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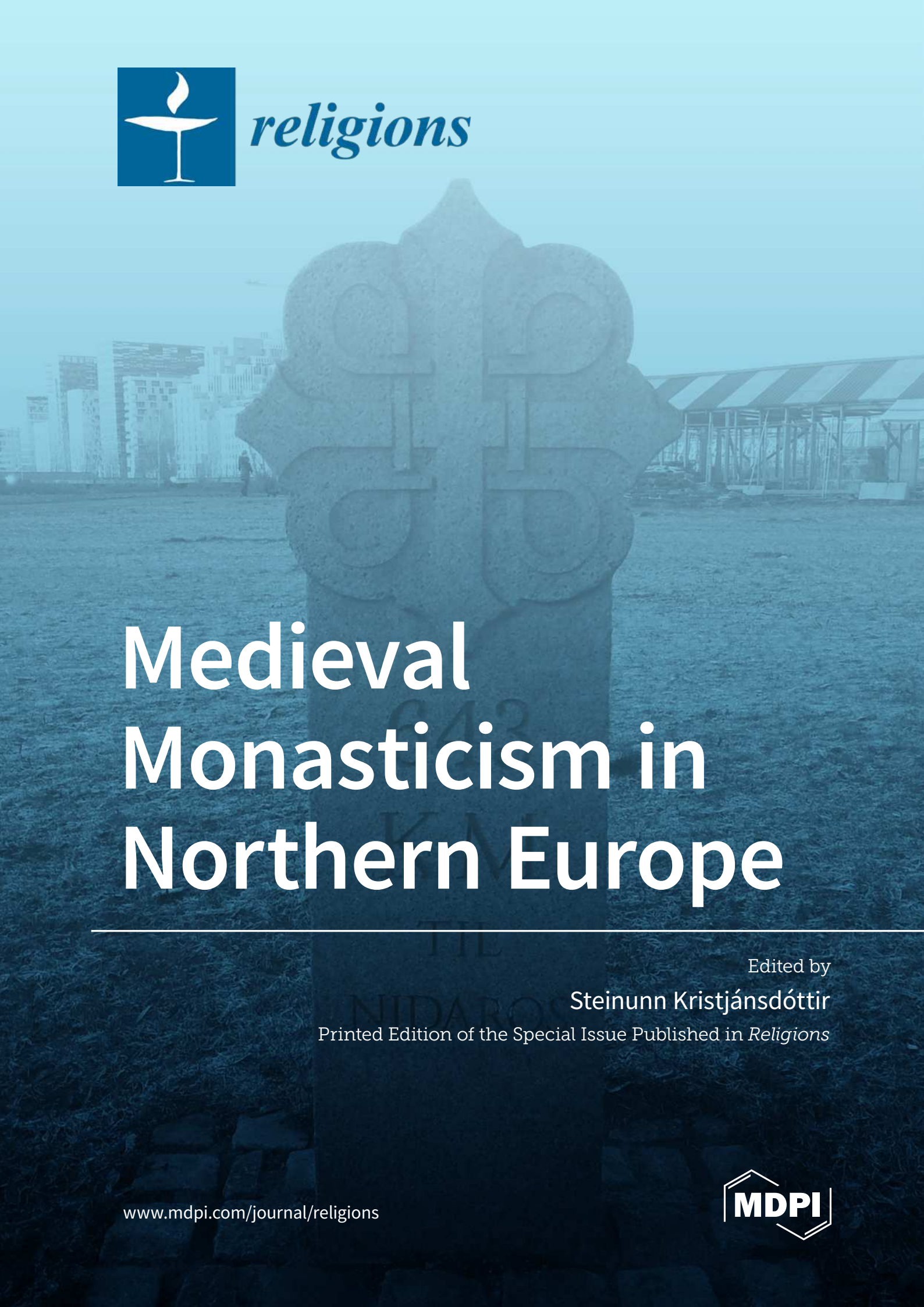

Medieval Monasticism in Northern Europe

Edited by
Steinunn Kristjánsdóttir

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Editor

Steinunn Kristjánsdóttir

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Editor
Steinunn Kristjánsdóttir
Department of Archaeology
University of Iceland
Reykjavík
Iceland

Editorial Office
MDPI
St. Alban-Anlage 66
4052 Basel, Switzerland

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About the Editor

Steinunn Kristjánsdóttir

Steinunn Kristjánsdóttir, professor of archaeology, Department of Archaeology, University of Iceland. Field of interest and research is medieval monasticism, gender and church history. Working currently on the project "Between man and nature: The Making of Benedictine Communities in Medieval Iceland". Received the Order of the Falcon award from the Icelandic state in 2016 for archaeological research and general contribution to the history of Iceland.

Preface to ”Medieval Monasticism in Northern Europe”

This Special Issue brings together scholars from different fields of medieval studies with the goal to portray current approaches in studies on monastic houses operating in Northern Europe during the Middle Ages. By highlighting Northern Europe specifically, the issue aims to place medieval monasticism in a broader geographical and cultural context as being one of the active agents that formed the Christian worldview of the Middle Ages. The overall ambition of this Special Issue is, at the same time, to emphasize and introduce novel approaches to the reciprocal formation of the pan-European monasticism through its shifting localities and temporality. The book is addressed to scholars working with history of religion, archaeology and related disciplines.

Steinunn Kristjánsdóttir
Editor

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Article

The Historiography of Medieval Monasticism: Perspectives from Northern Europe

Emilia Jamroziak

Institute for Medieval Studies, School of History, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT, UK; e.m.jamroziak@leeds.ac.uk

Abstract: The article provides a thematized discussion of the development of the historiography of European monasticism in northern Europe (north Atlantic, North Sea to the Baltic). Whilst it does not offer a comprehensive overview of the field, it discusses the significance of major currents and models for the development of monastic history to the present day. From focusing on the heritage of history writing "from within"—produced by the members of religious communities in past and modern contexts—it examines key features of the historiography of the history of orders and monastic history paradigms in the context of national and confessional frameworks. The final section of the article provides an overview of the processes or musealization of monastic heritage and the significance of monastic material culture in historical interpretations, both academic and popular.

Keywords: medieval Latin monasticism; medieval religious history; historiography; medieval northern Europe; interdisciplinarity; monastic heritage

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1. Introduction

The historiography of medieval Latin monasticism in the Benedictine tradition is a large area, which encompasses history as well as archaeology and other fields that focus on material evidence, such as architectural history, art history, and manuscript studies. Whilst there have been various forms of interdisciplinary approaches, these fields also remain distinct and separate in their methodology. The aim of this article is to provide perspectives on the historiography of medieval monastic history with particular focus on northern Europe. The institutional focus is the Benedictine tradition, which encompasses both individual communities following the Rule of St Benedict and the Cistercian order that emerged in the twelfth century. The geographical focus of this article reflects the span of the present volume—from the north Atlantic, North Sea to the Baltic. The areas discussed comprise Scandinavia, northern German territories from Ostfriesland to Mecklenburg, and then further along the southern shore of the Baltic from western Pomerania to Livonia. The medieval territorial divisions and political structures are also fundamentally different from modern (post-1918 and post-1945) states, and these political shifts had a significant impact on the historical interpretations. To keep to the scope of the present volume and to bring in dialogue with Anglophone literature, which had a major impact in the twentieth century in shaping narratives of monastic history, I will also refer to evidence from another North Sea area, the British Isles. An important facet of the development of the historiography of monasticism, in the area under discussion here, is the fact that the southern shores of the Baltic Sea are also parts of the east-central European historical framework, and this has important bearing on the analysis in terms of the conceptualization of monasticism on the frontiers of Latin Christendom. In other ways, Scandinavia has historically also been a frontier of western Europe and this has bearing on the history of monasticism there and its interpretation.

What is considered here through historiographical interpretations is a large and diverse area with both a longer history of Christianization, in particular the British Isles (7th century), but also a much later entry into Christendom by Iceland (11th c.), Scandinavia

(11–13th centuries), and the southern shores of the Baltic (11–13th centuries). This means that Latin monasticism became established in the regions of northern Europe at different points of its development and by means of support from different types of founders—territorial rulers, bishops, lay magnates but also following the process of crusade and conquest (Berend 2007; Murray 2014). What these large areas share is the experience of Reformation in the sixteenth century that destroyed monastic life and decimated archives, libraries, and material culture. It is significant because its modern historiography—from the nineteenth century onwards—developed in the context of monasticism being only a past phenomenon rather than living tradition. The research agenda has also been shaped by the accessibility of particular categories of sources—especially those associated with landed property—and the disappearance of others—related to the intercessory, devotional, and spiritual functions of monastic communities.

The objective of this article is to historiographically frame specific discussions within this special issue of *Religions*, as well as to provide a distinct contribution to the wider debate about the history of historiography of Latin monasticism in the pre-modern period in Europe. This debate focuses both on the identification of the inheritances that shaped the present understating of monastic history as well as processes of deconstruction of grand narratives of the development of monastic forms and interpretation of divergent evidence across medieval Latin Christendom. It comes after the publication of two survey volumes in 2020, which explicitly engaged with the state of the field. Both publications—one a large collective endeavor within *The Cambridge History of* series and the other a single-authored work—assert how the legacy of the linear model of monastic history that presents the succession of ever more developed forms of monastic and then mendicant orders have been challenged by a vast body of regional, local, and thematic studies that a present much more complex picture. However, the dominance of traditional meta-narratives continues and both the editors and contributors of the CUP volume and Stephen Vanderputten in his textbook call for the development of new, less linear approaches that better reflect the plurality of forms of monasticism in the medieval western-European context (Beach and Cochelin 2020; Vanderputten 2020). The authors and editors do not provide a definition of what that new framework should be, but these publications make a really important step in exploring deep historiographical inheritances that continue to circulate explicitly and implicitly. Without understanding how they came about and how they intersect within past and present historiography, it is not possible to leave behind the limitations that they impose on research agendas. This is indicative of the fact that we are at a particular moment in the reappraisal of a vast accumulation of studies of both specific institutions and regional histories but even more so, the accumulation of different thematic works on medieval monastic institutions. The importance of historiographical reappraisal is compounded by the realization of how fragmented the debates within this vast area are—by linguistic barriers, but also methodological approaches. The present article focuses on a selected area of historiographical inheritances that had a particular impact in shaping monastic history perspectives in the regions under consideration to explain how they formed interpretations and what the consequences of their, at least partial, continuing presence are.

Whilst the discussion will take a fairly broad chronological time-span from the seventeenth century onwards, it focuses on a number of key themes that, I will argue, have been fundamental in shaping interpretations of monasticism in northern Europe—the inheritance of the history writing by the monks, the historical context of national and confessional paradigms, and recent developments in the approaches to monastic material culture and process of heritage making. Reflection on these subjects, especially when adopting a trans-regional approach that focuses on areas across northern Europe, can be instrumental in finding solutions to the fragmentation of the field and can aid in creating a more productive dialogue between different linguistic traditions.

2. Monastic Constructions of Historical Time and "History from Within"

Writing about monastic history began in the monastic communities well before Christianity came to northern Europe. The inheritance of Late Antiquity, that western Latin monasticism took as the center of its identity, was really complex with a variety of textual genres in a broad range of languages, traditions, and forms from across the eastern and southern Mediterranean world. Whilst the vocabulary, imagery, and concept of cenobitic and eremitic practices of the desert were foundational for both western and eastern monasticism (Orthodox, including various Slavic rites), the Latin monasticism and its historiography came to essentialize the primacy of Benedictine Rule for western monasticism (Helvétius et al. 2020).

The models and methodologies for describing the monastic past were created originally "from within" by the members of the monastic communities themselves, by monks and nuns, who were actively reflecting on, shaping, and preserving different aspects of the recent and deep past as a living tradition. The process of building the Latin western monastic tradition, as Helvétius argues, already by the seventh century, collapsed diversity into a streamlined concept of coenobitic practice (Helvétius et al. 2020). The term "writing from within" is used here to indicate that texts and approaches were created by the insiders of monastic culture in the medieval period and beyond, who were reflecting on the past of their own lived experience. This means that historical material is considered a part of the writer's identity and not only an external artefact of analysis.

Whilst the notion of history was deeply exegetic within monastic tradition, there were two main modes of dealing with the past in medieval monastic culture—non-historicized and historicized. The latter, for example chronicles or gesta abbatum, presented past events in chronological order, often with dates and in temporal relation to various markers of passing time. They have received intense scrutiny from scholars not only in terms of their production within monastic culture itself and their development as a genre, but also as sources for political, social and economic history (Sot 1981; Wolf and Ott 2016). Their significance in the context of the history of memory, identity, and the uses of the past by the monastic authors have been particularly significant in the last few decades, as historians have begun to read 'internal' narratives more critically (Jäkel 2013). At the same time, the non-historicized engagement with the past formed a very important aspect of monastic culture in relationship to the liturgy, commemoration, and expressions of corporate identity. Essentially, these approaches placed the past of monasticism in general, as well as particular traditions and houses, into Christian models. In these, origin stories of Desert Fathers and Mothers defined the whole monastic tradition. In the histories of foundation, the present and linear narratives disappeared into perennial cycles of renewal and reform. Non-historicized past was accessible from the present of those reading foundational narratives because they contained monastic ideals and validation of the monastic form of life. The monastic origins were the source of imagery of a "desert" community and solitude, asceticism, sanctification, and overcoming difficulties and the miraculous. It has been fundamental to all processes of renewal, change, and reform in the institutional and devotional-spiritual dimensions, including observant movement (Davies 2014; More 2015; Burton 2006). The monastic rules, including the Rule of St Benedict, were central to the practice of monasticisms at every level, individually and communally. As such, they were outside time—ever present in the processes of copying, commenting, developing, and adopting (Diem 2019; Pansters 2020).

In the Christian tradition, as in Judaism, remembering the past is a religious duty. The cyclical nature of liturgy recalling Biblical events was a central form of direct connection to the past in the non-historicized form that monastic communities performed (Kubieniec 2018). Moreover, monastic communities "transcended death"—through cyclical time of liturgical commemorations, in the form of necrology notations of community members as well as patrons and benefactors (O'Donnell 2019; Jamroziak 2013). All this meant that non-historicized foundation narratives of the individual communities were a

key source of validation precisely because they were not located in the historicized past but had a continuing presence (Diem and Rapp 2020).

