156, 170, 175–177,
 183, 187, 233, 261–265, 314, 407, 437,
 440, 528–530, 533
 – *auctoritas* 247, 262, 263, 267
 – sacerdotal authority 49, 50, 55
 Avaldsnes
 – St. Olav's Church 180
 Avignon 178, 250, 427
 Axel-Nilsson, Göran 177, 178, 181–185

 Babel 21, 22, 440
 Babylon 4, 8, 25, 27, 440, 441, 453
 Bäckerfeldt, Lars 331
 Bagge, Sverre 16, 98, 108, 109, 114, 130, 147,
 156, 164, 174–176, 182, 235, 236, 501, 509,
 514, 515
 Baldwin I, King of Jerusalem 29, 200–204
 Baldwin II, King of Constantinople 173
 Baldwin II, King of Jerusalem 201
 Baldwin III, King of Jerusalem 121, 206
 Bale, Anthony 30, 41, 191–197, 253, 283, 448,
 492, 493
 Balearic Islands 106, 122, 155, 158, 201
 Bälinge Church 178
 Baltic, the 37, 39, 60, 61, 82, 95, 97, 106, 109,
 122, 125, 147, 155, 159, 326–329, 339, 365,
 478, 491, 494
 Bamberg 66, 72, 78, 80
 Bamberg Apocalypse 72, 78
 Bandlien, Bjørn 20, 26, 29, 41, 59–85, 104,
 107, 147, 163, 191, 274, 449, 478, 485
 Bangert, Susanne 150, 151
 baptism 59, 75, 76, 80, 201, 206, 301, 343,
 353, 441, 507
 baptismal font 304–307, 310, 312, 314, 324,
 336–339, 352–355
 Barbara, St 178

- Barcelona 202
 Bari 78, 82, 114, 206, 376
 Barletta 202
 Bartholomew, St, apostle 88
 basilica 52, 54, 55, 251, 253, 264, 290, 294, 330, 372, 431
 Basil II, Byzantine Emperor 82
 battle 26, 62, 74, 77–79, 82, 108, 116, 119, 121, 127, 133, 137, 142, 146, 161, 162, 223, 236, 238, 239, 243, 271, 272, 277, 281, 286, 288, 293, 296, 384, 412, 481, 483, 484
 – of Brunkeberg 526, 528
 – of Clontarf (1014) 69, 70
 – with the dromund 118, 124, 128
 – of Hattin (1187) 31, 144, 154, 163, 202, 216
 – of Helgâ (1026) 84
 – of Nesjar (1016) 20, 61, 66, 68, 71, 72, 79, 83, 274
 – of Stiklestad (1030) 71, 274, 291, 494, 495
 – of Svolder (1000) 67, 199
 Baybars I, Mameluke Sultan 32, 212
 Beatus of Liebana 429
 Bede the Venerable 347, 361, 415, 448
 Belting, Hans 378, 387, 392
 Benedictines 98, 202, 204, 207, 214, 221–223, 227, 229, 284, 427, 437, 450, 480
 Benedictinal of St Æthelwold 65, 359
 Benedict of Monte Soracte 73, 78
 Benedict VIII, pope 68
 Bengal 298
 Bengt, Bishop of Skara 325, 333–338
 Bergen 25, 26, 68, 95, 99, 107, 109, 110, 112, 114, 129, 135, 162, 168, 171, 173–176, 179, 180, 211, 278, 281, 287, 293, 382, 392, 478, 480, 482, 484, 487, 488, 513, 515
 Bergr Sökkason 222, 230
 Bernard of Clairvaux, St 107, 109, 121, 122, 128, 249, 250, 414, 507, 509, 512
 Bernward of Hildesheim 67, 84
 Berulfsen, Bjarne 493, 494
 bestiaries 357
 Bethany (Betania) 204, 207, 214, 217, 220, 225, 236
 Bethlehem 33, 82, 204, 210, 220, 249, 255, 256, 258, 260, 264, 265, 267, 375
 – Church of the Nativity 30, 41, 86–93, 188, 206, 251, 253, 261
 – Nativity Cave 252–254, 257
 Bible, *see* Scripture
 Biblical knowledge 253, 263
 Biddle, Martin 294
 Bie, Ole 298
 Binski, Paul 413, 479, 480
 Birch, Debra J. 222, 227, 229
 Birger, King of Sweden 171, 172, 179, 246
 Birgitta of Sweden, St 32, 41, 171, 214, 245–267, 342, 356, 364, 372, 373, 410, 411
 Birgittine Order 267
birkebeiner 286
 Björn Einarsson Jórslafari 214
 Black Sea 14
 Blake, William 7–9
 Blåland, *see* Africa
blámadr, *blámenn* 14, 120, 485, 488
 Blanca of Namur, Queen of Norway and Sweden 171
Blickling Homilies 70, 78
 Blindheim, Martin 375, 479
 Blom, Grethe Authén 290
 blood libel myth 492
 Bø 489
 Bodil Thurgotsdaughter, Queen of Denmark 29, 154, 199–201
 Bohemia 66, 92, 150, 185
 Bohemond 117, 196
 Boleslaw I, Duke/King of Poland 67
 Boleslaw II, Duke of Bohemia 66
 Bologna
 – San Domenico 173
 Bonde, Line M. 35, 41, 299–323, 342, 343, 370, 374, 398
 Boniface IX, pope 247, 265
Book of Marvels and Travels (by John Mandeville) 194, 448
 Bornholm 125, 326–328
 Boroffka, Anna 381, 382
 Borre 375–393
 Bourges 123, 491
 Brade, Anna 416
brandea (contact relics) 290
 Branderup Church 306
 Brasius, St 88
 Braun, Joseph 172, 173, 179, 180, 318
 Bremen 68, 191, 203, 271, 273, 302, 329
 Brian Boru, King of Ireland 69, 70
 bride 39, 245, 246, 252, 341, 342, 412
 – metaphor for Jerusalem 4, 27
 – metaphor for the Church 35, 364

- British Isles 91, 105, 228, 272, 273, 453
 Brown, Dan 7
 Brynolf Algotsson of Skara 171
 Buckinghamshire 491
 Bunge 359
 burial site 278, 333, 335, 337, 338
 Bury 153, 288, 492
 Bynum, Caroline Walker 142, 257, 258, 263, 386, 418, 453
 Byrhtferth of Ramsey 72
 Bysted, Ane L. 30, 31, 39, 41, 95, 123, 133–139, 155, 200, 328
 Byzantine Empire (Byzantium) 33, 82, 99, 100, 104, 110, 111, 114, 142–144, 146–149, 151, 153, 158, 163–165, 169, 184, 314, 346, 481
- Cadiz 211
 Caesarea 210, 264
 calendar 71, 224, 238, 432–435, 438, 439, 522
 Calvary (Golgotha), *see* Jerusalem
 Candlemas (Feast of the Purification) 341–374
Canones Nidrosienses 282
 canonization 108, 128, 148, 177, 247, 261, 289
 Canterbury 68, 196, 288, 290, 360, 375
 Canute, Danish kings, *see* Knud IV, St, King of Denmark
 Cape St Vincent 211
 Carolingians 64, 68, 84, 210, 316
 Carpentras 210
 Carruthers, Mary 235, 253, 301, 313–317, 322, 323, 390, 427, 429, 442
 Cartagena 211
 Cassian, John 5, 6
 Catald, St 88, 91
 Catherine of Alexandria, St 178
 centralized church plan 293, 294
 Chalfont St Giles Church 491
 Chancel 174, 184, 278, 288, 290, 297, 303, 304, 317, 320–322, 329, 330, 332, 351, 397, 398, 400–404, 406, 407, 410, 419, 485, 486, 489, 490, 498, 500, 511, 512
 chancel arch 303, 304, 306, 309, 317–322, 402
 Chariton, St 207
 Charlemagne 21, 60, 67, 73, 74, 76–78, 81, 83, 92, 104, 183, 210, 288, 314, 315
 Charles IV, emperor 185
 Chartres 64, 107, 201, 349, 453
Chateau d'Amour (by Robert Grosseteste) 508
 Chester 272, 369
 Chichester 272
 Chosroes, King of Persia 579–628, 26, 27, 481, 483, 484
 Chrétien de Troyes 241
 Christ, *see* Jesus Christ
 Christian II, king of Denmark 40, 167
 Christian III, king of Denmark 202
 Christianity 1, 2, 4–6, 13, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 39, 43, 54, 59, 74, 84, 91, 120, 123, 157, 169, 201, 221, 236, 238, 240, 242, 248, 249, 259, 273, 302, 325, 338, 357, 363, 375, 378, 385, 418, 425, 440, 444, 452, 463–465, 472, 478, 491, 493, 494, 496, 532
 Christianization (of Scandinavia) 16, 59–85, 147, 156, 164, 299, 301, 315, 316
 Christ in Majesty (*Majestas Domini*) 149, 398, 406
 Christmas 123, 134, 202
 Christology 35, 92, 296, 408, 432, 450, 465
 Christopher, St 376, 402
 Christus Pantocrator 429
Chronica Majora (by Matthew Paris) 185, 186, 450, 492
Chronica regni Gothorum 521, 528–533
 church architecture 35, 317, 318
 church building 20, 34, 51, 196, 299, 301, 302, 305, 309, 316–318, 327, 329, 331, 336, 342, 343, 352, 395, 524
 church fathers 50, 247, 249, 254, 265, 410
 churching (of women) 35, 268, 341–374
 church interior 168, 184, 198, 303, 318, 347, 365, 395–421
 Church of the Holy Sepulchre, *see* Jerusalem
ciborium 352, 353, 355–359, 432
 Cicero 315
 Ciggaar, Krijnie 114, 148, 149, 151, 163
 Cistercian Order 208
 City of God, *see* *Civitas Dei*
Civitas Dei 182, 529
Civitas Hierusalem 35–37, 39, 425–453
 Clairvaux 107, 109, 121, 122, 128, 249, 250, 414, 507, 509, 512
 Clement, St 212, 275, 276, 298
 Clermont 96, 97, 117, 118
 code 41, 63, 68, 224, 514–519, *see also* law
 – Code of the Norwegian Cities of 1276 516
 – cultural code 2, 6
 – *The Great Code* (by Northrop Frye) 3, 8, 9, 24