Whilst living tradition and non-historicized modes of engaging with the monastic past continued to be central to monastic practice in the post-medieval period too, new forms developed, driven by the structures of religious orders and their identities in the post-Trent context (Oberste 2014; Breitenstein 2019). Some of these developments were a continuation of medieval "catalogues" of saints that were, from the fourteenth century onwards, produced by many orders, monastic and mendicant, with the aim to celebrate the collective identity and harness the power of these saints against external threats. Typical examples of such collections were the works of Chrysostomus Henriquez (1595–1632) who was a Cistercian monk, vicar general of the Spanish congregation and historian of the order and cataloguer of its saints (Henriquez 1624). Another of his contemporaries, Gaspar Jongelinus (1605–1669), the abbot of Disibodenberg, doctor of theology and author of histories and descriptions of the monasteries belonging to the order, provides another example of this type of early "monastic history from within" celebrating and harnessing the past as a resource for the present (Jongelinus 1640).

Whilst the most important early modern critical editorial project of hagiography, the *Acta Sanctorum*, initiated by Jesuit Jean Bolland (1596–1665) and his successors, focused on the entire corpus of saints, rather than those belonging to a specific order, the role of Bollandists cemented the authoritative position of religious orders in research and writing about the history of monasticism. Benedictine monk Jean Mabillon (1632–1707) often celebrated as the "inventor" of diplomats as Hilfswissenschaft, produced, in cooperation with another Benedictine monk, a very extensive hagiographical collection of the lives of Benedictine saints (Mabillon 1668–1701). He was also an author of a narrative history of Benedictine communities (Mabillon 1703–1739). Whilst his work is very significant for the development of European historical methods of source criticism, he was also part of the highly intellectually productive community of the Congregation of St. Maur (Hurel 2007). All this shaped the histories of the orders (Ordensgeschichte) as the dominant mode of understanding the history of monasticism and grounded the predominance of members of religious orders as historians of their respective organizations until the mid-twentieth century (Schieffer 2016). This legacy was important for Catholic Europe and was also exported to the Spanish and Portuguese colonies in the Americas (Breitenstein 2019). Whilst the monasteries in the regions under discussion here were suppressed in the sixteenth century, there were also examples of English Benedictine communities in exile in continental Europe producing texts about the past and their identity (Kelly 2020). In the context of Protestant culture in northern Europe, Catholic historiography was the "other" in the polemics, and the history of early Christianity was a particular battleground (Bauer 2021). Some of the most influential survey monographs of Cistercian and other Benedictine traditions in the post-WWII period were written by monks for whom the monastic past was also an important arena in which to argue about the present state of religious life, especially the works of David Knowles and Louis Lekai, which dominated English-language historiography for most of the twentieth century (Knowles 1948–1959; Lekai 1953; Burton 2014; Jamroziak 2017). The set of concepts associated with the defining character of the origins, especially the significance of normative documents, impacted the intensity of debates around the emergence of Cistercian order and the chronology and nature of that process (Berman 2000; Waddell 2000).

The distinct format that this inheritance gave to the history of the orders contributed to the linear narrative of monastic history, driven by institutional developments. It reinforced the importance of normative texts in historical research on the history of different orders as well as the primacy of clear institutional structures over less definable phenomena, for example heterogeneous origins. The place of the origins in the historicized form has been central to most subsequent study of the orders up to the present day. It has not remained just a key feature of "monastic history from within" but has spread outwards to shape histories produced by academic historians who would not view themselves as writing

confessional histories. This modern form of Ordensgeschichte is different from a regional (or case study) approach, which has been very popular across the twentieth century. The latter examines the specific context of monastic history—social, political, or economic—within the wider environment of regional history and other religious and secular actors. In that model, the way in which monasteries operated in their local environment became the prime focus of examination rather than their belonging to the large structures of the order and the development of the order itself. The non-confessional version of the Ordensgeschichte tends to engage with institutional perspectives and structures in the context of the wider process of the development of medieval forms of governance, processes of decision making, and record keeping. A comparison between different orders helped to further create a sense of progressive development of more complex organization, especially in terms of government and control from the reform movements of the twelfth century to the mendicant orders hundred years later (Melville 2012).

The growth of the history of monasticism away from the order-centered approach and its turn to social and cultural history methodologies across many European historiographies meant a greater interest in the heterogeneous character of monastic history. This shift has also enabled new perspectives on the cycles of reform in the monastic communities and monastic orders. Research has moved away from the paradigm of development and decline, towards the conceptualization of reform as operating within shared cultures of monasticism and mendicancy; and as non-linear and heterogeneous processes (Vanderputten 2013; Duval et al. 2018). So far, the accumulation of these new historiographical approaches has not produced a new master-narrative, but the chronological approach has been fundamentally challenged by thematic perspectives (Vanderputten 2020). Whilst "writing from within" continues, it is within very changed contexts. The academic-historical journal belonging to the OSB, OCist, and OCSO—several published by different Benedictine abbeys, *Analecta Cisterciensia*, and *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* (for a comprehensive list see: http://archive.osb.org/acad/serials.html (accessed on 1 May 2021))—are peer-reviewed with editorial boards that frequently include scholars not connected to the orders or even the Catholic church. Whilst contemporary monastic life is not a living museum and Benedictine and Cistercian communities reflect on historical-spiritual and devotional texts not as historical documents but living tradition, there is nevertheless an important and continuing dialogue between "history written from within" and "from outside". This dialogue between past and living realities is also important in the context of monastic heritage and its interpretations will be discussed in the final section.

3. Monastic Histories as Histories of the Secular Nation-State

With the development and professionalization of academic history in Europe during the nineteenth century, monastic history, like most other histories, was brought into the conceptual structures of the nation state. While members of monastic orders and lay Catholic historians continued to write histories that served confessional ends, historians writing to valorize the nation-state offered very different interpretations. Monasticism became a crucial element in narratives of modernization, secularization, and the advance of "civilization" as Christianity was carried by missionaries into northern and eastern regions. After WWII, the Cold War, and the formation of the European Union, histories continued to draw on aspects of these frameworks.

The history of monasticism spans the entirety of the European continent, running across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Yet, in the nineteenth century, all aspects of the discipline of history were being shaped by the emerging paradigm that organized the processes of historicization in the context of nation-states (Hunt 2014; Berger and Lorenz 2008). The nation-state history model placed histories of individual monastic communities into the frameworks offered by the political history of European states and their regions. This process undermined the forms to which internal histories of the orders had tended to conform. Histories of monastic houses instead had to reflect ideas about the linear development of medieval populations as predecessors of modern nations and therefore they

stressed the political functions of foundation in the consolidation of political power. This framework was well-established by the second half of the nineteenth century and lasted into the mid-twentieth century in various modified forms that reflected changed socio-political conditions. It has been much exploited in the Germanic-Slavonic fronter along the Baltic coast, with studies of monastic foundations and settlement advancing the agenda of German-speaking territorial rulers. Whilst the historical scholarship and political context changed vastly between the mid-nineteenth century and the mid-twentieth century, what the studies by Winter and Kuhn have in common is the perception of religious foundation as primarily territorial and political enterprises (Winter 1868–1871; Kuhn 1962).

This broad tendency was sharpened by the "invention" of secularization in western Europe in the 1840s. Secularization was understood as a core element of modernity. This new conceptualization of the markers of a people's or a nation's "progress" required that "religion" be relegated into another invented category: the "medieval". Indeed, it served as the principal indication of the backwardness that preceded modernity. This strengthened the linearity of the historical narrative that located church history in premodernity (Borutta 2010). Moreover, its development in the context of the Kulturkampf against the Catholic Church and ethnic minorities in the post-1871 unified German state specifically supported such framings. Yet with the "religion" stripped out, aspects of monastic history proved useful to national narratives. Monastic institutions became a valid subject of study in the context of landholdings, economic practices, and issues of secular power, rather than a "problematic" Catholic tradition. We can see this in the case of Pomeranian abbeys, which were given the role of vectors of transmission of cultural and economic norms that were vested with German "national characteristics" and contrasted with a backwards Slavonic background (Winter 1868–1871; Jamroziak 2011). In more extreme cases, monastic foundations were even interpreted as agents of a civilizing process that was equated with the "Germanization" of the southern shores of the Baltic (Wehrmann 1905). Fundamentally, this understanding of the political and economic role of monasticism in the twelfth to thirteenth centuries was connected with the narratives of Germanic colonization of the east, including the Baltic.

In this context, the role of monastic communities in this process of the making of Europe made its way into Anglophone scholarship already in the early twentieth century. (Thompson 1920). After the Second World War, the history of monasticism in east-central Europe, including the southern shores of the Baltic, continued as a part of implicit and explicit debates about the nature of Europe and the West in the pre-modern period. The religious orders, in particular, beginning with Cistercians, were vested with an important role in the process of occidentalizing, but without an explicit nationalistic agenda. The process of occidentalization has been understood as a process of socio-cultural change rather than a political process with a linear connection to modern states. For example, Cistercians have been interpreted as a force bringing Scandinavia into the "mainstream of western Christianity" (France 1992). The political-territorial expansion of Sweden and Denmark towards Finland and Estonia in the second half of the twelfth century had Christianization-missionary dimensions, and Cistercians also played a role in it, but no longer reduced to political agents. Similarly, the German expansion towards the northern Baltic was marked by monastic foundations. Whilst the role of monastic networks in political structures continues to be emphasized in recent scholarship, it is no longer presented as a civilizing process (Krötzl 2003). The role of trans-European networks of religious orders in the transmission of ideas, information, and objects has become central in exploring their role on the "peripheries", for example, in Livonia (Strenga 2020; Tamm 2016). Because of much of the history of medieval monasticism within the Benedictine tradition, including the formation of the Cistercian order in the twelfth century focused on western Europe within the areas of post-Carolingian polities, this has been what defined the focus and norm of monastic history, whilst areas in the very north and east—including Scandinavia and the Baltic—have been examined as frontiers of Latin monasticism and thus part of the debates on practices, strategies, and connections to the surrounding society (Jamroziak and

Stöber 2013). The role of local elites wanting to be associated with the cultural capital of the new monastic foundations shifted discussion by the later twentieth century away from predominantly external political frameworks, without undermining the agency of political figures who were founders. This type of interpretation can be seen in the perspectives of the foundation of Kołbacz in 1174 by the dukes of western Pomerania from Esrum Abbey at the time of Danish influence towards the southern shores of the Baltic. It enabled further foundations along the Baltic coast because of the strength of Esrum as a mother house rather than primarily Danish political enterprise (Kłoczowski 2010). This type of interpretation helped the discussion to diverge further from the rigid understanding of the core, in the western origins of religious orders, where the "norm" was located and the periphery in east-central Europe where "divergence" occurred. It was also important for the recent ramifications of monastic history of Scandinavia as evident in the present volume. The transition towards understating what characterizes each monastic phenomenon as a sum of differing practices without assigning them value-status is paralleled by similar shifts in current approaches to mendicant orders and particular interpretation of divergent practices within observant movements (Jamroziak 2020; Romhányi 2018).

It is important to understand that throughout the period under discussion, monastic histories produced within nationalist narratives of civilization and secularization both drew on and were integrated into confessional histories. This is exemplified by the multiple "national" Reformation paradigms entangled with the different confessional versions. The German, English, or Czech narratives of Reformation relied on creating genealogies of "proto-Reformations" that required borrowings from other "nationalized" stories of proto-Protestant figures but re-telling them within a different national and linguistic framework (Corbellini and Steckel 2019). Northern-European Protestant perspectives in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century needed to accommodate within the narratives of its medieval history the seemingly alien church history including monastic history that was not part of the genealogy of Protestant narratives. Whilst marginalization of Catholic perspectives lasted in the Protestant-majority countries of northern Europe into the mid-twentieth century, there were different strategies in which the history of monasticism could be accommodated and made part of the core narrative (Kennedy 2008). The most frequent strategy of accommodation has been through examining monasteries as landholders, through charter evidence. and other types of legal documents that survived in disproportionally larger quantities than manuscripts and incunabula connected to liturgy and devotional life. A monastery as a landowner, agent, or tool of territorial and political control can be examined with little reference to its religious functions. This is exemplified by the early twentieth-century German-language scholarship on monastic houses in Pomerania (Hoogeweg 1916, 1924–1925).

These approaches were also bound with the interpretation of monasteries as playing an early "civilizing" role, before secularizing forces took over that role and left monasticism in the medieval past. This was expressed by Max Weber, who laid the foundation of this interpretation and placed medieval monasticism as a precursor of the "modern" rationality of capitalism. He described its progressive development as a chain from the rule of St Benedict to Cluny and then Cistercian and finally post-medieval Jesuits (Weber 1920), the "rationality" of monastic organizations prefiguring Puritan foundations of capitalism and protestant culture. By making western monasticism an element in the progressive chain leading to the protestant world of superior culture, medieval Latin monasticism was "rescued" from the contemporary Catholicism of Weber's time. This was also deeply Eurocentric. The Cistercian practice was contrasted by Weber with the "oriental" ascetism that was irrational and lacked organizational framework (Asad 1993). It is important to stress that Weber, unlike many later historians who applied his model, were not looking for rationality and design in a narrowly economic sense.

The 1960s and 1970s produced an approach to medieval monasticism, especially Cistercian history, that could be described, without any exaggeration as "monasticism without religion". It built, sometimes without acknowledgment, on Weber's ideas of rationality

and routinization of charisma. These works focused particularly on Cistercian economic history and even business history and some attempted to model it rather than simply provide a description and analysis of the available evidence. At the center of these studies is the idea that Cistercians represented a conscious program of rational economic choices aimed at maximizing profit. These approaches assumed that Cistercian uniformity of practice applied not to the liturgy and observance—belonging to the problematic religious sphere—but meant uniformity of the monastic organization in terms of economic design: the self-contained farms, cost-effective workforce of the lay brothers, and high quality surplus destined for the open market generating cash income. At the core, there was the assumption that standardization was a key contributing factor in the white monks' economic success. The normative regulations of the order were seen as a cause behind the developing aggressive economic behavior aimed at relentless growth and expansion. In this way, Cistercians become something of forerunners of capitalism (Madden 1963; Roehl 1969; Wollenberg 1984). These studies were primarily focused on Cistercian monasteries in the core areas of western Europe, but more holistic approaches that nevertheless placed monastic economy at the center of investigations have been developed in relation to the so-called *Germania Slavica* (a territory between Elba and Oder encompassing the entire southern coast of the Baltic from Lübeck to western Pomerania (Brather and Kratzke 2005). The economic activities of Cistercians in Pomerania and regions south of it, examined by Schich, were, in his interpretation, a very important facet of shaping the landscape, human environment, and society with a complex ethnic and linguistic make-up. Monastic houses were both active agents of change, but also important elements of economic networks (Schich 2016; Schich 1998).

In terms of creating an endpoint to monasticism in the regions under discussion, both the narratives of secularization and overtly Protestant perspectives were vested in presenting late medieval monasticism as corrupt (Heale 2009). The termination of monastic life in Scandinavia, the British Isles, and in German speaking territories along the North Sea and Baltic shore in the Reformation of the sixteenth century created a perfect teleological end point to a narrative of ultimately a failing form of religious practice. The secularized and dissolved monasteries were passive objects in the hands of secular agents. One of the most significant shifts in the writing of monastic history after the middle of the twentieth century was the challenge to these interpretations, both in terms of the nature of early sixteenth-century monasticism as well as processes of secularization and dissolution. In recent decades, they have been systematically deconstructed, both regionally and nationally, and build on the new approaches to the long fifteenth century too (Steckel 2019; Bertson 2003; Jürgensmeier and Schwerdtfeger 2005; Willmott 2020). In many respects, much of the work of monastic historians in the twenty-first century has been to free the field from these entangled paradigms and consider the past with fresh eyes.

4. Archaeology and Material Culture and Processes of Musealization

The wider field of monastic studies encompasses not only history, but also archaeology. Throughout the period under discussion, scholarly engagement with the material remains of monasteries in the regions under discussion shaped not just historical interpretations but also processes of musealization and public interpretation of the monastic sites. The importance of archaeology for new interpretations of history of individual abbeys cannot be overstated, whilst the development of new techniques within archaeological sciences opened up a new avenue of research into the human experience of monastic life especially diet, health, illness, and gender. New archaeological approaches allowed exploration of the relationship of monastic structures to the surrounding environment as well as the dynamics of change within the built environment of monastic precincts and the wider landscape (Kristjánsdóttir 2021; Wrathmell 2018; Stocker and Everson 2011; Keevill et al. 2001; Gilchrist 1994). Another aspect of monastic material culture—the interior decorations, devotional objects, and furnishings—survived in extremely diminished quantities from the regions under investigation, and this has remained a relatively small field of

research in comparison to documentary studies. However, in recent decades there have been important shifts in methodology and interdisciplinarity within archaeology, art history, and history that enabled late medieval monastic devotional culture to be explored in the context of ritualism, spirituality, and materiality especially in the 1300–1500 timeframe (Walker Bynum 2016; Luxford 2005). A very important manifestation of these new approaches is studies of late medieval Cistercian devotional materiality in North Sea-Baltic areas and northern England (Laabs 2000; Carter 2019).

Because of the suppression and dissolution of monastic houses in northern Europe, what constitutes surviving structures are mostly ruins or reused buildings with completely different functions. The processes of musealization began already in the nineteenth century with celebrations of romantic ruins in the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich (Eldena) or William Turner (Kirkstall Abbey). In England, placing the majority of monastic ruins into the care of the state in the first decades of the twentieth century created a very distinct appearance of monastic ruins as places to visit and experience. The process of "clearing" the sites to be accessible and visually attractive obliterated a huge amount of archaeological evidence but also exposed the ground plans of claustral ranges. This is often credited with the stimulation of research on Cistercian ground-plans in England (Thurley 2013). In the regions discussed in this article, several former monastic sites also became museums in which remaining buildings or parts of buildings provide exhibition spaces for the interpretation of monastic life, for example Esrum Abbey https://www.esrum.dk/en/ (accessed on 1 May 2021). This shows how in the second half of the twentieth century, the place of monastic history as somehow alien to the predominantly Protestant narratives of national past lost its significance and the former monastic site became much more integrated in the public presentation of history.

Another peculiarity of heritage creation has been introduced by the fact that in northern German, Denmark, and Sweden, many post-monastic churches became Protestant parish churches that now combine religious function with interpretation of medieval monastic history and its architectural heritage, for example Doberan https://www.muenster-doberan.de/index.php/de/ or Vreta https://www.vretaklosterforening.se/ (accessed on 1 May 2021). The heritage element in the presentation of these buildings remains secondary to their protestant cult functions, but explicit acknowledgment of medieval monastic past of these buildings is a visual equivalent of accommodating divergent confessional narratives. It is even more complex on the southern coast of the Baltic, where a formerly Protestant parish church in the chancel of the former monastic church in Kołbacz became a Catholic parish church in the process of Polonization after 1945 within the new political borders http://www.parafiawkolbaczu.com/opactwo-w-kolbaczu/ (accessed on 1 May 2021). In this case, the binary of Catholic (medieval) and Protestant (post-medieval) intersects with national narratives of Catholic (Polish) and Protestant (German), which does not clearly map onto the past or more recent historiographical constructs of medieval history of Kołbacz (Jamroziak 2011).

Public presentations of monastic heritage can be ambivalent for the living monastic institutions, who frequently resent attempts to musealize their lived experience. At the same time, historic monastic heritage can be seen as irrelevant and marginal in the deeply secularized contemporary context. In recent years, several transnational initiatives provided further impulse to the heritization of monastic sites held in mostly secular ownership (Coomans 2013). The *Charte européenne des Abbayes et Sites Cisterciens* https://www.cister.net (accessed on 1 May 2021) is an association of owners of post-monastic sites, including six in Sweden, two in Denmark, two in the Polish southern Baltic coast, and two in Mecklenburg. Whilst the network is an important vehicle for the practical concern of the care of historic buildings and their substance, it is also a forum that brings together different forms of attachment to monastic heritage as a part of local history, local identity in different European societies, and practical legal and economic frameworks. Two itineraries in the collection of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe focus on monastic sites: Clumiac sites of Europe https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/the-cluniac-sites-in-europe

(established in 2005) (accessed on 1 May 2021) and the European Route of Cistercian Abbeys https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/the-european-route-of-cistercian-abbeys (founded in 2010) (accessed on 1 May 2021). The design of these routes has no connection to location of medieval monastic networks, but nevertheless make a link to the connectiveness of medieval monastic institutions across political and linguistic boundaries, as a cultural and political statement about the shared heritage of Europe present in medieval monasteries is yet another dimension of possible public history. This type of initiative is also intended to boost tourism and has a further impact on the interpretation of sites and popular publications devoted to specific regions (Thomsen and Madsen 2019; Kaczyńska and Kaczyński 2010). Finally, a complex relationship between monastic heritage and new monastic foundations is exemplified by a recent foundation in northern Norway https://www.tautra.org/ (accessed on 1 May 2021). The foundation of the new Tautra Abbey, as a nunnery of the Cistercian Order of Strict Observance in 1999, near the side of the medieval Cistercian Abbey, is not a continuation of medieval monastic life, but one that builds its identity on the concept of monastic origins, spirituality developed in the twelfth century, and active dialogue with tradition in its observance. Architecturally, the new Tautra Abbey is strikingly modern and integrated into the landscape, it is not a neo-Gothic edifice, yet it is a continuation of a historically developed tradition of monastic life.

5. Conclusions

The historiography of monasticism in northern Europe has been shaped by the tradition of the history of monasticism within the paradigm of religious orders that was ultimately the product of "history from within", the history of monastic institutions written by members of these institutions and reflecting tensions between living tradition and historicized presentations of the monastic past. The greatest impact in the development of the historiography of northern European monasticism has been the development of a national history framework that not only pushed aside the Ordensgeschichte model, but also placed the history of individual monasteries and networks within the dominant structure of the development of political structure, linear development of the state, power, and control narratives. The nation-state history was also closely connected with a confessional perspective—in the context of the regions under discussion in this volume—it was a dominant Protestant current until the mid-twentieth century. Recent approaches to monastic material culture that greatly benefit from interdisciplinary possibilities, but also the reflection on the contemporary process of *heritagization of medieval monasticism, are important for building new models of interpretation.*

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The Making of Nordic Monasticism, *c.* 1076–*c.* 1350

James G. Clark

Department of History, University of Exeter, Exeter EX4 4QH, UK; j.g.clark@exeter.ac.uk

Abstract: The introduction of regular religious life in the Nordic region is less well-documented than in the neighbouring kingdoms of northern Europe. In the absence of well-preserved manuscript and material remains, unfounded and sometimes distorting suppositions have been made about the timeline of monastic settlement and the character of the conventual life it brought. Recent archival and archaeological research can offer fresh insights into these questions. The arrival of authentic regular life may have been as early as the second quarter of the eleventh century in Denmark and Iceland, but there was no secure or stable community in any part of Scandinavia until the turn of the next century. A settled monastic network arose from a compact between the leadership of the secular church and the ruling elite, a partnership motivated as much by the shared pursuit of political, social and economic power as by any personal piety. Yet, the force of this patronal programme did not inhibit the development of monastic cultures reflected in books, original writings, church and conventual buildings, which bear comparison with the European mainstream.

Keywords: monasteries; medieval scandinavia; Augustinians; Benedictines; Cistercians; Premonstratensians; manuscript fragments

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1. Introduction

Monasticism was an expression of Nordic Christianity in the Middle Ages, but it was not its original fount, its foundation nor, at least in its formative centuries, its driving force. The early inspiration and evangelical energy that moved the region to embrace the faith was not clerical at all: it was the leadership of its own lay society, the 'nail-shower nourishers' (naddskúrar nœrir) of saga legend, and their kinship networks, that urged on their territories conversion and then the first footings of an institutional church (Finlay and Faulkes 2016, pp. 164, 188). Their Christian convictions were as much part of their spoil from the harrying of north-western Europe for three hundred years as they were the result of missionary contact from Germany and the British-Irish Isles. Monks themselves reach no further than the margins of this story. Ansgar and Witmar of Corvey failed even to make a dry landfall and although their names and reputations were garnered by later generations, their Christian customs were not (Winroth 2012, pp. 103, 106, 110–11). It may have been a monastic, named Abbot Bernard in the account attributed to Theodoricus Monachus (*fl.* 1177x1188), who baptised Óláfr Tryggvason (*d.* 1000 CE) but it was the king's own uncompromising conversions that gave momentum to the new religion (McDougall and Foote 1998, p. 10). For the possibility of a monastic context for Óláfr's baptism see (Ellis 2019, pp. 65–67). The nascent church which arose from his and neighbouring rulers' new creed was configured around the *stadr* (centres of population) that were the anchorhold of their authority, and the *bóndi* (freemen), *boer* (farmstead) and *veiðr* (hunting and fishing) which fuelled their campaigns. Its leading clergy were, as with so much of their power, acquired overseas, or fashioned from their own *fólk* (people).

Yet, in the span of a century, from the deaths of the Danish rulers Sveinn Astridarson (1076) to that of Valdemar (1182) a network of monasteries grew across the four territories of Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden that was larger and more diverse in its representation of European congregations than was present at this time either in the island of Ireland or in Scotland. Its physical profile may have marked the landscape of Nordic

society almost at once according to the Romanesque design apparent in the traces of the first churches at Dalby, Naestved (Skovkloster) and, perhaps, Niðarholm. Excavations have indicated that the effects of its enterprise on life and livelihood would have been visible even to the generation that saw them arrive (Borgehammar and Wienberg 2012; Riddell et al. 2018). In fact, the true scale of the monastic presence is still coming into focus as both manuscript and material remains are subject to fresh analysis (Borgehammar and Wienberg 2012; Kristjánsdóttir 2014a, 2015a, 2015b, 2017; Riddell et al. 2018; Ommundsen 2008; Gullick 2013; Jensson 2021).

The uncertainty of the record has left historians conflicted in its interpretation. Perhaps the prevailing view is that in its early history, at least this first Nordic monasticism was essentially an extension of the ruling elites' early conversion impulse, to adopt the infrastructure of Latin Christianity to enhance their dynastic position and extend their own territorial authority. Their commitment to monasticism was much like their conversion; as the expatriate Englishman Ælnoth (*fl*. 1100–1122) assessed it in his *Vita et Passio Canuti*, they took it up just so long as it suited their plans (Gertz 1908, vol. 12, p. 83). From this perspective, their long history is best approached from their 'relationship to power groups in [Scandinavian] society' (McGuire 1982, p. 113).

When considered on its own terms this monastic culture has been represented for the most part as an echo of the traditions already dominant in northern Europe. The corporate voice of the original congregational narratives has continued to colour contemporary surveys. (McGuire 1982; France 1992). Such work has not been uncritical, of course, and has offered a close reading of some of the record books for the first time; but it has struggled to cast off the institutional blinkers of its sources leaving an impression of a monastic network which if not quite a colonial construct was at least a loyal imitation or recreation. The persuasive force of this point of view has caused foundations with few surviving records of their own to be claimed for the Cistercians without decisive proof, such as the Norwegian community of women at Nonneseter (Ommundsen 2010, 2016).

A new generation of Nordic scholars, who have counter-balanced the outlook of clerical Latinists with the surviving vernacular texts and landscapes, have challenged the notion of a monasticism whose centre of gravity remained outside the region. They question the conviction that Nordic convents, their customs and culture came from an Anglo-French, or Franco-German pattern-book as 'dubious and unnecessary' (Vésteinsson 2000, p. 140). Their research has brought into view manuscript and material evidence which has not been examined before (Gullick and Ommundsen 2012; Harðarson 2016; Kristjánsdóttir 2014a, 2015a, 2015b, 2017; Riddell et al. 2018; Jensson 2021).

This current research is uncovering a monastic environment more diverse and dynamic than can be adequately represented by either of the familiar archetypes: the manor-house *monasterium* of a chieftain *abbas* or the colonial posting of an international order. It is also revealing a monastic culture with a wider social, economic and intellectual reach within the Nordic polities, one which had lost little of its force in the late Middle Ages, when elsewhere in Europe it had already begun to recede. The purpose of this paper is to respond to these perspectives in a fresh survey of Nordic monasticism in its formative centuries.