- Jerusalem code 6–9, 13, 17–22, 24–29, 33–40, 60, 102, 305, 307, 322, 407, 411, 477
- Norwegian Code of 1274 501
- codicology 433, 436, 437
- Cogadh Gáedhel re Gallaibh* 70
- cognition 253, 312–314, 442
- Cologne 49, 54, 70, 73, 92, 145, 170, 184, 222, 307, 316, 375, 417
- Columbus, Christopher 40
- commonplace (*locus communis*) 1, 35, 299–323, 440, 443, 463, 533
- Conrad of Eberbach 208
- Constantine, Roman Emperor 87, 143, 153, 154, 209, 210, 236, 264, 291, 294, 328, 463
- Constantinople 28, 32, 33, 40, 73, 82, 91, 99, 104, 105, 110, 114–117, 119, 127, 135, 138, 143, 148, 150, 173, 179, 199, 224, 232, 272, 274, 276, 281, 314, 481, 485, *see also* Miklagard (Constantinople)
- contact 20, 22, 28, 43, 60, 74, 80, 83, 95, 97, 101, 105, 107–109, 115, 122, 124, 242, 250, 265, 272, 290, 382, 418, 420, 463, 477, 478, 480, 492, 496
- contiguity 20, 475
- Contra Petrobrusianos hereticos* (by Peter the Venerable) 405, 507
- conversion 2, 16, 20–24, 59, 60, 74, 103, 121, 147, 208, 248, 259, 260, 299, 302, 328, 472, 497, 526, 528, 532
- Copenhagen 12, 16, 17, 23, 28, 35, 36, 38, 45–47, 95, 105, 123, 130, 133, 147–149, 151, 154, 157, 159, 162, 163, 174, 177, 178, 183–185, 200, 203, 204, 208, 215, 219, 220, 226, 235, 236, 278, 279, 302–305, 348, 352, 362, 365, 367, 368, 371, 382, 396, 397, 401, 405, 412, 413, 416, 418, 424, 426, 428, 431, 436, 447, 451, 453, 463, 470, 497, 498, 501
- Corbo, Virgilio 294
- cor mundum* 362
- coronation 103, 104, 114, 129, 146, 147, 154, 164, 279, 281, 282, 287, 289
- Corsica 202
- Cosmas and Damianus, saints 88
- Cosmology 16, 227, 432, 433, 438, 446, 447
- council 96, 97, 99, 117, 122, 183, 201, 365
 - of Basel 267
 - of Constance 267
 - Fourth Lateran 1215 130, 415
- Crac des Chevaliers 32, 212
- Cracow 67, 328
- Creativity 20, 291
- Cross, the 6, 15, 18, 27, 31, 38, 39, 47, 66, 71, 95–98, 100, 108, 110–112, 124, 125, 128, 131, 134, 137, 143, 144, 146, 149, 151–155, 157, 158, 160, 162, 163, 167, 170, 177, 182, 201, 216, 225, 233, 236, 240, 251, 254, 255, 257–260, 329, 336, 337, 375, 378–382, 384–393, 425–453, 455, 470, 480, 481, 487, 489, *see also* Holy Cross
 - Exaltation of 25, 123
 - Invention of 123
- crown of thorns 19, 26, 32, 142, 163, 167–187, *see also* relics
- crucesignatus* 123, 124
- crucifix 67, 151, 257, 317, 318, 375, 378, 380, 381, 383–387, 391, 492
 - at Fana 392
 - at Røldal 384, 392
 - at San Damiano 257
- crucifixion 33, 71, 72, 87, 142, 170, 251, 252, 255, 257, 267, 296, 401, 402, 410, 444, 450, 465, 470, 471, 487, 489, 490
- crusade ideology 2, 29, 39, 99, 104, 105, 114, 130, 155
- crusader 18, 25, 26, 29–33, 37, 39, 43, 51, 52, 89, 92, 95–131, 133–136, 138, 143, 144, 146, 147, 149, 155–164, 167, 170, 177, 179, 192–197, 199–204, 206, 207, 210, 213, 214, 216, 217, 223, 233, 279, 282, 283, 287, 293, 294, 329, 382, 413, 425, 426, 429, 430, 455–457, 460, 475, 483, 484, 496
- crusader map (of Jerusalem) 193, 425, 426, 430
- crusader period 87, 88, 193
- crusades 2, 19, 37, 40, 81, 91, 137, 147, 148, 155, 158, 160, 177, 178, 192, 195, 200, 203, 204, 206, 210, 211, 235, 236, 238, 250, 327–329, 339, 382, 456, 460, 477, 480, 496
 - Baltic crusade 39, 95, 106, 155, 327–329, 339
 - First crusade 29, 30, 44, 49, 51, 52, 54, 64, 70, 73, 81, 96–101, 103–105, 107, 111–113, 115, 117–119, 124, 127, 133, 135, 136, 141, 143, 195, 196, 199, 328, 413, 425, 427
 - Second crusade 31, 95–131, 136, 177, 208

- Third crusade 31, 123, 133–135, 138, 144, 193, 200
- crusading 28–30, 37, 39, 41, 52, 95–97, 99–108, 112–114, 117–119, 121–123, 128, 130, 133, 135, 136, 138, 155, 158, 164, 200, 328, 427, 459, 496, 523
- crypt 8, 192, 201, 207, 210, 211, 290, 397, 442
- Ctesiphon 26, 27, 483, 485
- cult (of Saints) 44, 49, 77, 78, 80, 91–93, 103, 141, 160, 169, 183, 246, 271–273, 276, 278–282, 286, 288, 291–293, 333, 335, 382, 387, 388, 391, 392, 492, 496, 522, 523, 526, 532
- Cum inducerent puerum* 350
- Cuthbert, St 288
- Cyprus 29, 105, 153, 154, 200, 214, 246
- Cyril of Jerusalem 249, 259, 260

- Dagmar cross 140, 149–151
- Dagmar, Queen of Denmark 148, 150
- Dalby 68
- Danes 15, 29, 89, 133, 148, 200, 206, 271, 299, 301, 314, 315, 477
- Daniil/Daniel of Kiev 193
- Dante Alighieri 231, 241, 247, 250
- David, King of Juda, biblical figure 286, 445, 502–505
- deacon 68, 88, 92, 172
- Dead Sea 204
- De arca Noa mystica* (by Hugh of St Victor) 235
- Decapolis 23, 24
- demons 273
- Denkendorf 202
- Denmark 13, 16, 19, 28–30, 34, 35, 37, 39–41, 67, 68, 74, 84, 87, 88, 91, 92, 95, 98, 101, 104, 105, 107, 108, 116, 122, 133, 140–165, 167, 180–182, 199, 200, 202, 208, 226, 271, 274, 276, 278, 279, 286, 288–290, 299, 301, 302, 305, 307, 309, 314, 315, 326–328, 330, 337, 361, 366, 368, 375, 377, 399, 402, 410, 440, 478, 522, 526
- De ortu et temporu antichristo* (by Adso of Montier-en-Der) 73
- De planctu naturae* (by Alain of Lille) 405
- Descriptio Lateranensis Ecclesiae* 49, 52, 228, 316
- desert 4, 231, 280, 302, 445, 513
- destruction of Jerusalem 21, 50, 81

- devotion 8, 13, 27, 39, 41, 59, 64, 102, 112, 117, 118, 120, 138, 169, 183, 184, 192, 251, 253, 263, 267, 341, 382, 386, 390, 393, 405, 406, 408, 413, 414, 416–418, 420, 444, 453, 463, 493
- diagrams (geometric) 15, 193, 427, 433–436, 441–443, 446, 447, 451–453
- Dimbo Church 332–335, 337
- Divina dispensatione* (II), Papal bull 106, 107
- divine election, *see* elect people (divine election)
- divine office 34, 64, 161, 522, 524, 526
- Doc 206
- Dome of the Rock 30, 31, 51, 52, 207, 294, 429
- Dominican Order 214, 216, 356
- Dorothea, Queen of Denmark 181, 377
- dragon 14, 78, 233, 237, 242, 336, 402, 494
- Dream of the Rood* 71, 72, 389, 390
- Dritsker 468–470, 472, 475
- Drogo, Count of Vexin 79–80
- Drogo Sacramentary 359
- dromund* 116, 118, 120, 124, 128
- Dublin (Christchurch) 69, 70, 272, 335, 514
- Dudo of St-Quentin 84
- Durandus, William 301, 318
- Durham 103, 220, 228, 288

- Easter 34, 62, 63, 66, 67, 70–72, 74, 75, 123, 220, 225, 236, 242, 440
- Eberwin of Tholey, abbot 82
- Ecclesia Romana* 316, 322
- Edessa 108, 346
- edicule 290, 295, 296
- Edmund, St, King of England 92, 278, 288, 289, 293, 492
- Edward the Confessor, King of England 92, 272, 288
- Egeria, pilgrim 253, 260, 346
- Egypt 31, 231, 462, 472
- Eidsivathing 361
- Einarr skálaglamm 70
- Einarr Skúlason 43, 130, 272, 281
- Eindridi ungi 110, 111, 115–117, 120, 124, 127
- Eirik Haakonsson, Earl of Lade 74
- Eirik Haraldsson Blood-axe, King of Norway and York 69
- Eirik Ivarsson 510, 511
- Eiríksmál*, *see* skaldic poetry

- Eiríks Saga Rauða*, see saga literature
(Old Norse), Saga of Eirik the Red (*Eiríks Saga Rauða*)
- Eiríks saga viðförlla*, see saga literature
(Old Norse), Saga of Eirik the Traveller (*Eiríks saga viðförlla*)
- Ekroll, Øystein 20, 30, 41, 87–93, 117, 125, 130, 131, 160, 163, 202, 206, 271–298, 329, 335, 382, 492, 495, 510, 522
- elect people (divine election) 22, 23
- Elijah, biblical figure 88
- Elucidarius* (by Honorius Augustodunensis) 438, 440
- encyclopaedia (encyclopaedic literature) 433, 439, 441, 453
- England 34, 44, 46, 60–64, 70–72, 74, 75, 77, 78, 80, 83, 84, 92, 105, 108, 110, 111, 122, 143, 157, 169, 181, 196, 267, 271–275, 286, 288–290, 293, 309, 347, 349, 350, 360, 364, 370, 413, 464, 477, 480, 491–493, 498
- Epistola solitarii ad reges* 248
- Erffa, Hans Martin von 353, 354, 356, 357
- Erfirdrápa*, see skaldic poetry
- Eric of Pomerania, King of Sweden 33, 180, 182
- Ericus Olai 521, 528–532
- Erik II the Unforgettable, King of Denmark 207–208
- Erik IX, king of Sweden 334
- Erik Jevardsson, St, King of Sweden 280
- Erik of Pomerania, King of Norway, Denmark and Sweden 33, 180, 182
- Eriksberg 336
- Eriksen, Stefka G. 31, 39, 41, 103, 176, 203, 214, 219–243, 448, 466, 470, 495
- Erik the Good (Erik ægóðr), King of Denmark 29, 37, 105, 141, 146–149, 151, 153, 164, 199, 200, 204, 279
- Erling Ormsson skakki 96, 281, 286
- Ermengarde of Narbonne 115, 117
- Esbern Snare 134
- eschatology 1–3, 6, 9, 17, 18, 29, 36, 60, 71–77, 81, 96, 102, 321, 357, 397, 403, 432, 435, 441, 450, 453, 525
- Eskil, commander of the Danish fleet 207, 208, 210
- Eskilstuna
– Monastery of the Order of St. John 178
- Especulo* 516
- Etymologiae* (by Isidore of Seville) 15
etymology 34, 40, 43–47, 309
- Eucharist 34, 242, 320, 321, 374, 385, 406, 416, 417, 489, 490, 497
- Eugenius III, pope 100, 106, 107, 122, 130, 136
- Eusebius 249, 259, 264, 426
- Eustace, St 261, 262
- Euthymius, St 88
- evangelist symbols 296, 297, 380, 398
- Eve, biblical figure 67, 202, 225, 231, 232, 385, 415, 444
- Exeter 272, 491
- exodus* 3, 231, 234, 241, 462–468, 471, 472, 474
- exultatio crucis* (Exultation of the Cross) 480, 481
- Eyrbyggja saga*, see saga literature (Old Norse)
- Eyrabing, see Nidaros (Trondheim)
- Eystein Erlendsson, Archbishop of Nidaros, c.1120–88 114, 163, 281, 286, 510
- Eystein Haraldsson, King of Norway 110
- Ezekiel, prophet 5, 283, 322
- Fåberg 479, 480
- Fachtna Ulbrethach (ref. Sunde) 513
- Falköping 330, 331, 333, 334, 337
- Fall of Man 3, 385, 507, 511, 515
- Fana 392
- Färlöv, see Fyrileif
- Faroes/Faroe Islands 16, 96, 286
- Fassler, Margot 64, 349, 374, 417
- Fécamp Abbey 75
- Feginsbrekka 191–197, 283
- Felipe of Castile 516
- female roles (of Jerusalem) 4
- feretory 290
- Ferrol 202
- festum reliquiarum* (feast of relics) 184
- Filefjell 357, 358
- Filippa, Queen of Sweden 181
- Fines terrae* 15, 429
- Finland 39, 178, 279, 327, 377
- Finnvid, rector of the church of Nässjöhult 214
- Fischer, Gerhard 174, 293
- Flanders 202, 425, 426
- Fleischer, Jens 279
- Fleury Abbey 80

- Flos Peregrinationis* 230
four daughters of God 501–519
 France, John 77, 79, 81, 111, 144
 Franciscan custody of the Holy Land 250
 Franciscan Order 202
 Francis of Assisi, St 257
 Franz, Adolph 362, 363
 Frederick Barbarossa, Holy Roman emperor 92
 Frederick II, Holy Roman emperor 31, 210
 Frederiksnagore 298
 Frederik VII, King of Denmark 151
 Freedberg, David 386, 387
 Freeman, Charles 169, 183
 frescoes, *see* murals (frescoes, wall paintings)
 Frölén, Hugo F. 327, 331, 332
 Frothi, legendary Danish king 315
 Fruttuaria Abbey 75
 Frye, Northrop 3, 7, 24
 Fulk Nerra, Count of Anjou 79
 Fulk of Anjou, King of Jerusalem 79
 Funen 302, 310, 394, 397
 Fusca, St 88
 Fyrileif 162
Fyrlát mér jungfrúin hreina (Forgive me, pure maiden) 18
- Gabriele, Matthew 73, 74, 76, 81, 104
 Galilee 23, 24, 31, 118
 Garden of Eden 3, 5, 55, 385
 Garrison, Mary 22, 23
 Geary, Patrick 17, 170
Geisli 130, 272, 281, 282
 Gelasian principle 514
Gemma anima (by Honorius Augustodensis) 234, 361
Genesis 5, 46, 235, 385, 440, 463
 geography 16, 23, 33, 59, 102, 114, 124, 202, 224, 227, 228, 241, 248, 249, 252, 299, 329, 334, 390, 433, 435, 436, 439, 440, 443, 502
 geometry 425, 427, 429, 433, 439, 441–444, 452
 George, St 88, 376, 402
 Gerberga, Queen of West Francia 73
 Germany 33, 66–68, 74, 84, 108, 110, 114, 302, 305, 328, 352, 369
Gerusalemme liberata (by Torquato Tasso) 29
Gesta Danorum 148, 153, 154, 200, 315
 Gibelin of Arles, patriarch of Jerusalem 201
- Gibeon 503
 Gibraltar (Norvasund/Niorfasund) 14, 60, 77, 115, 116, 202
 Gizzur Hallsson 230
Glælognskviða, *see* skaldic poetry
Glossa ordinaria 529, 530
 Gniezno 66, 67
 Godfrey of Bouillon, King of Jerusalem 29
 Godfrey of Viterbo 444
 Godsted Church 306, 307, 310
 Godwin, Earl 272
 Golgotha (Calvary), *see* Jerusalem
 Golubovich, Girolamo 202
 Good Friday 66, 69–71, 185, 186
 Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew 258, 259, 346, 353, 358
 Gospels 23, 50, 55, 63, 67, 249, 251, 255–259, 262, 267, 346, 364, 415, 442, 471
 Götala 335
 Gothic 41, 293, 294, 307, 369, 375, 395–398, 400, 403, 406–408, 410, 412, 414, 415, 420, 490, 493
Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism (by Erwin Panofsky) 396
 Goths 271
 Gotland 44, 60, 69, 147, 159, 178, 270, 304, 327, 355, 359, 361, 365, 368, 381
Grænlinga Saga, *see* saga literature (Old Norse), Saga of the Greenlanders (*Grænlinga Saga*)
 Great Schism 272
 Greenblatt, Stephen 17, 18
 Greenland 16, 40, 96, 214, 239–242, 477, 513
 Gregorian reform 291
Gregorius oder Der gute Sünder (by Hartmann of Aue) 413
 Gregory, St, pope 277
 Gregory VIII, pope 134–137
 Grimcytel/Grimkillus/Grimketel, *see* Grimkell/Grimkjell, bishop of Selsey
 Grimkell/Grimkjell, bishop of Selsey 68, 113, 272, 275
 Grönbæk Church 311, 312
 Guðrún Ósvífrsdóttir 472
 Guibert of Nogent, abbot 98, 118
 Guy I, viscount of Limoges 79
 Gulathing 361
 Gumlösa Church 354

- Gunnes, Erik 114, 163, 280, 282, 283, 342
 Gunnlaug Leifsson 222
 Gyða, countess 272
- Haakon IV Haakonsson, King of Norway,
 1217–1263 175, 176, 478, 480, 496, 515,
 516
 Haakon Paalsson (Hákon Pálsson), Earl of
 Orkney 111, 126, 127
 Haakon Sigurdsson, Earl of Lade 60, 70, 74
 Haakon V Magnusson, King of Norway 168,
 170–177, 179–181, 183, 186
habitus 197
 Hadewijch of Antwerp 417
 Hadorph, Johan 289
 Hadrian IV, pope 113, 280, *see also* Nicholas
 Brekespear
 Hagar, biblical figure 4
 Hagen, Kaja M. H. 40, 41, 375–393
 hagiography 20, 64, 80, 248, 261, 263–265,
 282, 392, 464, 521
Hákonar saga, *see* saga literature (Old Norse)
 Halbwachs, Maurice 344
 Hallberg, Peter 473, 474
 Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld 70
 Hallvard, St 293
 Hamar 362, 478, 480
 Hamburg 68, 202, 203
 Hamburg archbishops 17, 199, 271, 302, 329
 Hammelev Church 306, 307
 Hansdatter, Bodil Margrethe 152
 Harald Bluetooth, King of Denmark 16, 68, 301
 Harald Fairhair, King of Norway 273, 462
 Harald Sigurdsson harðráða (the Hardruler), King
 of Norway 43, 82, 103, 120, 149, 276, 277
 Haram al-Sharif, *see* Jerusalem
 Hardeknud, *see* Knud III (Hardeknud), King of
 England and Denmark
 Harold of Gloucester 492
 Harrowing of Hell 380, 388
 Hartmann of Aue 413
 Hassing Church 306
 Hattin 31, 144, 154, 163, 202, 216
 Haug 124, 288, 456, 457
Hauksbók 45, 224, 229, 230, 239, 428,
 435–444, 449, 450, 452, 463
 heathendom 24, 440, 532
 Heaven 1, 3–6, 8, 26, 34, 35, 37, 39, 41, 43, 51,
 69, 83, 84, 96, 102, 124, 169, 170,
 182–184, 220, 223, 225, 236, 239, 241,
 243, 245, 249, 255, 267, 283, 286, 296,
 316, 321–323, 334, 341–343, 351, 357,
 364, 374–422, 426, 429, 431, 434, 443,
 450, 452, 453, 496, 503, 507, 514, 525,
 527, 528, 531, 532
 – Heavenly Jerusalem, *see* Jerusalem
 – Paradise 5, 231–234, 243, 400, 409, 416,
 418, 420
 Hedeby 206
Heimskringla 14, 44, 91, 103–105, 107, 120,
 128, 149, 155–157, 159, 161–163, 165, 201,
 223, 274, 287, 290, 384, 463, *see also*
Kringla heimsins
 – *Oláfs saga helga* 74, 76, 77, 83, 273, 275,
 277, 296
Heimslýsing ok helgifræði 45, 436
Heimspeki ok helgifræði 436
 Heinzel, Richard 505, 506
 Helander, Hans 526–528, 531
 Helena (Augusta), St, Roman Empress 26, 67,
 143, 153, 154, 209, 236, 249, 263, 264,
 444
 Helgafell Monastery 224, 225, 229, 232
 Heliga stadh 333
 Helluland 239, 240
 Henrik, bishop of Linköping 213, 214, 216–217
 Henrik of Finland, St. 178
 Henry I, King of France 76
 Henry II, Holy Roman Emperor 66, 67, 69, 78,
 80
 Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium 610–641, 26,
 27, 143, 481, 483, 485
 Herod, King, biblical figure 401, 486, 488
 Hess, Cordelia 477, 478, 494
 Het Zwin 202
 Hieronymite Order 262, 265
 Hierosolyma, *see* Jerusalem
 Hierusalem, *see* Jerusalem
 Hildegard of Bingen 417
 Hildesheim (St Michael's) 67, 68, 80, 83, 84,
 136
 Hill, Joyce 31, 102, 193, 204, 206, 222, 227
Historia de antiquitate regum
Norwagiensium 141, 463
Historia de profectone Danorum in
Hierosolymam 123, 133–139, 200
Historia Norwegie 23, 24
Historia scholastica 467, 508

- historiography, history writing 13, 17, 19–23,
 30, 41, 97–101, 109, 119, 156, 222, 227,
 307, 334, 338, 432, 437–439, 444, 473,
 478, 521, 528
- Hólar 143, 222, 241, 391, 392
- Holmgren, Jacob 298
- Holy Blood 125, 142, 143, 163, 282, 287, 357,
 376
- Holy City 4, 17, 29–31, 41, 60, 83, 133, 136,
 138, 170, 191–193, 220, 223, 249, 255,
 259, 286, 325–339, 412, 425, 427, 429,
 481, 502, 503, 530
- Holy Cross (from Borre) 18, 25–27, 39, 123, 125,
 144–146, 148, 154, 156–158, 162, 163, 179,
 180, 208, 216, 317, 318, 375–393, 438,
 443–450, 452, 483, 484
- Holy Crown, Christ's, in Paris 28, 145, 167, 172,
 173, 177, 185
- Holy Family 370, 402, 404, 406
- Holy Lance 66, 142, 145, 196
- Holy Land (Terrasanta) 2, 20, 24, 26, 29,
 32–34, 41, 43, 45, 59, 63, 64, 73, 76, 77,
 79–84, 89, 91, 93, 95, 96, 99, 104, 105,
 112, 114, 116, 117, 120–123, 125, 133–138,
 150, 154, 177, 191–193, 196, 197, 199–217,
 220, 227, 228, 238, 245–267, 283, 328,
 346, 375, 377, 381, 382, 414, 426, 441,
 455–475, 496, *see also* Palestine (Holy
 land, Jórshalaland, *Terra sancta*)
- Holy Mass 34, 35, 318, 319
- holy matter 18, 41, 257, 380, 382
- Holy Men of Selje 298
- Holy Mountain 192, 331, 468, 471, 472, 524,
 526, 529–531
- Holy Nails 143, 145
- Holy of Holies 49, 52, 53, 403
- holy place 64, 95, 102, 123, 134–136, 138–139,
 192, 193, 199, 200, 214, 220, 249, 253,
 254, 256, 258–262, 378, 432, 439, 460,
 461, 463
- Holy Roman Empire 80, 142, 145, 154, 314
- Holy Sepulchre, *see* Jerusalem
- Holy Spirit 22, 220, 321, 400, 404, 405
- Holy Trinity, Brothers of the 131, 214, 216,
 277–279, 369, 371, 445, 525, 532
- Honorius Augustodunensis 234, 361, 438, 440,
 444
- Hopperstad Church 355
- Horgen, Randi 174
- Hørning Church 302, 303
- Hospitallers (Order of the Hospital of St John of
 Jerusalem) 109, 125, 214, 216
- Hrafsmál*, *see* skaldic poetry
- Hugh de Neville 213, 214
- Hugh of Lincoln 492
- Hugh of St Cher 196
- Hugh of St Victor 442, 507–509, 512
- humility (cardinal virtue) 27, 59, 70, 72, 350,
 351
- Hunseby Church 299–301
- Hunt, E. D. 249, 260, 261
- Husaby 330
- Husby Church 312, 314
- Husum 365
- Hvide dynasty 337
- Iberia/Iberian Peninsula 60, 77, 95–97, 104,
 106, 114, 115, 122, 146, 328
- Ibiza 211
- Iceland 13, 16, 20, 31, 39–41, 44, 61, 95, 96,
 156, 176, 203, 215, 219–227, 236, 240,
 243, 287, 318, 391, 425, 427, 431–433,
 435, 437, 440, 446, 448, 455, 462–473,
 477, 503, 513
- iconography 15, 33, 35, 37, 41, 247, 251, 253,
 258, 293, 305, 308, 310, 321, 341, 346,
 347, 349, 352–354, 357–359, 366, 368,
 370, 371, 373, 379–381, 385–387, 396,
 398, 409, 411, 418, 420, 431, 479–481,
 485, 488, 489, 491, 498
- identity 2, 16, 22, 23, 30, 37, 84, 125, 133, 191,
 221, 293, 302, 344, 353, 456, 457, 497,
 498, 522
- idolatry 8, 27, 438, 440, 441, 453, 483
- imago mundi* 427, 453
- imitatio Christi* (imitation of Christ) 96, 137,
 416
- imitation (*imitatio*) 20, 23, 53, 247, 267, 307,
 316, 329, 414, 459, 461
- Imperial Guard, *see* Varangian Guard
- Imsen, Steinar 96, 147, 160, 202, 276,
 287
- India 230, 232, 237–239, 298
- indulgence 113, 135–138, 185–187, 212, 250,
 414
- Ingeborg Predbjørnsdatter 416
- Ingeborg, spouse of Duke Erik Magnusson 179
- Ingegjerd, Grand Duchess of Kiev 274