2. The Records of Nordic Monasticism

These different readings have arisen principally because the historical record of Nordic monasteries is the poorest by far of all of those in the northern Europe, from Ireland to the Baltic. What must have been substantial archives for foundations that were four centuries old, and libraries stocked well enough to train scholars for leading universities, were laid waste at the Reformation and in subsequent generations (Karlsen 2013a; Jensson 2021, p. 3). Ninety per cent of Norway's medieval books have been 'lost without a trace' (Ommundsen 2008, p. 34). Fragments from as many as 450 manuscripts from Iceland's pre-Reformation libraries have been preserved, but what fraction of the whole they represent can only be guessed (Jensson 2021, p. 3). The monasteries' parchment manuscripts were commandeered to provide (literal) reinforcement for the paper-based administrations of

the new Protestant monarchies of Denmark, Norway and Sweden (Niblaeus 2010, pp. 54–55). Unlike other regions subject to state reformation—England, Wales and Scotland—the losses have extended to all categories of the regular written word, not only books for worship, education and study but also charters, cartularies, financial accounts and estate records. The few fragments which have been saved and studied show, above all, that the written culture of these regular communities covered the same ground as their British and European counterparts, in liturgy, learning, literature and administration (Gullick 2005; Ommundsen 2008; Gullick and Ommundsen 2012; Niblaeus 2010). As is so often the case, the significance of the loss is set in sharp relief by a handful of survivors: the so-called Naestved necrology (Copenhagen, Royal Library, E don. var. 52 2°), a book of memory for the Benedictine monastery of St Peter whose brief record of dates and names describes the historical and liturgical identity of a house; and the Øm chronicle (Copenhagen, Royal Library, E don. var. 135 4°), another statement of the identity of a house, this one told in the idiom of the Cistercians, beginning with the legend of the early pioneers, and building to a climax with a battery of privileges granted by almost a hundred years of popes (Gertz 1917–1920, ii. 158–206; McGuire 1982, pp. 16–17).

These books stand in the way of any assumption that the historical imagination of Nordic monasteries was quite unlike that of other regions of Europe. It is true that the medieval narratives that are best preserved, the annals and chronicles of a few principal churches, and the sagas of the kings, pay scarcely any attention to monastic affairs. The histories best known, to contemporaries as much as now, such as those of Adam of Bremen (*d*. 1081x1085), Saxo Grammaticus (*d*. *c*. 1220) and Snorri Sturluson (*d*. 1241), were self-consciously secular in outlook, reflecting a clerical education in service to lay power. Even those compiled (if not created) in monastic centres record the passage of time through *gesta regum* and from their own point-of-view give greater notice to the vocation of the monarch—the *ad succurrendum* (i.e., for redemption) profession of Erik Lam (*d*. 1146)—and the legend of their order—the election of Pope Eugenius III (1145), the death of Bernard of Clairvaux (1153)—than to that of their own house (Waitz 1892, p. 224).

In fact, annals in this form, bald, derivative, unreflective, were found in houses of the same congregations in every region of northern Europe. They were not intended to be domestic histories and in a typical conventual book collection they were distinct from them. Naturally, they attracted a non-monastic readership before and after the dissolution of monasteries and everywhere they have been better preserved. The existence of one or two historical collections from the last half-century of the monasteries' history (e.g., the Sorø donation book, now Copenhagen, Royal Library, GKS 2485, 4°. See also McGuire 1982, pp. 24–25) is itself an indication of the likelihood of earlier iterations of domestic records that have since disappeared. These were the 'schedulis et vilibus cartis sparsim conscripta' (scattered, scribbled charters and other documents) which were still to hand when the historian of Guldholm began his account of the abbey in 1289 (Waitz 1892, p. 238). Their loss to posterity may have been apparent as early as the 1550s, giving place to the myth making of Johannes Magnus (1488–1544) and others steeped in the saga tradition, that have only obscured the monastic past (Skovgaard-Petersen 2012, pp. 453, 456–57, 460).

The limitations of the written sources are compounded by the condition of many monastic sites. Some, such as Iceland's Þykkvibær have been erased entirely and can now be interpreted only as and when the support for excavation can be found; more have been profoundly changed by subsequent use and the successive phases of development of the surrounding environment. Typically, the conventual complex has been removed, restricting a reading of the monastic occupation of a site which in many cases cannot be assumed to have been coterminous with the timeline of the church itself. Those that remain as cathedral or parochial churches, such as Denmark's Roskilde St Mary, or Sweden's Dalby, retain few visible traces of their monastery past. The further footprints of monastic lordship in population centres and in the wider landscape are now as difficult to recover as in any other European region given the changing patterns of settlement and land-use over the past five centuries.

It is from these same forbidding sources, manuscripts and landscapes much changed since the medieval period, that new perspectives are now being drawn. It may be that Nordic monasticism was not made exactly in the image of other regions of the European North West, but it is argued here that this difference should not diminish its role in the development of the church in the region nor, more especially, the imprint on its society and culture of the defining features—conventual, observant, subsistent—of the monastic life.

3. Early Monastic Encounters

Recent research has in fact renewed the old conviction that at the beginning of Nordic Christianity there was contact with established monastic circles in Britain and the European mainland. It came early, and then frequently and in time was sustained. Corvey's missionaries saw a church raised at Birka (now Sweden). However, it was served, there was enough continuity for another monk of Corvey, Unni, the first bishop of Hamburg-Bremen, to be called there some four decades later (Winroth 2012, pp. 106, 110–11). Writing from Bremen in the second half of the eleventh century, the annalist Adam saw a monastic influence already established in the archdiocese. He understood it to be the legacy of Unwan, archbishop from 1013–1029, whom he believed to be the first to turn the clergy of his cathedral from their 'mixed' life, midway between monk and secular, instead to live 'regulariter' (i.e., according to a rule) under the customs of Augustine (Schmeidler 1917, p. 108). It was under the jurisdiction of Unwan or his successor (r. 1032–1035) that an itinerant Norwegian clerk, Rúðólfur, appears to have begun a monastic colony in southern Iceland at Bæjarklaustur (Kristjánsdóttir 2014a, p. 7). He may have been there for as much as twenty years, as he is next documented as abbot of the English Benedictine monastery at Abingdon (Berkshire) in 1051x1052, succeeding another Norseman, Spearhafoc (Knowles et al. 2004, p. 24). Rúðólfur himself may have been the only trace of active monasticism associated with Norway in this period as the legend that Knut the Great settled a community a Niðarholm has been challenged by the archaeological evidence of the church construction there no earlier than the end of the eleventh century (Nyberg 2000, pp. 74–75 at 74). In his own career Adam of Bremen watched the rising star of monastic status, recording that his own archbishop, Adalbert (r. 1043x1045–1072) aspired to a claustral profession at the end of his reign (ut multotiens fieri monachus desideravit: Schmeidler 1917, p. 218). There may have been equally early traffic to and from English cloisters. In his life of the legendary Cornish saint, Ivo of Ramsey, Goscelin of Saint-Bertin (*d*. 1099) recalled the journey of a monk from Ramsey to Norway and back at the turning-point of the tenth century (Abrams 1995, pp. 221–22). This might suggest that the memory that Matthew Paris (*d*. 1259) recovered from thirteenth-century St Albans, of a journey to Odense in the distant past, if muddled, was not wholly without foundation (Riley 1867, i. 14, 17).

These trace elements signal not the beginnings of Nordic monasticism in the first half of the eleventh century but a new frequency of encounters with churchmen familiar with it, and favouring it, even if they did not all of them practice it themselves. They did not carry with them a decided agenda for monastic colonisation. In fact, some of the most substantial manuscript survivals from this early period are redolent of alternative vision of evangelism, of a mission led by charismatic bishops (British Library, MS Add. 34386; Helsinki, University Library, Fr. Bi 2; Niblaeus 2010, p. 67).

When Sveinn Astríðarsson took power in Denmark in 1047, the secular rulers of the Nordic region, as well as the leaders of its developing institutional church, were familiar with the Latin monasticism of northwest Europe in principle and in the practice embodied by a number of itinerant devotees. Yet, there is little to suggest there was a sustained or widespread impulse to settle a monastic network of their own.

4. The Beginnings of Monastic Life in the Nordic Lands

A church served by clergy set under a rule was not seen in anywhere in the Nordic region any earlier than the last years of the eleventh century. The annalists at work a century (and more later) associated the creation of monastic churches with the celebrated,

campaigning rulers of the previous half century. The anonymous hagiographer of David, evangelist of Sweden (*d*. *c*. 1080) attributed to him the foundation of a monastic colony at Munkthorp as early as the reign of Anund Jacob (*d*. *c*. 1050) (Fant et al. 1818–1876: II.i. 4). The tradition at thirteenth-century Niðarholm, absorbed by Matthew Paris, was that their monastery owed its origin to Knut the Great (*d*. 1035) (Luard 1872–1883, iv. 42–45). At Ryd, the Cistercians believed it was Olaf Haraldsson (*d*. 1028) whom 'primus religiosos in Daciam induxit' (Lappenberg 1859, p. 399). There are no text or material remains to lend any substance to these claims made at a distance of so many years, although the possibility that some clusters of regular religious were to be found in either Denmark, Norway or Sweden before 1075 should still not be discounted. The arrival of the monk, Wythman, who was either a Norseman or a German, at the English monastery at Ramsey (Cambridgeshire) in 1016 cannot be overlooked (Abrams 1995, p. 223; Knowles et al. 2004, p. 61). His candidacy for abbacy is more suggestive of early developments in his homeland than the dedication of the church at Selja to Alban, England's protomartyr. His cult was curated by a chain of monastery churches in the eleventh century, extending from England and the Rhineland, but its transmission did not depend on the adoption of monastic customs.

The later medieval annals and chronicles agreed that the tangible roots of their own conventual tradition could be traced to the last quarter of the century. At the climax of his career Adam of Bremen considered his province was now distinguished for its Christianity and its churches populated with those that are vested as monks (qui etiam vestitu monachico induti sunt: Schmeidler 1917, pp. 243–44 at 244. He remembered Eilbert, bishop of Odense (r. 1048–1072) as himself a monk (monachus: Schmeidler 1917, p. 231); Egino, his fellow suffragan at Lund (r. *c*. 1066–1072) Adam understood to have established clergy living under a rule (regulariter) at Dalby (Schmeidler 1917, p. 237); a claim which now appears reinforced by the archaeological record (Kockum 2012).

In the Danish sources, the turn from contact to the creation of communities occurred first in Zealand, during the reign of Sveinn Astríðarson (Sveinn II, *d*. 1076). Roskilde's cathedral chapter recalled, around 1140, that Sveinn provided a new bishop, his chaplain, Svend Nordmand (*d*. 1088), to the see, who proved to be 'the best of all his predecessors' (Gertz 1917–1920, i. 23). Bishop Svend gave stone for the *claustrum* (cloister) of the cathedral chapter, creating a conventual context if not in itself a prompt for the adoption of a regular life. He was also remembered for the settlement of communities of monks (monasteria) at Ringsted and Slagelse. At a distance of almost a century, but probably drawing on a Roskildan tradition, Saxo Grammaticus recorded the same bishop as the founder of three churches (sacraria) dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, in Roskilde, Ringsted and Slagelse (Friis-Jensen 2014, ii. 867–69 at 868). Saxo's terminology, 'in extruendis Marie sacrariis operam gessit' (he carried forward the construction of chapels dedicated to Mary) might challenge the annalist's conviction that these were *monastic* churches although his account was made when these acts of patronage were almost within living memory. At any rate, the annal later recorded that Svend's successor, Arnold, set a new wall around Roskilde's monastery (using the term, monasterium) and restored its paintings (picturam), a particular measure which might suggest that the original foundation had occurred early in Sveno's prelacy, which must have begun before Sveinn's death in 1076 (Gertz 1917–1920, i. 25). The next incumbent at Roskilde, Bishop Peter, appointed by Sveinn's son, King Niels (*d*. 1134), sought to extend the network of communities, enabling monks to be supported at the church of St Clement, to the south of the cathedral, giving them buildings (domos) and lands (terras). Niels himself also lent his patronage to the project (Gertz 1917–1920, i. 26).

There is a far fainter tradition of parallel developments in Jutland. There may have been monastic communities settled at Randers and Veng to the north and west of the see at Aarhus. The case for both of them is retrospective: the later monasteries of Essenbaeck and Øm claimed descent from them, and the prompt for the foundation of the latter (1172) was the reform of a Benedictine community at Veng which was, by that date, long established (Gertz 1917–1920, ii. 163). There is no substantive evidence to suggest that these colonies

were the result of an episcopal enterprise comparable to Roskilde. In fact, neither names nor the acts of the incumbents of Aarhus have been remembered between *c*. 1060 and 1102.

It was between these two Danish territories, on the island of Funen, that the arrival of a conventual, observant monastic life can be most clearly documented, almost a generation later than the initiative of King Sveinn's Bishop Svend. Perhaps at the outset of the reign of Sveinn's son, Erik I (1095), a delegation of monks from the English Benedictine abbey at Evesham (Worcestershire) was invited to form a monastic community around the church at Odense, dedicated to St Alban, which held the remains of Erik's elder sibling, Knut IV (*d*. 1086). Although a precise date is not recorded, there can be little doubt that a community was settled by the end of the century when the canonisation of Knut was carried out in situ at Odense. It was well enough established for the Canterbury monk, Ælnoth, Knut's hagiographer, to come and to stay there soon after 1100. It was recognised as a community to be a credible confraternity partner for the abbey of St Mary at York (Macray 1863, p. 325).

Dynastic prestige may have been the first aim of parallel acts of church patronage at the turn of the century in the Norwegian and Swedish territories. Eysteinn Magnússon (r. 1103–1123), second son and successor of Magnus Barefoot (Magnus Berfoettr, r. 1093–1103), was later celebrated by Theodoricus as 'fosterer of the Christian religion' and it is possible that he saw the placement of regulars at the church of St Michael, Munkeliv, near Bergen, where, according to Snorri Sturluson, he 'spent a lot of money' (Finlay and Faulkes 2015, iii. 154; McDougall and Foote 1998, p. 51). His client chieftain at Bratsberg, Dag Eilivsson and his spouse, Ragnhild Skoftesdotter, have been assumed to be founders of the community of women on the north-west coast at Gimsøy, not least because their daughter Baugeid was recorded as its first superior (Nyberg 2000, p. 151).

It may have been under Magnus Barefoot or his sons Eysteinn (r. 1103–1123) and Siugurd (r. 1103–1130) that forms of monastic life were established at Munkeliv, near Bergen, Niðarholm, near Trondheim, and Selja on the west coast. Material fragments both at the Trondeim site and at Selja do signal new—perhaps conventual—building activity not much later than 1130, the year of Sigurd's death (Abrams 1995, p. 223; Nyberg 2000, pp. 73–75).

A seventeenth-century transcript of land grants registered for the Benedictine monastery at Vreta, near Uppsala in south-east Sweden, recorded a substantial domain provided by Inge Stenkilsson, who held power in the first part of the first decade after 1100 (Nyberg 2000, pp. 81–86 at 82). There is no other substantive evidence, documentary or material, of a monastic presence before the site was occupied by a Cistercian community six decades later.

These pioneering communities arose from acts of royal and ecclesiastical patronage that carried priorities other than the promotion of the monastic ideal. The presence of monks of Evesham at Odense was to underpin the emergent cult of Knut the martyr (i.e., Knut IV of Denmark, r. 1080–1086). At Ringsted and Slagelse, and (if they were there) at Randers and Veng, the first object may have been nothing other than to strengthen the diocesan centre at Aarhus with satellite churches and clergy. Nonetheless, the evidence of the extant manuscript fragments would suggest exchanges with monasteries overseas that were more than instrumental—prompted by their patrons—and generated by the communities, collectively and individually, acting for themselves. The trace of a calendar whose content suggests an origin at the Benedictine abbey of Crowland (Lincolnshire) hints at relationships forged with a wider circle in England (NRA, lat. Fragmenter 145, 1–6; Gullick 2013, p. 105).

These were prominent churches and cult centres certainly, but they were also self-conscious representatives of the Benedictine tradition. In reaching out to churchmen of the remote Nordic region so far as to offer them their books it seems likely that they recognised in them a common commitment to a life under a rule. The possibility that manuscripts were made in English monasteries in this same period 'expressly for the purpose' of equipping Scandinavian churches is a powerful signal of a shared identity (Rankin 2013, p. 68). When the century turned these communities of clergy may have already displayed some of

the distinctive characteristics of the prevailing monastic culture, its liturgy in general, its cult focal points in particular and the look of its churches and convent buildings. Their monastic practice, such as it was, may have been only on the smallest scale. It may be telling that most of the early fragments of liturgical books are of missals. These were not yet communities of priests large enough to have any need for discrete volumes of graduals and sacramentaries (Rankin 2013, p. 68). However, their monastic identity was largely self-contained, or at least it was an expression of foundations whose direction and development was independent of one another. Here, there was monastic life but not a monastic movement.

5. The Settlement of Nordic Monasteries, *c*. 1134–1146

A momentum for monastic settlement is not perceptible in any part of the region for at least another generation, rising in the second quarter of the twelfth century. In Danish territory, it grew from the further development of the secular church, its leadership and its infrastructure in the decades before the Civil War that erupted in the wake of the death of Erik Lam (1146). Perhaps before 1133, the chapter of the cathedral at Viborg (Jutland) adopted the rule of St Augustine, since their brethren of this time were remembered in the Lund necrology as both 'priests' and 'canons' (Nyberg 2000, pp. 96–97). Svend II, chosen for the see at the turn of 1133/34 had served as prior of the cathedral chapter and his support as bishop for regular communities settlement elsewhere may strengthen the suggestion that from these early years it may have had a monastic character. It is possible that the church of Asmild, across the water from the cathedral, acquired a convent of canonesses at the same time although its monastic identity is documented only from the end of the century (Nyberg 2000, pp. 153–54).

The second incumbent of the new metropolitan see at Lund, Eskil (1133–1177), led the formation of regular communities reaching across his province. The rehearsal for his programme may have been at Roskilde where briefly he held the bishopric before his translation to Lund and where he may have restarted, or at least revived the turn-of-the-century monastery; here, he may also have given his patronage to a conventual church for women at Aalborg to the north east of Jutland, perhaps in collaboration with the incumbent of Børglum, Sylvester or his (unnamed) successor (Heilskov 2015, p. 143). When still at Roskilde Bishop Eskil may also have settled a regular community at Æbelholt also in North Zealand. The pre-existence of the community was acknowledged in the later account of its re-foundation under the Victorine William (Copenhagen, Royal Library, Add 51 2°, fo. 1r). Soon after he took office at Lund, William lent his support to the creation of a colony in the far west of Zealand at Naestved. It may have been under his primacy that the twin communities of Voer and Vissing were first settled in the east of Jutland within his suffragan diocese of Aarhus, although neither their institutional identity nor their fabric can be traced earlier than the century's end (Nyberg 2000, pp. 78, 194).

If the archbishop's patronage reflected a programme, it was to expand the human infrastructure of the church with communities made stable and sustainable not only with buildings and income but also by their vowed commitment to a recognised rule. It is surely a measure of his priorities that Eskil's interest in the regular life was eclectic: while it had been Benedictine custom that he had propagated in Roskilde, in Lund itself it seems he encouraged the introduction of the new, reformed canonical rule of Premontré for a community established at the church of St Saviour before 1150. From there, a second Premonstratensian colony settled at Tommarp (Nyberg 2000, pp. 161–63). Eskil's impulse also introduced Cistercians to the Nordic region for the first time, a little under fifty years after their first foundation at Citeaux. The engagement of the congregation leadership may have grown from the region's first synod convened in 1139. The first cohort of monks arrived at Herrevad just thirty miles north of Lund in 1144; a second colony settled at Esrum in 1151 (Lappenberg 1859, p. 404; France 1992, pp. 42–44).

The civil conflict of the 1140s and 1150s may have forced a hiatus, but in the new stability under Valdemar, what had been no more than outposts of Cistercian custom were

leavened into Nordic network. Herrevad set out to establish filiate communities at Tvis, Holm and Løgum. Eskil also looked to cultivate another novel form of observant life, inviting number Carthusians to build a house at Asserbo at the north western edge of Zealand in 1162 (France 1992, p. 7).

The monastic enterprise of the archbishop and his province depended on their increasing integration—personal and institutional—within a network of churches and clergy reaching both outward to the European mainland and further inward across the Nordic region. The deliberate settlement of monks in Danish territory was replicated over the same period in Iceland, Norway and Sweden; perhaps also in Greenland, although the only authority for it is retrospective.

In the case of Iceland, it was a direct consequence of the development of metropolitan authority for the church of Lund. A suffragan diocese of Hólar was designated in 1106 with jurisdiction over the north of the island, and its first incumbent, Jon Ogmundsson (1106–1121) is credited, by his thirteenth-century hagiographer, with encouraging the settlement of monks before his death. A community at Þingeyrar, some 100 miles to the west of the episcopal church, is commonly dated to 1133 his church (Storm 1888, p. 113; Head 2001, pp. 622–23; Vésteinsson 2000, p. 133). Archaeological evidence of the clearance of site for cultivation that appears to pre-date the monastic occupation adds substance to the medieval claims about the bishop's preparations (Riddell et al. 2018).

It is conceivable that it was the creation of an episcopal see for Greenland in 1126 at Garðar on the island's southern tip that initiated the introduction of regular religion. The earliest witness to the presence of churches served by monastic communities occurred more than two centuries later, when the territory was visited by Ívar Bárðarson, appointed as *locum tenens* (temporary custodian) for Garðar diocese in 1347. He recorded a community of Augustinian canons at Ketilsfjord and a counterpart Benedictine community at Ramsnes Fjord, which may be a misidentification for Siglufjord, the contemporary name for which is Uunartoq Fjord (Grayburn 2015, pp. 12–13). The 'complete lack' of corroborating material evidence for the first of these sites, and the absence of monastic characteristics in the assemblage recovered from the second have, for some historians, badly undermined Bárðarson's testimony (Grayburn 2015, pp. 13–15).

The devolution of episcopal supervision from Lund also stimulated the formation of monastic communities within Norway. Bergen, already a suffragan see, passed from Bremen's authority to that of Lund in 1104 and within a decade its own domain had been subdivided to form a see at Stavanger. The inaugural bishop was an Englishman, Reinald, called to the region in same capacity as the English monks of Odense, as representatives of a mature monastic establishment. Reinald's religious formation was under the influence of the church at Winchester, which claimed the tradition of the observant Benedictine reform movement of the late tenth century. It was also the focus for a cult of the ninth-century Bishop Swithun which had thrived in England. Reinald's legacy at Stavanger was a regular cathedral chapter but there is no certainty that he himself was professed as a monk. What he brought to the Norwegian setting was the form and style of worship at Winchester, but not necessarily a community of priests committed to a specified rule (Lapidge 2003, pp. 56–57 &n; Jorgensen 2011, pp. 133–35). Yet, the contemporary witness of one of the stories collected in the *Libellus Cuthberti* by Reginald, monk of the Benedictine Cathedral priory is worth noting. It tells of the intercession of St Cuthbert to cure a Norwegian youth who had come there after five years' formation in the community at Stavanger (Raine 1835, pp. 248–54; Antonsson et al. 2007). A case for a defined Benedictine identity has recently been made (Haug 2014). Nonneseter, near Oslo, may have been a product of this period between 1150 and 1160. Bishop Elias of Ribe (r. 1142–1162) is said to have turned his chapter into a regular community under the rule of St Augustine (Jorgensen 2011, p. 28; Nyberg 2000, p. 151).

It is possible to see the influence of Lund, and of Eskil's primacy in particular, in the Norwegian bishops' creation of Cistercian colonies in the course of the 1140s. In the same year of the settlement at Herrevad, a delegation of monks from Fountains (North

Yorkshire) were 'called from the distant ends of England' (evocatis de remotis Angliae finibus: Langebek 1776, pp. 407–9 at 408), according to a later foundation narrative, to Lyse by Bishop Sigurd of Bergen (r. before 1155x1157). Similarly to Eskil himself (who had experienced Citeaux), the link was formed from Sigurd's first-hand connection with the English house (Nyberg 2000, pp. 140–44). Within three years, a counterpart colony had been settled by Sigurd's colleague, William, bishop of Oslo, on the nearby island of Hovedøya. This too was formed from an English Cistercian community from Kirkstead (Lincolnshire), itself founded little more than five years before (Nyberg 2000, pp. 144–45).

In fact, the Lund template for Cistercian colonisation was repeated beyond its immediate jurisdiction in Sweden. It has been suggested that the first episcopal church at Uppsala, of the 1130s acquired a monastic chapter (Dählback 1993). Perhaps in support is the story of a Bishop Siward who came to Rastede from Uppsala armed with liturgical and patristic books including a copy of the rule (Lovén 2001, p. 244; Waitz 1892, p. 502). A party of Clairvaux monks were persuaded into the territory in 1143 by Ulfhild, queen of Swaerkir (*r. c.* 1135–1156), settling at Alvastra and Nydala to the east and south of Lake Vattern (Nyberg 2000, pp. 125–26, 128–29; Line 2007, pp. 83–85). Another colony was settled further to the west at Varnhem in 1150 under the patronage of Sigrid, consort of Erik, called Jedvardsson, who succeeded Swaerkirk in the second half of the decade. Possibly this community had first gathered at Lugnas further to the north (Gertz 1917–1920, ii. 138–39 at 138; France 1992, pp. 35–38).

The diffusion of episcopal authority in the Nordic region prompted papal intervention in 1151, and the restructuring of the metropolitan and diocesan sees. Rome's representative was the Cardinal Bishop of Albano, Nicholas Breakspear (later Pope Adrian IV, r. 1154–1159). Bishop Nicholas was also a career monastic, a regular canon who had held the abbacy of St Ruf (Avignon) and what he met in Scandinavia was a raft of religious houses hitched to the region's ruling authorities not so dissimilar from his own network which he had left some 2600 km to the south (Egger 2003).

6. Mid-Twelfth Century Movements

The quarter-century after 1150 saw a renewed impulse for monastic settlement right across the Nordic region. The continuing struggle for power in Denmark and Norway ensured there was no obstacle to the curbing of Lund's metropolitan authority in 1151 when the Cardinal Bishop Breakspear raised Niðarós to an archbishopric (Bergquist 2003). It opened a phase of monastic foundation much like that of Eskil at the start of his primacy. The second incumbent of the new metropolitan see, Øystein Erlendsson (r. 1161–1188), a member of the royal household of Inge Krokrygg, had encountered the reformed regular life at the abbey of St Victor in Paris, and early into his term established canon communities at Hegelseter, to serve his own cathedral church, Halsnøy and Kastelle (Waßenhoven 2006, pp. 105–40; Nyberg 2000, pp. 222–25). His suffragan of Stavanger, Bishop Eirik Ivarson (r. 1170–1188), was also an alumnus of St Victor and may have regulated the chapter of St Olav at this time (Jorgensen 2011, p. 131); it may have been under his watch that a regular community was first settled at Utstein on Mosterøy, the largest of the islands due north of the cathedral city (Haug and Ekroll 2007).

From the return of settled Danish rule under Valdemar, Eskil and his suffragans resumed their programme of regular foundations. The reinvigoration of their Cistercian colony was a direct consequence of Valdemar I's capture of the crown. He granted the territory of Vitskøl in the north of Jutland for the creation of a community 'according to order of Cistercians' (secundum Cisterciensem ordinem) in October 1157 (Nyberg 2000, pp. 176–81 at 177). Under the influence of Vitskøl a further nine communities were formed over the following forty years, at Tvis (1163); Dargun (1171); Øm (1172), a colony which over seven years from 1165 passed through four provisional sites, Sabrø, Silkeborg, Veng and Kalvø; Holme (1172x1174); Kolbacz (1174); Løgum (1175); Oliva (1176); Guldholm (1192); As (1194) (Gertz 1917–1920, ii. 141, 144–46; Nyberg 2000, p. 248). See also (McGuire 1982, pp. 104–7).

The wide extension of the network owed much to the enterprise of Absalon, bishop at Roskilde from 1158, but also Eskil's successor at Lund. As with Eskil, Absalon had first-hand knowledge of the Cistercian model of community from Clairvaux. He had also passed through the reformed canon house of Paris and promoted Victorine observance in his own see. In 1165, he persuaded the Parisian canon William of Sainte-Geneviève to come to reform the community at Eskilso, who had 'taken on the habit of the religious but were no lovers of religious virtue' (quidam habitum religionis assumentes sed virtutem religionis non amantes: Copenhagen, Royal Library, Add 51 2°, fo. 1r). These uncanonical canons resisted William's strictures but he succeeded in raising a new regular community at Æbelholt. Building a wide network of correspondence, the influence of William's brand of canonical reform washed over a wide region (Hermanson 2016, pp. 65–68, 71–75, 82–83). It may be that the chapter at Børglum now committed to an Augustinian following his example, although it is possible it had accepted reform even before the period of civil wars at the hands of a delegation from the reformist community of canons at Steinfeld in the Rhineland.