- Inge Haraldsson *kryppill* (“Hunchback”), King of Norway 108–110, 112, 113, 129, 130, 281
- Innocent III, pope 113, 136, 508
- Ireland 469, 513
- Isabella Bruce, Queen of Norway 26
- Isidore of Seville, bishop 15, 54, 231, 236, 429
- Islam 1, 123, 249
- Íslendingabók* 464, 474
- Íslendinga saga*, see *saga literature* (Old Norse)
- Jabala 212
- Jacob, biblical figure 84, 185, 203, 298, 397, 463
- Jacob’s Well, Nāblus 204
- Jacobus de Voragine 258, 262, 448
- Jaffa 135, 192, 204, 246
- James, St, apostle 88, 195
- Jarnsiða* 516
- Jaspert, Nikolas 142, 144–146, 154, 158, 160
- Jehoshaphat, valley of 154, 200, 206, 207, 225
- Jemtland (Jämtland) 274
- Jensen, Janus Møller 29, 33, 40, 95, 98, 100, 101, 107, 108, 117, 155, 160, 200, 228
- Jensen, Kurt Villads 28, 29, 37, 105, 122, 155
- Jericho 201, 206, 236
- Jerome, St 5, 14, 15, 178, 249, 254, 257, 258, 260–265, 400, 434
- Jerusalem 13–47, 49–55, 59–85, 133–165, 191–197, 219–243, 271–323, 341–374, 395–422, 424, 501–533
- Dome of the Rock 30, 31, 51, 52, 207, 294, 429, 431
 - Dominus flevit, church of 197
 - Gethsemane 259
 - Golgotha (Calvary) 34, 39, 170, 259, 288–289, 328, 448, 470
 - Haram al-Sharif 30, 429
 - Hierusalem 34–37, 39, 43, 51, 213, 220, 253, 425–453, 527
 - Heavenly Jerusalem 3–5, 34, 35, 41, 51, 69, 102, 124, 182, 184, 239, 243, 249, 283, 322, 323, 342, 343, 374, 395–421
 - Holy Sepulchre, church of 27, 31–33, 51, 52, 67, 81, 82, 84, 92, 96, 120, 124, 125, 138, 149, 195, 201, 202, 204, 207, 208, 220, 222, 224, 225, 236, 249, 250, 252–254, 257, 279, 283, 290, 294–296, 325, 327–329, 336, 338, 429, 435, 448, 470
 - Hospital of St John 109, 204, 216
 - ideas about 33, 134
 - Jerusalem, (Latin) Kingdom of 29, 31, 87–89, 96, 105, 107, 121, 144, 195, 199, 206, 279
 - Jorsalaborg 43, 236, 435
 - Jorsalír 34, 40, 43–47, 455
 - Kidron Valley 30, 200
 - Mount Calvary 251, 252, 254, 257
 - Mount Moriah 3
 - Mount Scopus 192
 - Mount Sion/Zion 32, 39, 84, 192, 204, 220, 250, 253, 283, 530, 531
 - Pool of Bethesda 446
 - New Jerusalem 3, 4, 67, 182, 192, 301, 316, 334, 343, 412, 415
 - St Mary of Jehoshaphat 200
 - St Mary’s Church at Mount Zion 283
 - Temple Mount 30, 50, 51, 283, 429
 - *Templum Domini* (Dome of the Rock) 30, 51, 52, 204, 220, 225, 236, 283, 294, 429, 431
 - *Templum Salomonis* (Aqsa Mosque) 51, 204
 - Tower of David 204, see also Mount of Olives
 - visualizations of 53, 141, 143–146, 154, 155, 164
- Jesus Christ 5, 208, 231, 255, 260, 336, 337
- birth of 252, 255–259, 315
 - death of 254, 256, 257, 389, 450, 509
 - deposition of 37
- Jews 1, 4, 6, 8, 19, 34, 41, 49, 50, 52, 72, 81, 225, 251, 391, 441, 446, 465, 468, 477–499, 527
- Johanson, Karl G. 436
- John of Gorze 78
- Johnsen, Arne Odd 95, 96, 109, 113, 127, 130, 163, 168, 176, 507, 508, 510
- John, St 55, 109, 178, 204, 251, 256, 334, 429
- author of the Apocalypse 256
 - the Baptist 88, 92, 93, 204, 216, 220, 282, 288, 291, 402
 - the Evangelist 88
- John XIX, pope 84
- Jón Birgisson, Archbishop 130
- Jönköping 331, 333
- Jónsbók* 516
- Jónsson, Finnur 45, 46, 63, 117, 226, 436, 437, 463
- Jordan, river of 45, 80, 82, 116, 120, 123, 130, 138, 201, 205, 206, 208, 231, 236, 460
- Jørgensen, Hans Henrik Lohfert 378, 387, 389, 439

- Jorsalaborg, *see* Jerusalem
 Jóršalaland, *see* Palestine (Holy land),
 Jóršalaland, *Terra sancta*)
 Jorsalír, *see* Jerusalem
 Jórviik (York) 43–47
 journey (travel) 5, 29–31, 60, 69, 73, 77, 79,
 80, 83, 95, 96, 103–105, 108, 110–114, 116,
 117, 120, 124, 128, 133–139, 149, 155, 157,
 195, 199, 200, 206, 211, 214, 221–223,
 228–234, 236–238, 243, 246–248, 256,
 261, 453, 459, 460, 465, 472, 501–519
 Judaea 204
 Judaism 1, 51, 123, 249, 491–493, 497, 498
 judgement 27, 71, 75, 78, 79, 136, 220, 321,
 363, 395, 396, 400, 402–404, 406, 417,
 418, 420, 449
 Jürgensen, Martin Wangsgaard 40, 41, 299,
 303–305, 317, 318, 395–421
 justice 142, 402, 502–504, 507–509, 517, 518
 Jutland 35, 37, 56, 134, 202, 206, 302, 303,
 306, 307, 311, 312, 314, 409, 412, 418, 422

 Kaisheim 202
 Kalf Arnesson 495
 Kalmar Sound 327, 328
 Kalmar union (1397–1523) 39
 Kålund, Kristian 203, 206, 220, 224, 225, 229,
 231, 235, 453, 470, 497
 Kantorowicz, Ernst 66
 Karl Jónson 222
 Karl Knutsson Bonde, king of Sweden 180
 Kaspersen, Søren 149, 305, 405, 418
 Katarina Ulfsdotter 246, 257, 265
 Kedwards, Dale 16, 433, 435, 440, 446, 448
 Kidron Valley 30, 200
 king (metaphor) 1, 3, 4, 14–16, 18–22, 26–30,
 32, 37, 39–41, 43–45, 47, 59–64, 66–73,
 76–80, 83–85, 87–93, 95, 97, 98,
 103–116, 118, 119, 121–123, 125, 127–131,
 134, 135, 141, 146–150, 152, 154–165, 167,
 168, 170–183, 185–187, 191, 199–201, 206,
 221–223, 226, 232, 238, 240, 242, 248,
 258, 270–282, 285–291, 293, 296, 301,
 315, 321, 325, 327, 329–331, 334, 335,
 382, 429, 445, 446, 455, 463–464, 466,
 467, 478, 480, 481, 483, 486, 488, 495,
 496, 501–505, 509, 513–516, 521–525, 527,
 529, 531, 533
 kingship 41, 64, 70, 75, 83, 85, 118, 129, 146,
 147, 155, 161, 286, 503, 514, 525
 Kinsarvik Church 488, 489
Kirialax saga, *see* saga literature (Old Norse)
 Klim Church 306
 Knights Templar 30, 104, 214, 329
 Knud, Earl 200
 Knud III (Hardeknud), King of England and
 Denmark 276
 Knud IV, St, King of Denmark 22, 30, 41,
 87–90, 522
 Knud Lavard, St 39, 92, 154, 164, 278, 289
 Knud the great, King of Denmark, Norway and
 England 60, 68, 83, 84, 103, 271, 273,
 274, 276
 Knud VI, King of Denmark 123, 279
 Knut Eriksson, King of Sweden 1167–1195/96
 335, 336, 522, 523
Konungs Skuggsiá (King's Mirror) 176, 460,
 502, 513
 Kopp Church 178
 Kornerup, Jacob 38, 397, 399
 Krefting, Otto 278, 290
kringla heimsins 14–18, 30, 40, *see also*
mundus (world); *oikumene*; *orbis terrarum*
(terrarum orbis)
 Kristina, daughter of Karl Knutsson Bonde 180
 Kristin, Sigurd's daughter, Princess of
 Norway 89–91
 Krötzi, Christian 103
 Kryger, Karin 278, 279, 304
 Kühnel, Gustav 87, 206
 Kumlabý Church 356, 366, 368
 Kungahälla 159, 160, 162, 382

 Lagman Gudrodsson, King of Man and the
 Isles 199
 Lambert of St Omer 440, 442, 444
Landafræði 224
 landscape 19, 20, 30, 35, 41, 191, 192,
 195–197, 240, 242, 283, 325, 326, 329,
 333, 337, 338, 347, 429, 441, 455,
 462–473, 475, 526
 Langebek, Jacob 203
lapides vivi 182
 Larson, Laurence Marcellus 361, 505–506
Las Siete Partidas, *see* law
 Last Judgement 71, 78, 321, 403, 404

- Lateran Basilica, *see* Rome
 Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, *see* Jerusalem
 Latowsky, Anne 73, 84
 law 4, 14, 16, 23, 24, 39, 41, 55, 59, 63, 68, 83, 96, 114, 130, 171, 213, 253, 282, 286, 334, 341, 350, 356, 360, 361, 363, 368, 369, 371, 470, 471, 474, 489, 490, 501–519, 523, 527, 530, 532, *see also* code
 – Eidsivathing Law 361
 – Elder Westrogothic Law 334
 – Gulathing Law 361
 – of Husum 365
 – *Las Siete Partidas* 516
 – of Slesvig 365
 – Upplandslagen 361
 – of Visby 365
 Lawrence, St 129, 178, 284, 376
 Lazarus, biblical figure 214, 217, 225
Legenda aurea 259, 262, 264, 346, 444, 448
 Legend of the Last Emperor 71–76, 83
 legitimization of power 40, 286
Leiðarvísir 103, 219–232, 235, 236, 238, 243, 448, 470
 Leo, St 88
Leofric collectar 271
 Leofric of Exeter 272
 Leonard, St 88, 91
Liber Augustalis 516
Liber celestis revelacionum, *see Revelaciones* (by St Birgitta of Sweden)
Liber floridus (by Lambert of St Omer) 438–442
 Lidén, Anne 87, 89
 Lidén, Hans-Emil 174
 Liepe, Lena 18, 19, 26, 32, 33, 41, 125, 142, 143, 163, 167, 225, 226, 247, 381, 401
 Ligato, Giuseppe 144–146, 158, 162
Lignum vitae (Tree of Life) 385–386
 Limoges 79, 195
 Lincoln 414, 492, 498
 – Cathedral 491
 Lindahl, Fritze 149–152
 Lindgren, Mereth 267, 336, 356, 365, 366, 368
 Lindisfarne 21
 Linköping 178, 213, 214, 216, 347, 369
 – Cathedral 178
 – treasure (treasury) 178
 Lipton, Sara 490, 491
 Lisbjerg Church 35, 36
 Lisbon 110, 122, 201, 202
 literacy 16
 liturgical play (mystery play) 368, 372
 liturgical practice 318
 liturgy 1, 34–37, 39, 53, 62, 64, 75, 92, 123, 142, 213, 253, 281, 282, 286, 292, 296, 318, 322, 343, 346, 347, 349, 350, 358, 360, 374, 406, 416, 504, 521, 523–526
 Living Cross 390
 Living Tree, *see Lignum vitae* (Tree of Life)
Loca sancta (Jerusalem and the Holy Land) 41, 247–255, 258–262, 264, 266, 375, 393
locus communis, *see* commonplace (*locus communis*)
 Løffler, Julius Bentley 397
 loft, *see* screen (loft)
 Løjt Church 409, 410
 London 2, 3, 5, 8, 14, 23, 24, 28, 30, 45, 46, 64, 83, 91, 95, 102, 103, 105, 106, 118, 136, 141, 143, 155, 157, 159, 169, 176, 183, 184, 191–193, 196, 199–202, 204, 206, 239, 242, 262, 267, 272, 273, 286, 291, 293, 315, 357, 359, 381, 384, 387, 405, 413, 415, 431, 450, 463, 478–480, 483, 485, 487, 491, 493, 503, 506
 – Temple Church 293
 Longinus 487, 495, 496
 Louis IX, St, King of France, 1214–1270 32, 128, 167, 173, 176, 183, 185, 480
 Louis VII, King of France 110, 111, 123
 Lovén, Christian 280
 Luke, St, evangelist 4, 51, 197, 255, 258, 259, 342, 346–350, 356, 363, 364, 369
 Lund 34, 37, 45, 54, 68, 69, 148, 151, 159, 181, 182, 185, 262, 279, 305, 328, 336, 347, 348, 350, 352, 353, 356, 365, 374, 522
 Lund Cathedral 177, 178, 181–185
 Lundegårdh, Ingrid 280, 522, 523
 Luther, Martin 33, 55
Lux illuxit laetabunda 282
Luxuria 491
 Lyngby Church 309
 Lysaker, Trygve 297
 Macarius, St 88
 Maeshowe 113, 123, 124, 456–460, 475
 Magerøy, Ellen Marie 174
 Magi (the Holy Three Kings) 92, 222, 254, 258, 288, 375, 403, 435
 magic 27, 105, 387, 389, 392, 495, 496, 499