Steinfeld itself had adopted the Premonstratensian reform in the middle years of the century and at whatever date this influence was passed to Børglum, and from there to an affiliate female community at Vrejlev. These joined an axis of the reformed customs which again Eskil had created at Øved, Tommarp and Va in the years after Valdemar's victory (Nyberg 2000, pp. 214–15).

In the neighbouring see of Viborg, Bishop Niels (1153–1191) propagated a canonical rule at Asmild (1165) and Grinderslev (1176). At the same time, in the suffragancies of northern and southern Iceland there was a further expansion of the monastic presence: Bjorn Gilsson of Hólar (1147–1162) that a further monastic community was settled in Iceland at Munkaþverá, not far from the see itself (dated by the earliest annals to 1154: Storm 1888, p. 115; Vésteinsson 2000, p. 135). It may be assumed that it was with the cooperation of the bishop of the southern diocese of Skaholt, Klængur Þorsteinsson, that the Victorine canon, Þorkel, formed a community of regular canons at Þykkvibær in 1168 (Vésteinsson 2000, p. 136). Episcopal patronage was replicated by territorial chieftains. Probably it was the local chief Ogmundr who provided for a canon house at Flatey, later moved to Helgafell, where he took the position of abbot for himself (Storm 1888, p. 117; Vésteinsson 2000, pp. 136–37). Other chieftains now sponsored monastic settlements: at Saurbær, Olafr placed regular canons and at Keldur the Oddaverjar chieftain Jón Loftsson (a grandson of Magnus Barefoot), initiated a colony that later dispersed (Vésteinsson 2000, pp. 138–39).

In the four decades that Eskil served Lund, the colonies of monks and regular canons under the see's metropolitan jurisdiction more than doubled. The pace of this expansion matched that of the region's nearest neighbours in Britain, Ireland and Germany. The number, scale and scope of the communities may have been different—the populations of the Nordic monasteries were undoubtedly far lower at this time—but the motive power, a combination of secular and ecclesiastical lordship, was much the same.

7. The Dynamics of Nordic Monasticism

In outline, these phases of monastic settlement, apparently showing most momentum in the first and third quarters of the twelfth century, seem to align the Nordic region with the experience of the neighbouring nations of the northwest, from where its Christian faith had come. The chronology is closely matched: for England and Wales at least, for each step in the adoption of regular religious life: the introduction of Benedictine customs in cathedral chapters at the turn of the twelfth century; the arrival and internal spread of Cistercian settlements in successive waves rolling from the end of the 1130s as far as the 1170s, and the mid-century movement of canonical reform under the influence of St Victor and Premontré. In fact, for a time between 1135 and 1154, there appears a mirror between the monastic settlements of Anglo-Norman England and the territories of Denmark and Norway given the common challenge of contested crowns and consequent seigniorial disorder. The

growth of the Cistercian network in England and Wales outstripped the Nordic presence, in spite of these obstacles. Their progress in Ireland, by contrast, was a close match for the Scandinavian experience, and the first settlement at Mellifont (Drogheda) was also the project of the presiding metropolitan (1132x1134–1136–1137), Malachy of Armagh (Flanagan 2010, p. 120; Flanagan 2015, p. 297).

The mutability of monastic communities had also been shared by their European neighbours. The Cistercian colonies in the north (e.g., Byland) and the southwest (e.g., Forde) of England, and in Ireland (e.g., Boyle) passed through more than one location before they succeeded in a settled site (Burton 2006; Kalkreuter 2001). Changes of custom were commonplace, from Augustinian to Benedictine in England, Wales, Ireland and France. The women of Kilcreevanty (Co. Galway, Ireland) moved across the spectrum of monastic discipline, from Benedictine to Cistercian, and finally settled on a canonical rule under the Arrouaisian affiliation (Ó'Clabaigh 2005, p. 117). The male community of Eberbach (Baden-Württemberg) passed rapidly down the same route of reform but in the opposite direction, turning from a canon house to an abbey of Cistercians in the space of just twenty years (1116–1131x1135) (Savage 2012, p. 26).

In some respects, the press of church and crown politics on the Nordic settlements were also recognisable from the perspective of the European mainland. Notwithstanding the legacy of a network of ancient monastic churches, the advance of observant monastic and canon communities in England and Wales was driven by the fortunes of the new Norman monarchy, peaking when royal authority was assured (1070–1087; 1100–1135; 1154–1180) and there was a compact between the prince and his prelacy (Cownie 1998, pp. 47–48, 142–44; Vincent 2007, p. 332).

It is also possible to see cultural dynamics in the making of monasticism that were shared by the churchmen in each of these regions. Circles of friendship, created through cross-border education, conventual visits as well as letter exchanges were important not only in establishing corporate ties but also a source of monastic education and formation. Citeaux, Clairvaux, St Victor and their leadership trained Nordic regulars, in person and remotely, just as they did those from all regions of the British-Irish Isles and Germany (McGuire 1982, pp. 39–40, 44; France 1992, pp. 118–29 at 122; Nyberg 2000, pp. 174–75, 221–25). There was also a shared investment in values of the Gregorian papacy and its expanding range of legislative instruments. The legatine mission of 1152 lent support to the leadership of the Nordic church and they, and their new foundations were underpinned by the battery of privileges very readily given by a succession of pontiff who were either monastic themselves, or conspicuous supporters of the congregations, Eugenius III, Adrian IV, Alexander III and Lucius III.

Yet, these common features frame a picture of early monasticism in Scandinavia which in important points of detail was quite distinct from its neighbours to the south. Regular communities were not only convened by the secular church but were also configured on its very foundations. As the historian of Gudholm described it, 'the bishop built a monastery in his own domain and provided it with many riches from his own patrimony' (episcopus autem edificari fecerat monasterium in suo fundo proprio . . . contulit . . . .de suo patrimonium predia multa et plurimum promisit: Waitz 1892, p. 239). From the cathedrals to the provincial churches, the first and persistent instinct of episcopal patrons was for vowed religion to be planted in churches that were already standing. In this they surely acknowledged the realities of their own ecclesiastical environment: there were fewer churches standing among the scattered settlements of territories whose Christian conversion was little more than a century old.

Yet, it does seem these prelates weighed the value of a monastic constitution differently from their counterparts in the kingdoms to the south. The rules of canons or monks following either Benedict or the constitutions of Citeaux promised them a pattern of worship in churches whose presence and profile was not yet well established: not all of them were of recent construction, tracing their origins perhaps as far back as the beginning of the eleventh century, but few, if any could claim an unbroken history. The commitment

to a rule also held out the prospect of an assured supply of clerical personnel; if not all them were ordained to the priesthood, at least there were the foundations for a form of pastoral care.

These considerations might have resonated with Archbishop Malachy of Armagh but in the neighbouring kingdoms of England and Scotland, in France and in Imperial Germany already the leadership of the secular church was less inclined to look on their regular communities as their natural partners in power. Here, the spiritual benefit of a monastic foundation came to be considered as its very separation from the Church militant. It was an exemplum of the life with Christ, valuable and viable in the overall structure of the institutional church only because it was not part-and-parcel of the social community. In the same period that Bishops Eskil and Absalon invited regulars to take possession of churches and parishes, one of the most powerful diocesans in England, Bishop Robert de Chesney of Lincoln (r. 1148–1166), battled over the spiritual jurisdiction of a Benedictine monastery (St Albans) all the way to the Roman Curia (Riley 1867, i. 128–32, 135–36).

In the Nordic regions, the monastic estate was also shaped by the secular ruling elite—monarchy, magnate lordship and its connecting networks of kinship—in patterns for which in the same period there was no match in the most developed kingdoms of England and France and which in Germany had receded from as early as the mid-tenth century. There monasteries had been 'nodal points in the social structure' but for the most part 'before the emergence of familial castles'. Thereafter, the ruling elite had 'begun to rely on other strategies' (Nightingale 2001, pp. 6, 262). It is true, of course, that Scandinavian secular founders employed some of the same tools as their counterparts to build regular churches. Valdemar I's Vitskøl began with charter that followed a European blueprint that was already more than two hundred years also, describing a domain and prescribing a pattern of (in this instance, Cistercian) observance, an echo of the earliest charters of Cluny itself (Nyberg 2000, p. 177). The first charter of Esrum, that opens the cartulary in the Exordium book, affirmed tenure under the terms of free alms that were the main currency of the monastic patronage in the same period in the kingdoms further south (Copenhagen, Royal Library, E don. var. 140 4°, fo. 3r-v).

Beyond these charters, however, Nordic patrons formed a different relationship with the communities they brought into being. Frequently, the domain of the new monastery was itself the source of their own seigniorial position. Iceland's Þykkvibær was settled on the estate of founder, Þorkell Geirason; although the creation of the diocesan, the community of Munkaþverá was likewise conjured from the Gilsson family property (Vésteinsson 2000, pp. 138–39). Valdemar himself was explicit in his Vitskøl charter that was drawn from his own *patrimonium* (patrimony) the place known as 'Vita scola', on the western coast of the Limfjord in north Jutland (Nyberg 2000, p. 177). In this form of endowment there were parallels with some early monastic settlements at the outer edge of the developed kingdoms further south: Gille Críst (*d. c.* 1206), head of one of two kinship groups that claimed the Mormaer of Mar in north east Scotland, provided for a community of regulars, called Culdees (from the Irish *Céilí Dé*, meaning those vowed to God) on his family estate at Monymusk in the second half of the twelfth century (Simpson 1925, pp. 40–42). Such *burgh* or *baile* (settlement or township) foundations were not typical of either Scotland or Ireland, however, nor did they retain their tie to the hereditary domain for as long as their Scandinavian counterparts (Oram 2012, pp. 334–38).

Congregational affiliations did not undo these secular ties. The Cistercian settlement at Cistercian Sorø rested squarely on the estate (and continuing investment from) the Skane clan of Hvide (Hybel 1995, p. 261; Esmark 2006, p. 96). There was a continuity in the circumstances of landlordship, and in the conception of a monastic foundation, for this approach to persist in later phases of settlement. Rein, a convent of women under a canonical rule was created in 1226 on the principal Fosen peninsula estate of Duke Skule Bardsson (Bagge 2010, p. 117).

Scandinavian monasteries were coterminous with royal and clan lordship, not only because they were built on the *stadr*;, but also because they took a share in the particular

fiscal rights on which that lordship was sustained, both those that were a feature of any settlement (tithes) and those that by which the clan itself exerted its influence over the outlying region, levies on fishing, on market trade, on the exploitation of woodland and, where applicable, the mining of minerals. The fiscal framework surrounding these foundations set them on a different course to many of those in the regions further south. The Cistercians of Esrum were supported early in their history by the singular privilege of the monopoly on money-lending (Hybel 1995, p. 262). Where settlement and economic activity did not develop, they were vulnerable and some did not survive, but where there was expansion and growth they were sustained, and the extension of their own territorial domain may have been a secondary consideration. Eldena, Cistercian daughter house of Esrum, after a difficult beginning which saw the community driven from Dargun, was revived with the benefit of the levy on the neighbouring salt pans (North 2015, p. 28). The community's prosperity was expressed in its fine brick-built church in the Gothic style, begun within half a century of their arrival. Later, from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, some foundations, from Denmark to Iceland, did extend their own domain, standing as a proprietor on their own local horizon with a profile that might have been recognisable to the tenants of a Benedictine monastery in England or northern France. However, the monastic estate in these kingdoms could not claim the fiscal influence and income of their Nordic counterparts.

As a development of the infrastructure of their own lordship, such foundations were approached as a locus for their own social community. Kinfolk joined the life of the regulars. Some of these were retirements, and sometimes perhaps sincere penitential acts, conversion to a monastic life at the point of death *ad succurrendum* (for redemption). Famously, Magnus IV Sigurdsson of Norway (r. 1130–1135; 1137–1139) was compelled to enter Niðarholm, worn out, according to Saxo Grammaticus, from his wielding of the monarch's sceptre (Friis-Jensen 2014, ii. 978–79), where, according to Snorri Sturluson, the community claimed him as one of their own believing him to have 'take[n] his vows as a monk' (Finlay and Faulkes 2015, iii. 181, 186). King Erik Lam ended his life in claustro at Odense in 1146 (Gertz 1917–1920, i. 32; King 1966, p. 197). The presiding chieftains in the territories of Iceland's monasteries joined the communities at the end of their active career: Jón Loftsson at Keldur, Þorkell Geirason at Þykkvibær, Olafr Þorsteinsson at Saurbær and Þorvaldur Gizurarson in Viðey (Vésteinsson 2000, p. 140). Such acts were not unknown in other regions of Europe. Roger Mowbray, earl of Northumbria (*d. c.* 1125), patron of the Benedictine priory at Tynemouth (Northumberland) was remembered as making a monastic profession at St Albans Abbey, to which he presented his priory, after two decades of martial lordship on the English-Scottish borderland and as many years imprisonment for rebellion against the Norman monarchy (BL, MS Cotton Nero D VII, fo. 91v). Yet, in these neighbouring territories, it never became the natural last move that it seemed to be for some Nordic lords.

Yet, in Scandinavia, there were as many instances where the monastic community appears to have absorbed the kinship network of its founder; or rather, was itself absorbed into it. The original codes of the Benedictines and the Cistercians represented the monastery as a family, the superior represented as the parent of one community, and the governing abbey standing in that capacity for a chain of sibling foundations. Scandinavia's monastic families were more than a figure of speech. They were familiar and close-knit. The Naevsted calendar made the obits of the founder Peter Botildis and his mother the largest and more colourful entries of all; as it happened, falling in the month of April, dependent on the date of the Easter festival, they would have marked both the beginning and the end of the monastery's year of worship (Copenhagen, Royal Library, E don. var. 52 2°, 21v, 23v). Generation after generation of the founding *Hivdefolk* (Hivd family) were buried at Sorøkloster; their donations accounted for as much as half the land of the monastery documented in the *gavebogen* (gift book) (Esmark 2019, p. 109). Munkaþverá began as a family enterprise under the abbacy of a brother of Bishop Gilsson. Both Þingeyrar and Saurbær early in their history were led in their abbacy by kinsmen of the chieftain clan

within whose estates they had been established. Rein was first put under the governance of the founder's daughter, Sigurd Bardsdottir (Bagge 2010, p. 117).

The raising of regular communities from clansmen and women marked their culture. It is possible that the tight bonds of the folk restricted recruitment to these new settlements. If the numbers that formally professed monastic vows were low, then it may have limited the degree to which they could replicate conventional observances in their church. The expatriate Cistercian communities in Denmark and Norway may have held the minimum complement of priests for the customary patterns of worship but elsewhere it may be that these human resources were accrued only over time. The evidence of manuscript fragments confirms that by the end of the twelfth century knowledge of monastic rules in the region was based on more than general renown, or the word of individual evangelists (Gullick and Ommundsen 2012). Yet, since insular values still influenced the conduct of the secular clergy, it cannot be assumed that the standards of these early generations of regulars were themselves strictly canonical. The hereditary principle was applied to the office of superior, and under the gravitational pull of *folk*, *kind* and *heim*, it is unlikely that all of those that made a monasti profession were detached from wider social relations or remained celibate.

The social catchment of these communities gave vernacular language and literature a central place. It can now be brought into a clear focus by the identification of a native Nordic scribe as the copyist of translation of the *Regula Benedicti* and the eleventh-century *Decreta Lanfranci* in the years around 1200 (Gullick and Ommundsen 2012). Vernacular literature may have been latinised in the same context, such as the legend of Saint Hallvard which is found in fragments from *c*. 1300 (Ommundsen 2008, p. 43). There were parallels in Ireland's monastic network but at this very moment in Anglo-Norman England Latin had all but eclipsed what had once been a lively multilingualism. Within two generations of the Norman Conquest writing in the Old English language had disappeared from the monasteries together with many of the books they must have once held.

The connection to the clan and its patrimony also made these settlements volatile and vulnerable. Looking back more than a century later the Cistercians of Varnham still recalled how the place and permanence of their original settlement for several years depended on the whim of their magnate patron, Sigrid (Gertz 1917–1920, ii. 138). The Icelandic colonies established at Hítardalsklaustur, Keldnaklaustur, and Saurbæjarklaustur could not endure the clan conflict surrounding them and were abandoned (Kristjánsdóttir 2021, p. 5. See also Kristjánsdóttir 2017). Nor was this a weakness only of their early years: a hundred years after their arrival in the region the Guldholm chronicler lamented the wasting of his convent at the hands of its own patrons (Waitz 1892, pp. 239–40).

Nordic monasteries did not grow apart from secular lordship as did the larger and more diverse networks of religious houses in England and Wales and in some regions of the European mainland. The continuing imprint of regional power on their institutional and even their observant life is comparable rather to the communities in Scotland, Ireland and Wales, in and outside the four counties under English rule (See, for example, Ó'Clabaigh 2005; Browne and Ó'Clabaigh 2020; Stephenson 2013; Oram 2007; 2011, pp. 358–60). Similarly to them, their function as instruments of Nordic lordship did not necessarily efface the monastic features of their life.

8. Social and Religious Culture

The social context has caused Nordic monasteries to be caricatured as 'retirement homes for aristocrats' (Vésteinsson 2000, p. 133). This misrepresents both the causes and the consequences of the relationship. These foundations were conceived as collateral for the territorial presence, seigniorial, social, economic and fiscal influence of a regional dynasty. As such they are analogous to the *eigenkloster* or *hauskloster* (i.e., proprietary or house church) foundations which were widespread in Germany and for which analogues can also be identified in northern Scotland and in Ireland beyond the jurisdiction of the English colonists. At the same time, the Nordic monasteries formed part of their founders' settlement network: here the monastic ideal, and the church and convent in which it was

played out, were garnered at the centre-point of a mixed social community, an environment that in its character anticipated certain features of the 'modern devotion' (*devotio moderna*) communities of the fifteenth century.

To label such communities as un-monastic by comparison with other regions of Europe is also to misinterpret the values and practice of the mainstream of congregations, even of the reform movements of the mid-twelfth century. The monasticism of Cluny, Citeaux, St Victor and Premontré was propagated by and for an aristocratic and educated elite with ready access to social, seignorial and political capital. Even at the cutting-edge of regular reform, such as at Gorze (Lorraine) in the tenth century, to separate 'the material and religious or spiritual spheres of a monastery's existence [is] artificial' (Nightingale 2001, p. 263). The success of the Cistercian and Victorine settlement in Denmark may be due in part to a mutual recognition in the context of their foundations. William of Æbelholt (*d*. 1203) may have been celebrated as a saint of Scandinavian monasticism (canonised 1224) but clearly, he accepted the essential dynamics of his adopted society, commending new recruits to his monastery not only for the devotion to religion but also for the advantage of their birth (McGuire 2015, pp. 176–77). Despite criticism of Benedictine communities as 'unreformed', the discourse of the Cistercians celebrated the patronage of the social elite and cultivated the same outlook of separation from the peasantry. The biographer of the Cistercian Bishop Gunner of Ribe (r. 1230–1246) recalled his sharp words when confronted by 'rustics and farmers'; with a Latin tag from Ovid's *Remedia amoris*, he was said to have muttered, 'wars are in store for me' (Gertz 1917–1920, ii. 275).

Perhaps above all, if too much emphasis is placed on the elite aspect of early Nordic monasticism it obscures the wider dynamics which drove the onward development of the monastic estate in the region. The handful of surviving calendars and necrologies provide a valuable reminder that the early communities attracted a wider social involvement. Lund recalled the life history of one Tovi who came to the community as a *conversus* but ultimately made his profession as a monk. He was no aristocrat but a man of property bequeathing the foundation his mansion in the town of Oshogu (Lund, University Library, Medeltidshandskrift 6, fo. 124v). Naetsved remembered a cohort of *conversi* (lay brethren)—for example, Herby, Johann, Rothbert, Sven—and *familiares* (members of a household) among which were unvowed secular *clerici*—for example, Georg the priest—and artisans—for example, Ascer the carpenter (Copenhagen, Royal Library, E don. Var. 52 2°, fo. 44r). The representation of the colony at Øm to be a 'tiny team' (pusillum gregem) of *devoti* was an expression of its spiritual ambition to be separated from the sin of the world (Waitz 1892, p. 161). The Cistercian network recruited laybrothers and sisters and the early annals recorded their advance alongside that of the professed population (Waitz 1892, p. 232).

By the early thirteenth century, local Scandinavian society had established a presence also among the professed. Saxo Grammaticus represented the first monastic settlements as the preserve of 'outsiders' (exteros: Friis-Jensen 2014, ii. 1386–87) but towards the end of his life these same communities held recruits that were home grown. Niels, the ninth abbot of Om, had been a child oblate (in monastici ordinis disciplina a puero enutritus: Gertz 1917–1920, ii. 192–93). It may be a measure of increasing insular recruitment that when Gunner welcomed Cardinal Gregory to his monastery, he was obliged to act as translator 'for he had no knowledge of Danish' (quia ipse cardinalis noticiam lingue Danice non haberet), and when he preached to them in the chapter house, he did so in the same vernacular (Gertz 1917–1920, ii. 266).

In fact, this was not an unpopular monasticism. Early on, episcopal patrons reached for a community and its regular customs to secure churches which were, or had the potential to be, popular cult centres. The religious routine, and underpinning discipline, of the vowed religious were adopted to curate cathedral shrines. Even beyond these centres of population there are signs that monastic settlements emerged as a focal point for social religion. Indeed, it may have been only the first regular foundations in the episcopal towns that saw their role in lay religion recede over time, as some chapters again turned away from the regular life, and new mendicant convents were established from

as early as the 1230s. Among the more dispersed populations of the remoter provinces, there is no doubt that monastic centres made space for parish worship. The Cistercians of Hovedøya were inclined to serve as the Norwegian King Sverrir's personal chaplains, receiving a reprimand from their General Chapter in 1200 for overlooking the monarch's own sentence of excommunication (Bandlien 2016, p. 167n). In the context of sparse and dispersed settlements of Greenland the intersection between monastic and parish church may account for the few material traces of a distinct conventual complex (Vésteinsson 2010, pp. 140–41).

This is not to say that the Nordic monastic plan was predisposed to the provision of parochial space. The footprint of Munkaþvera has suggested quite the opposite, the conscious creation of an environment for exclusive conventual religious practice. However, in a broader sense, monastic sites did draw the devotion attention of the laity. The conventual church at Æbelholt became the beacon for the cult of its first abbot, William, which reached as wide across the region as those of monastic pioneers in other parts of Europe. Bishop Gunner invited the local elite and their families (nobiliores milites et eorum vxores) to celebrate the feast of the assumption at Asmild (Gertz 1917–1920, ii. 270). The texts of the surviving homily books suggest some pastoral outreach, at least in the form of public preaching. In 1200, the Cistercian General Chapter condemned monks for holding masses for the excommunicated King Sterrir (Harðarson 2016, pp. 116–17). The Norwegian homily collection contains a sermon that was surely the work of a canon of St Olav, Stavanger (Harðarson 2016, p. 52). There are also hints of the monasteries' service to satellite parishes. It was claimed in 1517 that secular priests had become accustomed to celebrating mass using books borrowed from the religious orders. Given the volume of liturgical books known to have been owned, and made by Nordic monasteries before 1250, there is no reason to think this was already happening before 1400 (Ommundsen 2008, p. 41).

Excavations have revealed patterns of non-clerical burial comparable to those of monastic and mendicant sites elsewhere in Europe. At Sorø, it was done apparently in defiance of the Cistercian General Chapter (Esmark 2019, p. 109). The evidence from the later medieval foundation at Skriðuklaustur may well be an indication that it was now common practice at Iceland's monasteries. (Kristjánsdóttir 2015b, pp. 155, 166). The impression that only the defined social network of the founder and their folk surrounded these communities is countered by references to customs of hospitality. It was as a result of their support for passersby that the monks of Løgum secured the grant of the income arising from a parish church in 1327 (France 1992, p. 225). Iceland's monasteries offered lodging to longer-term boarders (*próventufólk*) whose benefits were presented to benefactors in a similar way to corrodies and pensions (Vésteinsson 2000, p. 140). Environmental analysis has also pointed to provision of general medical and perhaps palliative care (Gilchrist 2020, p. 94). See also (Larsson and Lundquist 2010, p. 3; Kristjánsdóttir 2008; Kristjánsdóttir et al. 2014b). According to Saxo Grammaticus (*Gesta Danorum* XV, 6.9) it was a Swedish abbot (perhaps from Oved) who was summoned to treat Valdemar 'although as a practitioner of medicine he was more brash and sdkilful' (Friis-Jensen 2014, ii. 1491). Even in the—apparently vestigial—monastic environment of Greenland at Siglufjord, the fourteenth-century visitor Bárðarson observed that the neighbourhood came to bathe in the fjord waters under the jurisdiction of the church 'and . . . are cured of their illnnesses' (Grayburn 2015, pp. 11–12).

Even recent surveys of Nordic monasticism have been reluctant to distinguish insular patterns of monastic thought and action from those imported and instrumentally adopted from outside. Yet, the evidence for it is tangible, among fragments of parchment, and in landscape and environment data; and some of it may be dated as much as a century earlier—mid-12th as opposed to mid-13th—than might have been anticipated.

9. Growth of the Monastic Network, 1182–1241

It was the wider and deeper roots of the monastic enterprise which surely explains the further investment of clerical and lay patrons as the thirteenth century turned. The

Valdemarian dynasty continued its conspicuous patronage of the principal Cistercian and Victorine colonies at least as far as middle years of the new century. Knut VI cleaved to the counsels of William of Æbelholt (Hermanson 2016, p. 82). His great nephew, Abel was celebrated by the Ryd annals as a patron of their network (Lappenberg 1859, p. 407). The strength of these ties to the prevailing dynasty perhaps now gave these congregations more of a guiding hand in the development of their network. Certainly, the inherent impulse to colonise seemed unchecked from the last years of Valdemar I, the chain of Esrum's offspring projecting the influence of Danish monasticism to Eldena and a new frontier with German and Slavic peoples (North 2015, p. 28). In 1231, Valdemar's cousin Vitzlav of Rugen chartered the Cistercians as Neuenkamp to begin settling villages, drawing populations of any peoples under their jurisdiction. The canons' ambitions were more modest but reached westward from Tommarp to Bakaskog on the southern shore of Ivosjon (North 2015, p. 41).

The continuing commitment of secular patrons to what were now older customs of regular life contrasts sharply with the outlook in neighbouring regions. In England and Wales, and also in Ireland and Scotland where the ties between monasteries and local lordship endured, patrons turned their attention to the ascetic ambition and evangelical energy of more recent currents, the friars and the new monastic codes. No new house of Benedictines or Regular Canons was founded in England and Wales after 1267; only two further Cistercian communities were established between 1281 and 1540, one of which was a University *studium* (Knowles and Hadcock 1971, pp. 112–15, 137–35, 184–85).

10. The Deepening of Monastic Identity

The congregational vigour apparent in this continued expansion can perhaps be connected with signs of a sharpening sense of monastic identity. The first compilation of Cistercian foundation stories in the thirteenth century may itself be an expression of a more clearly defined understanding of a Nordic congregation. Their vocabulary, 'conventus', 'mutatio claustri' of course reflects the imprint of Citeaux and its legislation but it also points to the identification of their own living Scandinavian communitas (Waitz 1892, p. 225). The author of the life of the Cistercian Bishop Gunner of Viborg commended him as an offshoot (membrum) of our order (nostri ordinis: Gertz 1917–1920, ii. 265). An understanding of the meaning of their mode of life and their membership of the *ordo* (order), is apparent also in the iconography of the Naestved calendar and necrology. A pair of images present the community of monks, on their departure as a new colony sent out by their original superior, and on arrival. Each of the five figures standing at the front of the cohort clutches a book, a reminder of the rule that was the foundation of the life they professed, if not also of its call to *ad literam* observance (Copenhagen, Royal Library, E don. Var. 52 2°, fos. 5v–6r).