- Magna Mahumeria (*Maka Maria*) 204
 Magnus Birgersson, Ladulås, King of Sweden 172
 Magnúsdóttir, Elín Bára 473, 474
 Magnus Eriksson, King of Sweden 171, 179, 181
 Magnus Erlendsson, St, earl of Orkney 128
 Magnus III berfætts (Barefoot), King of Norway, 1093–1103 105, 113, 161, 223, 361
 Magnus Sigurdsson, King of Norway, 1130–1135 161–163
 Magnus the Good, King of Norway, 1035–1047 68, 78, 275, 287
 Magnus V Erlingsson, King of Norway, 1161–1184 287
 Magnus VI Haakonsson Lagabøte (the Law Mender), king of Norway 26, 170–176
Majestas Domini (Christ in Majesty) 149, 398, 406
 Majestatis workshop 352, 354, 356
 Males, Mikael 20, 41, 113, 120, 123, 224, 247, 448, 455–476
 Malmfrid, Queen of Norway 89
 Mamelukes 32
 Mandeville, John 17, 194, 195, 448
 manual 253, 348
Manuale Norwegicum 343, 348, 363
 manuscripts 26, 34, 39, 41, 45, 53, 74, 75, 149, 162, 196, 203, 204, 206, 211, 215, 219, 220, 224–230, 232, 235–239, 243, 334, 347, 348, 352, 382, 424–437, 439–444, 447, 449, 451–453, 464, 466, 478, 480, 488, 502, 508, 510, 515, 516, 518, 519
mappamundi (world map) (*mappaemundi*) 5, 10
 maps 21, 193, 425–427, 429, 431–433, 435, 437, 439–441, 443, 444, 452, 453
 Marani, Tommaso 220–222, 227–229
 Margaret, St 88
 Margery Kempe 246, 267
 Margrethe I, Queen of Norway, Denmark, and Sweden 180–182
 Marianus Scotus 70
 Markland 239, 240
 Mark, St, evangelist 23, 51, 255
 Markus, Kersti 20, 41, 125, 325–339
 Markús Skeggjason 43
 Marqab (Margat) 212
 Marseilles 115, 202, 211, 214, 216
 Martinus Capella 440
 martyr 29, 70, 71, 92, 93, 130, 133, 138, 139, 192, 247, 248, 271, 291, 293, 294, 296, 415, 493, 520–523, 525, 533
 martyrdom 138, 181, 227, 271, 280, 288–290, 434, 489, 495, 496, 525
martyrion 92, 293, 294
 Mary Magdalene, St 69, 178
 Mary, mother of Christ, *see* Virgin Mary
 masculinity 461
 mass exposition 299, 301, 309, 316, 318, 320, 321
 materiality 250, 258, 378, 386, 453
 Matthew Paris 185, 186, 450, 479, 480, 492
 Matthew, St, evangelist 23, 255, 258, 259, 351, 380, 415, 492
 Maubeuge
 – St.Pierre-St. Paul's Church 173
 Maundy Thursday 53, 220
 Maurice, Franciscan friar 32, 211, 212
 measurement 295, 296, 381, 382, 385, 393, 434, 439
 Mechthild of Magdeburg 417, 418
Meditaciones vite Christi 251, 255, 267
 Mediterranean 14, 23, 28, 30, 77, 83, 95, 99, 100, 114, 116, 121, 142, 148, 152–155, 161, 212, 246, 265, 440
 Meissner, Rudolf 505
 Melania the Younger, St 209, 264
 Melisende, Queen of Jerusalem 121, 201, 207
 Mellinkoff, Ruth 488
 Melus of Bari 78, 82
 memory 29, 43, 64, 66, 67, 73–76, 103, 104, 191, 192, 235, 250, 253, 254, 263, 271, 309, 313, 316, 343–346, 374, 378, 386, 425, 443, 453
 – collective memory 316, 344
 – cultural memory 19, 344, 345
menorah 52–54
 mercy 121, 234, 241, 276, 321, 402, 444, 445, 502–509, 517, 518
 Messina 202
Messuskýringar 34, 318, 320, 321, 342
 metaphor 1–7, 9, 17, 27, 34, 37, 62, 83, 102, 170, 182, 233, 234, 241, 243, 282, 299, 301, 313, 322, 323, 364, 412, 469, 472
 Metcalfe, Frederick 282
 metric relics 381, 382, 393

- Meyer, Johan 292
 Michael, St, Archangel 60, 67, 77, 78, 178, 180, 225, 377, 402
 micro-architecture 308, 310, 395, 396, 431
Midrash Rabba 501, 506, 507
 Mieszko I, duke of Poland 66
 Miklagard (Constantinople) 28, 40, 232, 481
 Milan 92, 222, 228, 308
miles/milites Christi 124, 195
 Milvian Bridge 144
 Minorities 179, 477, 491, 493
 Minsk 150
 miracles 27, 124, 128, 134, 138, 139, 153, 234, 246, 257, 259, 271, 272, 275, 276, 281, 282, 288, 289, 384, 388, 392, 409, 445, 459, 483, 491, 496, 497
 Miriam, biblical figure 398, 403
 missal 34, 74, 75, 347–349
 – *Missale Scarense* 349
 – Strängnäs missal 180, 348, 350
 – Uppsala missal 349, 350
 mission 22, 23, 83, 106, 137, 240, 440, 497, 526
 Mølen 61
 Molland, Einar 174, 506–509
 monasticism (monastic culture) 34, 35, 39, 108, 109, 233, 249, 264, 313, 325, 347, 414, 415, 437, 444, 448, 453, 470, 473, 480
Mons Domini 521, 525, 526, 532, 533, *see also* Uppsala
Mons Gaudi (Montjoie) 30, 192, 193, 195, 196, 283
 monsters 228, 484, 485
Mons Zion (Mount Zion) 39, 530, 531
 Monte Cassino 81
 Monte Gargano 77–79, 81, 82
 Montreal, Jordan 203
 Mont-Saint-Michel 75, 77, 78
 Morann 514
 Morgan, Nigel 359, 479, 480, 491
Morkinskinna 103, 104, 107, 111, 112, 115, 119–121, 157, 159, 161, 162, 165
 Mortensen, Lars B. (Boje) 16, 17, 19–23, 154, 276, 302, 315, 464
 Moses, biblical figure 4, 52, 192, 229–231, 368, 404, 437, 442, 445, 462, 463, 467, 468, 470–472
 Moster 462–464, 472
 Mount Calvary, *see* Jerusalem
 Mount Joy, *see* *Mons Gaudi* (Montjoie)
 Mount Moriah, *see* Jerusalem
 Mount of Olives 29, 30, 64, 73, 193, 200, 206, 209, 211, 225, 236, 259, 283, 441
 – Church of the Ascension 283
 – Church of the Lord’s Prayer 210
 Mount of Temptation 206
 Mount Zion (Sion), *see* Jerusalem
 Mount Tabor 204
 Mundal, Else 276, 496, 497
mundus (world) 15, *see also* *kringla heimsins; oikumene; orbis terrarum (terrarium orbis)*
 Munkaþverá / Munkathvera (Pverá) monastery 41, 204, 219, 221–223, 228
 Munke Bjergby Church 306
 Munkholmen 284
 murals (frescoes, wall paintings) 86, 90, 352, 356, 360, 367, 396–398, 400, 401, 403, 406, 408, 410, 419, 478, 489–491
 – in Aal Church 56, 412
 – in Kumlaby Church 356, 366, 368
 – in Løjt Church 409, 410, 418
 – in Sanderum Church 394, 397–409, 411, 412, 418
 – in Torpa Church 352
 – in Vinderslev Church 418, 419
 Muslims 1, 8, 26, 28–31, 39, 41, 44, 82, 100, 104, 108, 120–122, 124, 128, 135, 136, 177, 194, 195, 201, 204, 212, 477, 478, 481, 484, 485, 494, 495, 498
 Myrvoll, Klaus Johan 34, 40, 43–47, 455
 mythology 219–221, 233, 434, 465
 – Christian 16, 17, 23, 154, 302
 – Biblical 8, 20, 24
 – Old Norse 233, 436, 449, 466
mythopoiesis 21
 Nabi Samwil 192–194
 Näblus 204
 Naples 246, 265
 Narbonne 114, 115, 117, 124
 narrative, narratology 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 13–15, 20, 21, 23, 24, 26, 27, 37, 66, 68, 69, 71, 75, 83–85, 97, 106, 107, 116, 119, 120, 123, 156, 196, 219, 220, 226, 228, 233,

- 238–241, 243, 253, 255, 256, 263, 308, 311, 346, 348, 350, 356, 364, 369, 371, 396, 401, 405, 413, 438, 439, 441, 444, 445, 448–450, 456, 458, 460, 462, 471, 475, 477, 484, 488, 493, 495, 496, 522, 523, 525–527, 529
- nation 22, 98, 472, 504, 521, 526–529
- nationalism 2, 99
- Nativity (of Christ) 33, 252, 253, 258, 261, 264, 267
- nave 56, 87, 88, 93, 174, 206, 210, 280, 293, 297, 299, 303, 304, 311, 313, 317, 318, 320, 321, 329, 397, 400, 402–404, 406, 408, 412, 418
- navel of the world (*omphalos, umbilicus mundi*) 5, 15, 31, 248, 427
- Nazareth 1, 198, 203, 204
- Nedstryn 25, 480, 481, 483, 485
- Nedstryn, altar frontal (Bergen University Museum) 26, 27, 28, 480, 481, 484, 485
- Nesjar 20, 60, 61, 66, 68, 71, 72, 79, 83, 274, *see also* battle
- Nesjavísur*, *see* skaldic poetry
- Network 4, 17, 34, 59, 112, 113, 283, 326, 334, 337, 387
- New Jerusalem, *see* Jerusalem
- Nicholas Brekespear 279, *see also* Hadrian IV, pope
- Nicholas, St 148, 178, 376
- Nicolaysen, Nicolay 167, 171, 174, 289
- Nid (river) 274, 284
- Nidarnes 278
- Nidaros (Trondheim) 18, 20, 22, 34, 37, 41, 54, 64, 91–93, 103, 108, 114, 125, 127, 130, 131, 143, 149, 159, 163, 178, 191–197, 202, 226, 250, 271–298, 329, 342, 343, 347, 349, 351, 363, 364, 369, 477, 478, 480, 492, 497, 510
- Archbishop's residence 284, 511
- Bakke 284
- Christchurch (Cathedral) 91, 92, 125, 130, 131, 272, 277–282, 285, 288–298, 349, 494, 500, 501, 511–515
- Eyrabíng 274
- Holy Trinity Church 277–279
- St Clement's Church 275, 276, 298
- St Mary's Church 159, 166–168, 170, 174–176, 178–181, 185–187, 225, 277, 283
- St Mary's Hospital 284
- St Lawrence, Abbey of 129, 178, 284, 376
- St Olav's Church 132, 180, 277
- Sancta Sedes, Abbey of 283, 284
- Nikulás Bergsson, abbot of Þverá (Munkaþverá) 31, 103, 204, 219, 221, 226, 470
- Nikulás Saemundarson 204
- Noah, biblical figure 192, 224, 322, 437, 440
- Normandy 60, 75–79, 81, 82, 84, 273
- Norra Strö Church 268, 367–369
- Norrland 280
- North Sea 23, 135, 137, 274, 277, 326, 347, 371, 480, 491, 493
- North, the 13–18, 20–24, 26, 28, 29, 34, 35, 37, 39–41, 43, 47, 75, 77, 92, 93, 95, 100, 131, 135, 137, 152, 155, 195, 204, 210, 219, 221–223, 225–227, 233, 236, 239, 241, 247, 248, 277, 280, 284–286, 288–289, 291, 310, 326, 328, 331–333, 341–374, 377, 385, 400–403, 412, 413, 425, 440, 449, 455, 456, 458, 460, 461, 464, 469, 478, 480, 490, 491, 493, 494, 496, 497, 502, 521–533
- Norvasund /Niorfasund, *see* Gibraltar (Norvasund/Niorfasund)
- Norway 13, 16, 18–20, 22–26, 29–32, 34, 39–41, 45, 59–88, 93, 95, 97–99, 105–110, 112, 113, 116, 117, 122, 125, 127–130, 133, 134, 141–165, 167, 168, 170–173, 176, 177, 179, 182, 191, 201, 206, 223, 233, 245, 248, 273, 277–280, 282, 283, 286, 287, 293, 318, 326, 329, 347, 357, 359, 365, 375, 377–379, 384–386, 390, 391, 425, 431, 436, 440, 450, 459, 462–464, 469, 472, 477–480, 485–493, 495–498, 501, 503, 508, 510, 511, 513, 516, 519, 520, 522, 526
- Norwegian Code of 1274*, *see* code 501
- Norwich 272, 492, 498
- Notmark manual 348
- Novgorod 60, 91, 150, 272, 274
- Nunc dimittis* 369
- octagon 87, 92, 125, 278, 285, 290, 292–296, 329
- Oddr kikinaskáld 78
- Oddr Snorrason 222
- Ødegård, Knut 281

- Odo, Count of Nevers 213
 Odo of Cluny 78
 Oen, Maria H. 30, 33, 214, 245–267, 342, 460
 offerings 34, 40, 49, 66, 185, 206, 212, 284, 329, 333, 342, 348, 351–354, 356, 357, 360, 362–364, 368, 369, 372, 374, 378, 382, 384, 388, 400
 Oftestad, Eivor Andersen 1, 13, 19, 33, 40, 49–55, 125, 314, 316
oikumene 14, 15, 21, 23, 30, 440, 449, *see also kringla heimsins, mundus* (world); *orbis terrarum* (*terrarum orbis*)
 Olaus Magnus 32, 350, 351, 361
 Olav I Tryggvason, King of Norway 199
 Olav II Haraldsson, St, King of Norway (*rex perpetuus Norvegie*) 16, 20, 28, 29, 59–72, 74–77, 82–84, 226, 273
 Olav III Kyrri (the Peaceful) Haraldsson, King of Norway 131, 271, 277, 278
 Old Icelandic Homily Book 45, 444
 Old Norse Homily Book 234, 384, 444, 481
 Olof, king of Sweden 329–331, 524
Olsók (St Olav's mass) 130
omphalos, *see* navel of the world (*omphalos, umbilicus mundi*)
 Onuphrius, St 88
 orb 425–453
orbis terrarum (*terrarum orbis*) 14, 427, 452, *see also kringla heimsins, mundus* (world); *oikumene*
 Ordericus Vitalis 97
Ordinarius Lincopensis (the Linköping ordinal) 347, 348, 350
Ordo Nidrosiensis (the Nidaros ordinal) 282, 343, 347, 349, 351
 Orkney 30, 91, 95, 96, 108, 111–114, 123, 124, 126–129, 206, 326, 375, 455–461, 475
Orkneyinga saga, *see* saga literature (Old Norse)
 ornament 31, 35, 41, 179, 287, 294, 301, 308, 310–312, 315, 321, 336, 527, 528
 Orø cross 149, 152, 153
 Orthodox Church 272
 Oslo 18, 34, 44, 47, 59, 63, 69, 75, 78, 91, 96, 98, 99, 105, 107, 109, 112–114, 127, 129, 143, 158–160, 162, 163, 167, 168, 174–176, 179, 183, 186–187, 211, 230–232, 234, 245, 246, 272, 280, 282, 293, 297, 308, 318, 342, 343, 359–362, 375, 376, 385, 431, 432, 444, 460, 463, 467, 469, 478, 479, 486, 489, 490, 492, 502, 506, 510, 515
 – Akershus Castle 168
 – St. Mary's Church 166–168, 170, 174–176, 179–181, 185, 186
ostensio reliquiarum 184
 Östergötland 327, 331, 332
 Östra Aros 280
 Östra Gerum 333
 Oswald, St, King of England 278, 293
 Otto III, Holy Roman Emperor 66, 67, 72–75, 78, 84
 Ottoman empire 40
 Ottomans 33
 Ottravad 324, 336–339
 Ousterhout, Robert 31, 249, 253, 254
pacis visio 404
 pagans 15, 16, 20, 23, 27, 44, 72, 74, 76, 78, 79, 106, 115, 134, 138, 227, 293, 315, 326, 333, 440, 449, 450, 462–464, 466, 467, 478, 495–497
 Palestine (Holy land, Jóršalaland, *Terra sancta*) 14, 15, 17, 24, 29, 32, 43, 192, 194, 195, 200, 202, 207, 212, 224, 247, 249, 253, 463, 464
pálmara (pilgrim) 104
 Palm Sunday 60–66, 69–71, 79, 83
 Panofsky, Erwin 396, 414
 papacy 49, 95, 97, 104, 106, 107, 117, 136
 Paphos 200, 204
 Paradise, *see* Heaven
 Paris 5, 17, 32, 68, 78, 80, 83, 95, 108, 109, 114, 136, 144, 146, 149, 153, 167, 169, 170, 172–174, 177, 185, 199, 201, 202, 206, 209–211, 283, 344, 369, 382, 400, 414, 427, 506–508, 510, 525
 – Notre Dame Cathedral 508, 510
 – Sainte-Chapelle 32, 167, 173, 174, 177, 185
 – St Victor, Abbey of 283, 501, 507, 510, 512
partes aquilonis (lands of the north wind) 21
Passio Canuti regis 22
 passion of Christ 18, 41, 66, 125, 142, 243, 293, 296, 321, 352, 382, 402
 passion relics, *see* relics
Passio Olavi (*Passio et miracula beati Olavi*) 91, 272, 281, 282, 288, 289
patibulum 148

- patriarch of Jerusalem 216, 217
patronage 111, 112, 115, 130, 175, 177, 210, 357, 496
Paul, apostle, St 50
Paula, St 262, 264, 265
Pax Augustana 315
peace 51, 63, 66, 69, 72, 78, 91, 112, 115, 131, 183, 242, 277, 315, 320, 350, 404, 405, 448, 453, 502–509, 517, 518, 524
Pechenegs 281
penance 39, 106, 111, 127, 363, 408, 415, 417
Perno Church 178
Peter, apostle of Christ, St 54, 55, 211, 212, 222, 227, 290, 373, 402, 407, 408, 418, 479, 480
Peter Olofsson, master of Skänninge 246
Peter Olofsson, prior of Alvastra 246
Peter the Venerable 22, 105, 405, 507
Petrus Comestor 444, 467, 508–512
Philip III, king of France 26, 167, 170, 173
Philip IV, king of France 167, 168, 170, 171, 173, 176, 177, 181
Phoenix 230, 231, 235, 237, 238, 242
Piacenza Pilgrim 192
pia fraus 277, 287
Pierre le Mangeur, *see* Petrus Comestor
pileum cornutum (Judenhut) 486, 489
pilgrimage 28, 29, 34, 41, 44, 71, 77–84, 96, 100–106, 111, 120–123, 127, 143, 148, 154, 191, 193–197, 199–204, 206, 208, 211, 213, 219, 221, 222, 225, 227–231, 238, 240, 242, 245–267, 273, 275, 276, 283, 284, 288–290, 292, 294, 329, 375–379, 412, 414, 417, 427, 453, 459–461, 477
pilgrim guide 52, 82, 103, 219, 228, 250
pilgrim route 78, 114, 191, 194, 219, 220, 227, 243, 333
pilgrims 18, 25, 28, 30–33, 41, 44, 45, 51, 52, 76–82, 84, 89, 93, 102–104, 114, 120, 123–125, 127, 158, 170, 191–193, 195–197, 199–215, 220, 246, 249, 250, 253–255, 260, 261, 263–266, 273, 275, 283–285, 289, 292, 328, 346, 375, 377, 378, 382, 393, 429, 455, 456, 460, 464, 470
pillar of cloud/fire 466
plunder 21, 117–119, 481
pluralist 101, 102
Poitou 62, 76
Polycarp, St. 181
Pontefract, England 196
Poor Clares, Order of 250
portal (door) 37, 38, 221, 280, 299, 300, 303, 310–312, 322, 325, 334, 336, 349, 511, 512
Power 7, 17–19, 30, 32–34, 40, 44, 59, 60, 66, 67, 72, 75, 79, 81, 83, 84, 96, 102, 105, 111, 113, 124, 128, 129, 142, 144, 146–148, 156, 158–160, 162, 163, 170, 173, 175, 177, 179, 183, 191, 227, 237, 241, 253, 265, 272, 274, 276, 279, 283, 286, 290, 291, 296, 302, 322, 333, 335, 337, 338, 351, 364, 375, 378, 386, 387, 390–393, 443, 446, 460, 465, 481, 485, 495–497, 514, 525, 530
Prague (Praha) 66, 185, 328, 382
Prawle Point, Devon 202
praxis pietatis 408, 420
pre-Christian society 325, 333
Prefiguration 20, 385, 464, 471
Premonstratensian Order 108, 109
pride (cardinal vice) 27, 481, 528
primer 415, 416, 418
Pringle, Denys 31, 32, 41, 44, 51, 91, 103, 154, 192, 199–217, 220–223, 249, 279, 294, 328, 382, 448, 470
procession 64, 66, 71, 144, 169, 184, 185, 193, 238, 268, 320, 342, 343, 346–351, 362, 363, 365, 367–372, 374
prophecy 5, 29, 50, 74, 75, 247, 346, 356, 438, 446, 449, 450, 531, 532
Protestant(ism) 2, 18, 39, 55, 98, 360, 411
protomartyr 93
psalms, biblical 362, 501, 514, 522, 524, 526
Pseudo-Methodius 72
Purchase His Pilgrimes 196
purgatory 246, 250, 400
purificatio beate Virginis Mariae 348, 358
Purkis, William 96, 102, 120

qibla 1
quadriga (hermeneutical model) 5, 18, 316
Queen of Sheba (Queen Sibilla), biblical figure 445, 450

Ragnarr Loðbrók 221, 458
Rainald, Bishop 162
Raoul Glaber 75, 79, 81
Raschellà, Fabrizio 228
Rationale divinatorum officiorum (by William Durandus) 301, 318

- Raupp, Lukas 18–19, 41, 44, 91, 97, 105, 125, 141–165, 170, 200–201, 204, 223, 287, 382
- Raymond d'Aiguilers 196
- rebirth 54
- reformation 2, 5, 18, 39, 54, 55, 64, 73, 75, 96, 108, 114, 143, 147, 167, 169, 172, 178, 202, 288, 290, 291, 296, 297, 302–304, 350, 360–363, 365–367, 370, 378, 396, 401, 402, 407, 409, 411, 415, 417, 418, 421, 480, 492
- regnum* 39, 49, 185, 291, 525
- Regularis concordia* 64, 350
- relic display 185
- relics 18, 19, 26, 28, 31, 32, 41, 49, 66, 73, 76, 91–93, 97, 117, 125, 130, 131, 141–165, 167–187, 201, 202, 204, 222, 224, 227, 228, 253, 254, 264–266, 272, 278, 280, 287, 289–291, 298, 316, 349, 376, 379–382, 384, 390, 393, 438, 444, 522, *see also brandea* (contact relics); metric relics
- passion relics 18, 142–143, 146–147, 163–164, 167, 170, 173, 186–187
- reliquary 32, 151, 152, 168–173, 179–182, 185, 187, 290, 335–336, 382
- representation 20, 23, 29, 33, 40, 41, 64, 88, 89, 96, 124, 145, 162, 228, 229, 237, 238, 249, 258, 308, 310, 325, 327, 329, 352, 372, 374, 384, 385, 388, 393, 395–398, 402, 403, 405, 406, 408, 410, 412, 414, 415, 417, 420, 421, 427, 429, 431, 445, 452, 453, 477
- responsory 527, 528
- resurrected Christ 324, 336, 512
- resurrection 1, 27, 136, 193, 236, 256, 259, 338, 385, 389, 418, 429, 438, 446, 450, 509
- retable (Valö) 369
- Revelaciones* (by St Birgitta of Sweden) 245–257, 261–263, 265, 267
- Revelation (Book of) 72, 245, 334, 385, 411, 413, *see also* apocalypse
- rex perpetuus Norvegie*, *see* Olav II Haraldsson, St, King of Norway (*rex perpetuus Norvegie*)
- rhetoric 23, 27, 84, 121, 191, 253, 259, 263, 299, 301, 302, 305, 307, 309, 311, 313–316, 322, 405, 406
- Rhetorica ad Herennium* 315
- Riant, Paul 32, 95, 98, 153, 199–201, 203–204, 206, 208, 210–211, 214, 382
- Ribe 37, 38, 202, 203
- Riccoldo di Monte Croce 254
- Richard II, Duke of Normandy 75–77, 80–83
- Richard of St Vannes 80, 82
- Richiza, Queen of Sweden 150
- Rijchter, Tadeus 86, 90
- Riley-Smith, Jonathan 95–97, 101, 111–113, 117–119, 136–137
- Ringsted 150, 279, 381
- St Bendt's Church /Abbey Church 150, 279
- Ritua Aboensis* 348
- ritual 20, 34, 60, 64, 66, 69, 71, 72, 129, 147, 178, 181–185, 192–195, 197, 254, 268, 301, 303–305, 309, 317, 318, 320–322, 343–349, 351, 353, 357, 359–372, 401, 406, 416, 466, 493, 511
- Roach, Levi 74, 75, 78
- Roaldset, Hege 162, 163, 176–177, 183, 186–187
- Robert, Archbishop of Rouen 75
- Robert of Bury St Edmunds 492
- Robert, Duke of Normandy 79
- Robert of Ely 200
- Robert of Jumièges 74, 75, 349
- Rodrigo Álvarez 192
- Rognvald (Rognvaldr) Kali Kolsson, St, Earl of Orkney 30, 91, 95, 97, 100–102, 107–108, 110–116, 118–120, 123–124, 128–130, 206, 456, 460–461
- Röhricht, Reinhold 202–203, 211
- Røldal 384, 392, 488
- Roman Church, *see* *Ecclesia Romana*
- Romanesque 41, 210, 291, 293, 294, 299, 303, 305, 307–309, 314, 316, 317, 322, 329, 334, 353, 395–400, 403–406, 408–410, 412, 414, 420, 511
- Rómavegr* 114, 116, 155
- Rome 17, 19, 31, 32, 34, 49, 53, 54, 67, 76, 84, 103, 105, 111, 114, 116, 127, 135, 184, 195, 196, 203, 204, 206, 212, 219, 220, 222, 224, 227–229, 245, 246, 248, 250, 251, 260, 261, 263–265, 267, 279–281, 290, 314–316, 341, 346, 350, 372, 373, 375, 427, 442, 463, 502, 510, 530
- Lateran (San Giovanni di Laterano) 49, 52–55, 227, 316

- Monte Mario 195
- St Maria Maggiore 53, 341, 372, 373
- St Paul's (Basilica di San Paolo fuori le mura) 50, 173
- St Peter's (Basilica di San Pietro) 54, 55, 211, 212, 222, 227, 290, 373, 402, 407, 408, 418, 479, 480
- rood 71, 72, 317, 318, 389, 390, 392
- Rorgo Fretellus of Antioch 203
- Roskilde 148, 370, 377
 - Chapel of St Birgitta 410, 411
 - Roskilde Cathedral 410, 411, 419
- Roskilde cross 149, 151, 152, 159
- Rouen 64, 75, 76, 81–83, 273
- round church (circular church) 20, 125, 126, 127, 325–332, 334, 335, 337–339
- routes (roads) 114, 220, 227, 327, 329, 330, 339, 397, 418, 429
- royal office 19, 167–187
- Royal Portal, Chartres 349
- royal saint 22, 87–89, 91–93, 167, 178, 278–279, 288–289, 293, 335, 522
- royal succession, law of 282, 286
- Rubin, Miri 497
- rule of law 63, 504
- rulership 15, 25, 60, 63–64, 66–67, 71, 73–74, 76, 83–84, 141–146, 153, 164
- Rumar, Lars 280, 522
- Runer, Johan 333, 335
- runes, runic inscriptions 28, 44, 75, 103, 113, 124, 389, 457, 459

- Saami 41, 477–499
- Sabas, St 88
- sacerdotum* 291
- sacrament 208, 345, 360, 374, 407, 416, 431
- sacramental niche 359
- sacred history 247–249, 253, 255, 256, 262, 267, 349
- sacred landscape 20, 191, 337
- sacrifice (of Christ) 356, 409, 508
- Sæby Church 306
- saeculum* 15
- Saewulf 201, 210
- saga literature (Old Norse) 378
 - *Eyrbyggja saga* 20, 461–465, 467–470, 472–475
 - *Hákonar saga* 163, 164, 165, 226, 474
 - *Íslendinga saga* 473, 474
 - The Orkneyingers' saga (*Orkneyinga saga*) 91, 95, 107, 108, 110–116, 118, 120, 121, 123, 124, 128–130, 165, 226, 456, 457, 460, 461
 - Saga of Eirik the Red (*Eiríks Saga Rauða*) 239–242
 - Saga of Eirik the Traveller (*Eiríks saga víðförla*) 218, 226, 229, 230, 232–235, 237, 239, 241
 - Saga of the Greenlanders (*Grænlandinga Saga*) 226, 229, 230, 239, 242
 - Saga of the Veralders (*Veraldar saga*) 224, 229–231, 234, 238
 - Saga of the Vinlanders (*Vinland saga*) 229, 230, 239–242
 - Sverris saga 111, 165, 191, 226, 286, 392
- Sa'īd ibn al-Baṭṭīq (Eutychius) 209
- St.-Mahé, Brittany 202
- saints 16, 22, 28, 30, 32, 39, 66, 72, 75–82, 84, 87–89, 91–93, 95–131, 141, 143, 145, 148, 149, 154, 163, 164, 167–170, 173, 176–179, 181–185, 187, 195, 202, 206, 222, 242, 246–248, 259–262, 265, 271, 272, 275, 276, 278–281, 284, 288, 289, 291–293, 296–298, 321, 335, 341, 357, 370, 373, 376, 380, 384, 391, 402, 403, 409, 411, 431, 438, 439, 448, 456, 463, 466, 483, 486, 489, 495, 520–522, 526–528, 533
- Saladin (Salāḥ ad-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb) 31, 32, 121, 133, 158, 193, 216, 328
- Saliba 213
- Salmund Sigurdsson 510
- salvation 20, 41, 112, 118, 136, 175, 187, 243, 249, 250, 321, 336, 349, 350, 360, 364, 385, 386, 388–390, 393, 406, 407, 455, 495, 509, 527, 530
- salvation history 2, 3, 5–6, 9, 14–18, 20–22, 24, 27, 40, 109, 170, 243, 260, 301, 316, 322, 351, 378, 404, 425–453, 465, 474, 475, 521, 522, 526, 527, 529, 531, 533
- Samaria 204
- Samuel, biblical figure 502
- Sancta Maria iuxta paganos* 478
- sanctity (holiness) 2, 17–21, 31, 53, 80, 95, 118, 123, 125, 145, 177, 235, 246–250, 254, 255, 259, 262, 265, 267, 275, 276, 377, 381, 384, 393, 396, 403, 404, 453, 495

- Sanderum Church 394, 399–404, 407, 408, 412
- Santiago de Compostela 77, 103, 195, 196, 250, 273, 375
- Saracens, *see* Muslims
- Sarah, biblical figure 463
- Sardinia 115, 202, 211
- Saul, King of Juda, biblical figure 286
- Saxo Grammaticus 105, 147, 148, 154, 200, 315
- Saxony 68, 315
- Scandinavia 1–2, 9, 10, 13–41, 44, 46, 49–55, 59–63, 67–69, 74, 75–77, 82, 83, 87–93, 95, 97–109, 114, 118, 121–123, 125, 127, 141–143, 146–150, 153, 155–156, 158, 161, 164, 167–187, 191, 199–215, 219, 221, 247–249, 254, 271, 272, 281, 292, 302, 309, 325–329, 335, 337, 338, 345–347, 349, 352–354, 356–358, 360, 361, 365, 371, 373, 377, 379, 381, 382, 386, 397, 402, 409, 415, 418, 431, 461, 462, 464, 466, 469, 477–479, 481, 491, 493–495, 503, 510, 516, 522, 531
- Scania 68, 75, 104, 268, 302, 304, 328, 352, 354, 367, 401
- Scheel, Roland 28, 99, 149–151, 153, 154
- Scherer, Wilhelm 505, 506
- Schirmer, Herman 292
- Schleswig 68, 149, 302, 305, 326, 371
- Schmerzenmutter 356
- Schmid, Toni 171, 172
- science (scientific texts) 2, 49, 148, 155, 224, 238, 302, 370
- screen (loft) 63, 119, 207, 317–318
- Scripture 5, 18, 20, 21, 51, 247–249, 253–256, 258, 260–262, 264, 265, 267, 316, 415, 459, 523, 529–531
- Sebaste 204
- Sebastian, St. 178
- secularisation 2, 9, 35, 37, 39, 92, 101, 114, 117, 129, 130, 175, 177, 217, 234, 413, 419, 455, 460, 461, 474, 475
- Selim I, Ottoman Sultan 33
- Selje 211, 298
- semiological thickness 18
- Semiotics 7, 19, 20, 22, 23, 461, 475
- Senchas Már* 513
- Senearia* 516
- Septuagint* 260, 262
- Serampore 298
- Serkland, *see* Africa
- Sermon on the Mount* 39, 43
- Seth, son of Adam, apochryphical figure 445, 452
- Shimei, biblical figure 502–503
- shrine 52, 92, 103, 125, 151, 163, 173, 179, 194, 198, 202, 212, 250, 273, 278–280, 287, 289, 290, 292–294, 333, 375
- of St Olav 92, 103, 191, 276–278, 286–288, 290, 329
- of St Erik 278, 520, 522–526
- sibyl, *see* Tiburtine Sibyl
- Sidon 156, 200, 201, 204, 210
- Sigfrid, St, bishop 178, 331, 333
- Sigurd, bishop of Bergen 109
- Sigurd II Munn, King of Norway 285
- Sigurd (Sigurðr) Magnusson jórsalafari (the Crusader), King of Norway 22, 29, 141, 143, 155–157, 162, 165, 201, 221, 223, 287
- Sigvat Thordsson / Sigvatr Þórðarson, skald 61–63, 80, 83, 276
- Simek, Rudolf 204, 206, 215, 227, 425, 426, 432, 433, 435, 439
- Sinai 3, 4, 81–83, 210, 468, 472, 473
- Sinding Church 310–311
- Sinjil (Casale S. Egidii) 204
- Sintra 121, 201
- siðarskipti* (change of custom) 16
- Siward, Earl of Northumbria 272
- skaldic poetry 44, 47, 60, 62, 63, 78, 124, 274
- *Eiríksdrápa* 43
- *Eiríksmál* 69, 71
- *Erfdrápa* (about St Olav) 45, 80, 223, 276
- *Glælognskvida* 276
- *Hrafsmál* 473
- *Nesjavísur* 61–64, 70, 71, 76
- *Sigurðardrápa* 43
- *Stúfsdrápa* 43
- *Vellekla* 70
- *Vikingavísur* 63, 77
- Skara 171, 172, 176, 214, 325, 329–337, 348, 349, 356, 365, 366
- Skaun 357, 358
- Skíringssalr 44
- Skopti Ogmundarson 105
- Skörstorp 326, 331–333, 337
- Skovgaard-Petersen, Karen 133, 134, 137–139, 200
- Skule Baardsson 287

- Slangerup 147, 148, 154
 Slavs 67, 271
 Slesvig 365
 Småland 105, 331, 356, 366
 Smyrna 181
 Snorri Sturluson 14, 15, 44, 45, 63, 74, 76, 77, 83, 91, 103–105, 107, 120, 128, 155, 157, 159, 161–163, 201, 223, 273, 274, 287, 382, 384, 463, 473
 Soderup Church 311, 313
 Södra Råda Church 365, 366, 368
 Södra Ving 336
 Solomon, king of Juda, Biblical figure 1, 3, 6, 51, 52, 67, 234, 294, 299, 321, 322, 342, 343, 445, 446, 450, 502–505, 523–526
 Southwark 272
 spirituality 96, 102, 124, 169, 250, 391, 417
 spiritual knowledge 247
 Stade 202
 – Abbey of St Mary 217
 Stamford Bridge 277
 Stang, Margrethe C. 23, 26, 41, 223, 308, 357, 450, 477–499
stauratheka / staurothekai 144, 145, 151, 179
 Stavanger (Cathedral) 43, 279, 362, 478, 515
 – Stavanger Cathedral 184
 Steinberget 284
 Steinland, Gro 449, 450, 492
 Steinvikholm Castle 202, 296
 Sten Sture, regent of Sweden 180
 Stephen, St 88, 92, 93, 291, 488
 Stiklestad 71, 223, 274, 275, 288–289, 291, 296–298, 494–496
 Stockholm 47, 87, 149, 151, 158, 171, 172, 174, 178, 203, 216–217, 227, 228, 245, 246, 250, 256, 261, 280, 289, 302, 327, 331, 333, 334, 347, 348, 352, 353, 356, 359, 361, 365–367, 375, 479, 520–522, 526, 528, 529
 – Royal Palace chapel 172
 – St. Nicholas' Church 178
 stonechurch building 35, 277, 278, 288, 299, 301–303, 305, 316, 317
 stone of St Olav 297
 Stora Kopparberg Church 178
 Storm, Gustav 107, 112, 141, 171, 211, 287, 288, 464
 storyworld 6–9, 13–41, 102, 219–243, 299, 301, 316, 322, 356, 369, 371, 452, 453, 461, 464, 477, 481, 485, 495, 497, 499, 526, 533
 Strängnäs 348
 – Strängnäs Cathedral 180
 Stúfr the Blind Thordarson 43
 Sturla Þórðarson 164, 473, 474
 Sturlungar family 223
 style 75, 116, 206, 263, 264, 299, 307–310, 314–316, 336, 338, 352, 396–398, 403, 405, 409, 414, 455, 460, 472, 488
 Suger of St Denis 414
 Sunniva, St 293
 Sussex 272
 Svealand 280, 327, 329, 331
 Svein Haakonsson, Earl of Lade 61, 74
 Svein Knutsson (Alfivason), King of Norway 274–276
 Svend, bishop of Roskilde 151
 Svend, bishop of Viborg 207
 Svend Godwinson 199
 Svend Forkbeard, King of Denmark 273
 Svend II Estridsen, King of Denmark 29, 98, 149, 199, 271
 Sverresborg Castle 284, 285
 Sverre Sigurdsson, King of Norway 163, 191, 196, 281, 285
 Svoldr 199
 Sweden 13–14, 16, 19, 20, 22, 32, 34, 39–41, 44, 45, 61, 89, 92, 98, 125, 147, 150, 170–173, 180, 181, 213, 214, 245–248, 250, 252, 258, 265–267, 274, 278–280, 285, 287–290, 302, 325–339, 342, 347, 349, 361, 367, 377, 378, 381, 440, 478, 493, 520–522, 524, 526–528, 531–533
 Swedes 15, 271, 477, 522
 symbol 7, 15, 72, 83, 85, 123, 124, 142, 144, 164, 223, 233, 238, 241, 242, 282, 296, 297, 338, 344, 356, 369, 378, 380, 385, 393, 398, 483, 490, 496, 503
 Symeon of Trier 82
synagoga (personification of) 486, 487, 489–491, 498
 Tarragona 202
 Țarțūs (Tortosa) 198, 212, 213
 Tasso, Torquato 29
 Templars 104, 109, 125, 212, 214
 Temple 1, 3, 4, 6, 19, 30, 34, 36, 49–55, 67, 136, 207, 209, 216, 220, 234, 236, 268,

- 283, 293, 294, 299, 301, 314, 322, 336,
340–374, 429, 445, 450, 462–465, 467,
470, 486, 523–526
- in Jerusalem, *see* Jerusalem
 - as metaphor 1–7, 9, 17, 27, 34, 37, 62, 83, 102,
170, 182, 233, 234, 241, 243, 282, 299, 301,
313, 322, 323, 364, 412, 469, 472
 - of Solomon 1, 51, 52, 67, 234, 294, 299, 322,
342, 343, 445, 450, 523, 524, *see also*
Templum Salomonis
- Temple mount, *see* Jerusalem
Templum Salomonis, *see* Jerusalem
Terra sancta, *see* Palestine (Holy land, Jór-sala-
land, *Terra sancta*)
Teutonic Knights 214, 477
Theodoricus Monachus/ Theodoric the
Monk 76, 109, 141, 157, 291
Theodosius, St 88
Thingeyrar (Píngeyrar) monastery 222, 223, 437
Thomas Aquinas, St 405
Thomas Becket, St, Archbishop of
Canterbury 288, 290
Thord Sigvaldaskald 61
Thorir Hundr 223, 275, 495–497, 499
thorn relic 142, 167, 168, 170–178, 186, 187
Thorolfr 20
Thorsnes 20
Thorstein Knarresmed 495
Tiburtine Sibyl 72–75, 449, 450, *see also*
Queen of Sheba (Queen Sibilla), biblical
figure
Tifernate, Lilio 54
Titus, Roman Emperor 52–54, 210,
446
Tjällén, Biörn 20, 41, 280, 335, 521–533
T-O map (world map) 15, 427, 440, 452
tomb of Christ (*aedicula*) 294, 295
Tønsberg 31, 127, 132, 133, 135, 159, 160, 326
– St Mary's Church 159, 166–168, 170,
174–176, 178–181, 185–187, 225, 227, 283
– St Michael's Church 78, 180, 225, 377
– St Olav's Church 132, 180, 277
topography (sacred) 40, 96, 259
topos (topoi) 1, 4, 20, 31, 104, 116, 310, 441,
466, 501–505, 521, 526, 533
Torarin Lovtunga 276
Torpa Church 352
Torpo Church 390, 391, 489
Torsten Hendricson 333
Tractatus contra Petrobrusianos 507
transfer 2, 17–21, 37, 49, 50, 55, 84, 125, 143,
144, 164, 167, 168, 171, 175, 233, 246, 273,
277, 278, 289, 290, 314, 335, 427, 464,
522, 523
translation 2, 7, 19, 23, 40, 49, 50, 59, 63, 64,
95, 100, 115, 125, 130, 131, 136, 137, 154,
157, 164, 203, 204, 208, 220, 230, 232,
233, 235, 237, 239–241, 245, 258–262,
283, 291, 296, 299, 301, 316, 318, 348,
349, 390, 405, 414, 418, 439, 444, 463,
466, 505, 517, 523, 527
translatio templi 19, 40, 49–55, 125
travel (journey) 28, 30, 60, 61, 76–79, 81, 83,
84, 100, 102, 103, 113, 114, 116, 120, 135,
194, 195, 199, 212, 219–243, 249, 250,
255, 263, 265, 346, 375, 376, 382, 405,
448, 460, 496
travelogue 5, 17
Traver, Hope 505–508
Tree of Knowledge 385, 446
Tree of Life, *see* *Lignum vitae* (Tree of Life)
Trinity 131, 214, 216, 232, 277, 369, 371, 442,
445, 525, 532
Tromsø 109, 174, 478
Trondheim, *see* Nidaros (Trondheim)
True Cross 91, 141–165, 179, 201, 264, 287,
336, 381–385, 387, 393, 444
truth 33, 51, 237, 238, 245–267, 289–290, 351,
381, 393, 420, 441, 446, 465, 502–509,
517, 518
Turks 480–485, 491, 495
turtledoves 346, 356, 357, 373
Tveitane, Mattias 506, 508, 509
Tyre 26, 67, 201, 203, 206, 214, 217
Tyssøy 176
Ugglas, Carl R. af 178–180
Ulf of Lauvnes 134
Ulrich of Augsburg, archbishop 64
umbilicus mundi, *see* navel of the world
(*omphalos, umbilicus mundi*)
unction 129, 296
Unwan of Bremen, archbishop 68
Upplandslagen, *see* law

- Uppsala 34, 41, 44, 45, 113, 180, 183, 245, 249, 258, 267, 280, 304, 325, 335, 348–350, 361, 384, 426, 427, 456, 464, 466, 481, 521–533
- Cathedral 171, 179, 183, 485, 493, 524, 525, 528, 529
 - Holy Trinity Church 131, 214, 216, 277–279, 369, 371, 445, 525, 532
 - *Mons Domini* 521, 525, 526, 532, 533
 - Uppsalarir (Old Uppsala) 43–45, 280, 525
- Urban II, pope 54, 96, 97, 100, 117, 118, 135
- Urbs beata Jerusalem, dicta pacis*
visio 404–405
- Vadstena monastery 180
- Valdemar II, King of Denmark 37, 39, 122, 150
- Valdemar IV, King of Denmark 182
- Valdemar the Great, King of Denmark 91
- valkyrie* 69
- Vall Church 355
- Vallø 159
- Valö 369, 370
- Valstad 334, 336, 337
- Vandvik, Eirik 105, 291
- Vänern Lake 329
- Vang Church 490
- Vansina, Jan 345
- Varangian Guard 28, 82, 99, 110, 114, 127, 147
- Västerås 178
- Västerås Cathedral 178
- Västgötalagen 331, 333, 334
- Vättern Lake 330, 331, 334, 337
- Vellekla*, see skaldic poetry
- Venerable Bede, see Bede the Venerable
- Vercelli Homilies* 74
- Verdal 274, 298
- Veraldar saga*, see saga literature (Old Norse),
 Saga of the Veralders (*Veraldar saga*)
- Vestfold 44, 61, 274, 385
- Viborg 206–208, 305
- viking (age) 14, 23, 45, 59, 60, 62, 64, 68, 70, 83, 91, 103, 117, 130, 141, 147, 155, 157, 164, 200, 201, 228, 242, 273, 291, 293, 336, 338, 384, 455, 462, 501
- viking art 338
- Vikingavísur*, see skaldic poetry
- Vincent of Beauvais 203
- Vincent, St 88, 92, 93, 211, 291
- Vinderslev Church 419
- Vinland (America) 240
- Vinland saga*, see saga literature (Old Norse),
 Saga of the Vinlanders (*Vinland saga*)
- Virginity 231, 234, 258, 357
- Virgin Mary 36, 37, 82, 117, 201, 207, 212, 234, 236, 268, 321, 341, 342, 382, 481
- virtue(s) 8, 25, 27, 41, 66, 234, 235, 238, 250, 321, 382, 501–519
- Visby 69, 147, 159, 178, 365
- St. Mary's Church 178
- Visingsö 331
- vision 3, 5, 51, 77, 196, 197, 235, 249, 251–253, 255, 257, 258, 261, 263, 264, 265, 283, 315, 327, 334, 341, 342, 356, 364, 372, 373, 389, 391, 405, 408–412, 417, 419, 420, 429, 452, 531
- visual rhetoric 27, 299, 302, 305, 309, 313, 322
- Vita* of St Birgitta of Sweden 246, 256, 258, 262–264
- Völuspá* (Eddic poem) 74, 75, 78, 436, 449, 450, 452
- vplva* (prophetess) 74, 449, 450, 452
- Vulgate 15, 63, 242, 248, 260, 262, 346, 358, 462
- wall paintings, see murals (frescoes, wall paintings)
- Walter von der Vogelweide 413
- Wandering Jew, myth of 492
- Wanner, Kevin 462, 468, 473
- warfare 60, 70, 96, 102, 104, 121, 183, 199, 335, 477
- Warner, David 64, 66, 68
- warrior (ideology) 37, 47, 62, 76, 78, 83, 89, 101, 113, 118, 161, 293, 412, 413
- Wellesley, Arthur, Duke of Wellington 7
- well of life 231
- Wenceslas, St, Duke of Bohemia 92
- Wends 78, 79, 108, 477
- West Saxon Gospels* 63
- whore 4, see also Babylon
- Wienberg, Jes 68, 125, 302, 326–329
- William II, count of Angoulême 79
- William of Champeaux 507
- William of Norwich 492
- William of Volpiano 64, 75, 78
- William the old, bishop of Orkney 108, 112
- Wilson, Christopher 293
- Witzlaw II, prince of Rügen 174

wooden churches 298, 302, 325, 338, 365,
431, 432
wood, of the Holy Cross, types of 385, 446
Wulfstan of York 70, 74, 78

Yaroslav, Grand Prince of Kiev 274
York, *see* Jórvik (York)

Zealand 152, 279, 302, 303, 306, 311, 313, 361
Ziolkowski, Eric 7, 9
Zion (Sion) 4, 27, 32, 35, 39, 41, 84, 191–192,
204, 220, 250, 253, 283–286, 521–533