At a distance of a century from their first foundation, these makers of books were now imbued with an idea of the monastic *opus*. Bishop Gunner's biographer represented the *Regula Benedicti* as the very essence of the man. He said that even when the prelate travelled he would halt and dismount at regular intervals in order to observe the hours of the Office, 'according to the duty of his order' (secundum debitum suit ordinis: Gertz 1917–1920, ii. 267). The clearer articulation of monastic values by the thirteenth century was perhaps reflected in discourse beyond the convents themselves. The saga of King Sverrir (*d*. 1202) that the former the former abbot of Þingeyrar Karl Jónsson (*d*. 1212) composed from within his court circle surrounded his life with a climate of monastic asceticism (Bandlien 2016, pp. 166–67). The portrait of the Norwegian priest-pretender Sigurðr Slembe made by Snorri Sturluson (*d*. 1241) was of a piety that was unmistakably monastic: Sigurd was said to have sung a third of the psalter at the point of death (Finlay and Faulkes 2014–2016, iii. 197).

These expressions of community and custom, however slight, lend some context to the hints and impressions offered by the surviving manuscript fragments. Of course, it is perilous to argue on the grounds of loss but the pieces of parchment which have been preserved point to the early (i.e., pre-1250) transmission of some of the staple manuals of

monastic devotion such as Cassian's *Instituta* and sections of the *Vitae patrum* together with the twelfth-century *De claustro animae* of the Victorine, Hugh Fouillou (NRA lat. Fragmenter 8, 1–2; 18; 24, 1–2; 30, 1; Karlsen 2013b, pp. 228–29, 236). Half of the known Norwegian fragments date from before 1225 (Ommundsen 2008, p. 40). Pieces in the Swedish National Archives (SRA) can be shown to form the same copy Possidius' *Vita Augustini* (No Fr 42–43: Björkvall 2013). The reproduction of a readable text of the *Regula Benedicti* and the *Decreta Lanfranci*—before the mid-thirteenth century the only complement to the rule that seems to have passed between houses speaks of a pattern of monastic education and formation in a Nordic community which counterparts in other northern European regions would have known well. The trace of monastic—Benedictine, Cistercian—attributes in the saga portraits produced at Þingeyrar at this same time, in the years either side of 1200, might be taken as another signal of a quickening of a distinctively monastic outlook (Jensson 2021).

Perhaps it informed the advancing development of the sites of these settlements. Naestved itself raised a new church and conventual range in the first decades of the new century. The proportions of these churches may not have matched their English, French or Scottish counterparts. Æbelholt was no more than 30 metres in length, smaller than even a provincial friary in England. However, their scale should not distract from the fact that they incorporated a full monastic complex as well as attendant spaces for public burial. A proposed outline for the first structures at Utstein suggests a simple nave church with a timbered conventual range attached on the south side (Haug and Ekroll 2007). New studies of the Icelandic monasteries have drawn attention to the traces of a conventual plan comparable to those typical in the neighbouring regions of northern Europe (Kristjánsdóttir 2014a, 2015a, 2015b, 2017; Riddell et al. 2018). They may have been close-bound to chieftaincies but these were no manor-house monasteries. It may be only the comparatively limited scope of the material evidence that obscures the view.

11. Renewal

If the monastic identity of these settlements was more clearly communicated by the second half of the thirteenth century then it would appear to have been a message well-received in Nordic society, as investment in new monastic foundations continued. The impulse to invest in monastic settlements it seems was strong enough still to withstand the early introduction of the mendicant orders (Lovén 2001, pp. 247–48), by the end of the 1230s, and what has been seen as a rising tide of anticlericalism (Bagge 2010, pp. 303–12, 312–16). In certain respects, the new communities created between 1252 and the beginning of the Black Death changed the profile of the monastic estate in the region. The early tie to cathedral chapters was largely cut Bishop Gunner of Ribe (1230–1246) established a canon house at Tvilum after failing in his effort to transform Ribe's cathedral chapter to the Augustinian rule. Now there were more communities of women in every territory. Bishop Laurentius of Linkoping had sent women to Solberga on Gotland in 1246. The women of Fogdo, Sweden, moved to Varfruberga and was recast as a daughter house of Julita in 1289. A century after its first, a new female settlement in Iceland was established by Bishop Jörundur Þorsteinsson of Hólar (1267–1313) at Reynistaður (1295). The Cistercian advance was now overtaken by new canon houses. Magnus IV placed Augustinians at Utstein and in Iceland canons were settled at Möðruvallaklaustur and *Skriðuklaustur. Conversion of the island convent at Viðey to the Rule of St Benedict proved short-lived and it reverted to the customs of the regular canons after c. 1352* (Jorgensen 2011, pp. 133–35; Sigurdson 2016, p. 69). Premonstratensians were brought to Dragsmark by Haakon IV (*d*. 1263). In Denmark the tradition of royal patronage of the Cistercians persisted after 1300. The unfortunate Christopher II founded a daughter house of Sorø at Knardrup as late as 1326 and was buried at Sorø six years later (Trap 1898–1906, ii. 159).

On the eve of the Black Death there remained an impulse across the Nordic region to invest in monastic religion which had no match among its immediate neighbours.

12. Conclusions

Perhaps it is the resilience of the monastic principle that is the most striking feature of the Nordic experience. The press of episcopal and seigniorial imperatives in the twelfth century may have moulded it at first in forms quite different from those in other regions of the north but contact with the wider network of congregations, their own personnel and participation in the textual communities, garnered and grew monastic identity. Already by the beginning of the thirteenth century, on the manuscript page as well as a material plan, the region saw a monasticism that was an expression of that seen right across the north west of Europe. Additionally, in contrast to those territories, as it continued to evolve—extending its commitment to the Augustinian tradition, and to the vowed life for women—Nordic monasticism still prospered. After the Black Death, it provided an environment in which a new monastic reform, of the Birgittines, might be broadcast to those kingdoms from which their Christianity had come.

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Monasticism in the British Isles: A Comparative Overview

Karen Stöber

Facultat d'Educació, Psicologia i Treball Social, Universitat de Lleida, 25001 Lleida, Spain; karen.stober@udl.cat

Abstract: The medieval British Isles were marked by a lively monastic presence throughout the entire period. Groups of monks, nuns, regular canons and canonesses, and friars established communities even in the furthermost reaches of the territory, and by doing so they came to play an important part in the life, culture, economy, and politics of the region. This paper will provide an overview of the arrival and spread of the different religious orders in England, Ireland, Wales, and Scotland, and by doing so, it will provide some comparative study of the different parts of the British Isles and examine how and when the spread and settlement of the various religious groups manifested itself across the islands, and what their impact was upon their localities and the society around them.

Keywords: monasticism; religious orders; Ireland; Wales; England; Scotland; conquest

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> "In the fourteenth year of Maurice[1] and about 150 years after the coming of the Angles to Britain, [Pope Gregory the Great (590–604)], prompted by divine inspiration, sent a servant of God named Augustine and several more God-fearing monks with him to preach the word of God to the English race."

Thus wrote the Venerable Bede (1965, 1994) in his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* in the eighth century.

1. The Beginnings

When Augustine and his fellow monks arrived in England from Rome, the island was by no means an empty stage as Christian monastic activity was concerned, though the earliest beginnings of cenobitic movements in the British Isles are difficult to reconstruct. Different types of monastic communities emerged unevenly but roughly concurrently in the north, south, east, and west of the archipelago. Evidence for these early communities is unequally distributed and often scant. We can, however, complement the fragments of formal documentation, including letters, with toponymics, hagiographical works, and archaeological remains, including inscribed stones, to try and get a picture of the extent and nature of early monasticism in the British Isles.

The topic of monasticism in the medieval British Isles has been much treated by historians over time, both in terms of individual parts of the archipelago and collectively (the literature is too vast to list here, but note for example Knowles 1950; Lawrence 1984; Burton 1994; Melville 2012; Vanderputten 2020 and works listed in the bibliography of this article). What the present paper aims to do is provide no more than a brief comparative overview of the arrival and spread of the different groups of monks and nuns, canons and canonesses, and friars, in Ireland, England, Wales, and Scotland, and on their impact on their localities and on the region.[2]

Christianity arrived in Britain during the Roman period and the patchy evidence, both documentary and archaeological, suggests that some sort of a diocesan organization was in place by the fourth century, dividing the Roman part of the island into ecclesiastical provinces. Moreover, it was shown by Marilyn Dunn and others that cenobitic communities of some sort were present in parts of the British Isles from at least as early as the fifth and early sixth centuries (Dunn 2000, p. 139). These earliest foundations are often linked to individuals of holy renown, who attracted a following and might develop into centres

of learning, occasionally of some repute, as at Clonmacnoise in Ireland, Iona in Scotland, or Lindisfarne in Northumbria. Early monastic founding fathers include, notably, men like Ciarán (d. 549, founder of Clonmacnoise), Colm Cille (or Columba, d. 597, founder of Iona), or Aidan (d. 651, founder of Lindisfarne).

During the early Anglo-Saxon period, as Christianity spread in what is now England, monasticism was an integral part of it and was often promoted and patronised by kings and queens (Burton 1994, p. 1). A characteristic feature of the early religious landscape in England was the minster church, staffed by secular clergy, which could be found across Anglo-Saxon England and played a part in the process of Christianisation. Sarah Foot has described them as "mission stations" whence groups of religious set out to preach to people in the locality, while they simultaneously served as administrative centres (Foot 2006, p. 77). At the same time, other types of monastic institutions began to emerge in the region during the seventh and eighth centuries, though our knowledge of them is mostly limited. Some of these, however, prospered and grant us something of an insight into the monastic life of the period. Thus, we know that religious houses in Anglo-Saxon England during the seventh century benefited from contacts with Rome and the Continent, thanks to the initiative of some early monastic founders, men like Benedict Biscop (d. 690), first abbot of Wearmouth in Northumbria, and from the appointment of foreign bishops (Foot 2006, p. 58; Burton 1994, p. 2).

As elsewhere, religious communities across the British Isles around that time began to adopt rules to regulate the communal life, which was also influenced by local and regional customs (Burton 1994, p. 20; Vanderputten 2020, p. 37). We find a good example of what is known as the *regula mixta* in the writings of the Venerable Bede about Benedict Biscop. Among other things, Bede stresses Benedict's repeated visits to France, whence he gained experience and understanding of the monastic life on the Continent and brought back books and relics, as well as masons and glaziers to work on the buildings of his new Northumbrian monastery.

In Wales, the monastic panorama was similarly lively (Davies 1982, pp. 146–47). Religious communities were present from the fifth century, often linked to certain individuals, like St David or St Beuno, and several early religious foundations, as the one at Llanwit Major in Glamorgan, acquired a reputation as centres of learning (Dunn 2000, p. 139). The *vitae* of the Welsh saints, such as the *Life* of Saint Beuno, despite the limitations of their genre, grant us an important insight into this period, which has been called the "Age of the Saints" for a reason (Baring-Gould and Fisher 1907, pp. 209–20). The other defining feature of early Welsh monasticism was the so-called *clas* church, which was not unlike the Anglo-Saxon minster in its structure, and which comprised communities of monks (later secular canons) or *claswyr* living under an abbot. The mother church, which could have one or more dependent chapels, was situated in its enclosure, which can still be identified today by the toponymic *llan*, as at the former *clas* church of Llanbadarn Fawr near Aberystwyth in Ceredigion (Evans 1992, pp. 33–35; Burton 1994, p. 19).

A system not dissimilar to the Welsh *clas* was also present in Scotland, housing communities of eremitic monks, *culdees* or *Céli Dé*, which had been introduced from Ireland via Iona, while there simultaneously existed communities of priests along the lines of the Northumbrian model (Gilchrist 2020, pp. 50–51). The former was predominantly a northern phenomenon, serving the "spiritual needs of rural communities to the north of the Forth", while the latter could be found mostly in southern Scotland. Several of these early sites were identified (McNeill and MacQueen 1996; Gilchrist 2020, pp. 51–52), though so much has now disappeared that it is difficult to reconstruct the scope of early Scottish monasticism. One exception is the site of Portmahomack in Easter Ross in northern Scotland, where remains of ecclesiastical buildings and a cemetery, possibly dating from the sixth century, have been unearthed. In contrast to "Anglo-Saxon monasticism", early Scotland had few connections with the papacy and the role of bishops in the monastic organization was limited (Gilchrist 2020, p. 52). There were similarities to early Irish monasticism, and also to the early Welsh church, which has led scholars in the past to coin

these communities collectively as "Celtic", signifying their differences from Benedictine monasticism, a term which is problematic in this context.

Ireland was home to an impressive number of early eremitic communities or houses of *culdees*. As elsewhere, the beginnings of Irish monasticism are difficult to reconstruct on account of the uneven evidence, which includes hagiography and toponymics, and due to the scarcity of material remains, but by the mid-sixth century, notable monasteries which have left clearer traces had begun to appear in Ireland (Dunn 2000, pp. 142–46; Ó Cróinín 1995, pp. 162–63; Ryan 1931, rev. 1992), including Clonmacnoise (County Offaly) and Clonard (County Meath). By the eighth century, a large number of monastic communities, including houses for men and women, had been established across the entire island (Collins 2015, pp. 235–37).

Little is known for sure about the internal workings of the early monastic communities in the British Isles. Their lasting reputation as houses of learning, and the survival of manuscripts and other artefacts indicates their importance as cultural centres, an aspect much emphasised in the early literature, especially in hagiographical works, but these, of course, tend to defend or emphasise their own aims and interests.

What about the place of women in these early monastic communities in the British Isles? Again, the evidence is not plentiful, but we know that women played an active part in the emerging options of cloistered life, and in addition to documentary sources, including formal documentation, letters, and hagiographical accounts, there survive examples of tomb sculptures depicting women, hinting at a much greater female implication than it might appear at first sight. Toponymic evidence also reveals something of the locations of female religious communities, or of sites and places associated with nuns. Nearly 50 early female communities have been identified in Ireland where sixth-century women founders include Brigit of Kildare and Ita of Killeedy (Collins 2015, p. 230). On the whole, their expansion in the British Isles was less pronounced than that of their male counterparts. Thus, in Anglo-Saxon England, nunneries were geographically restricted to the south and the Midlands (Burton 1994, pp. 104–5), though we know of a number of formidable abbesses during this period. Our knowledge of the provision for female religious in early medieval Wales is scanty to say the least, and even during the later Middle Ages the number of nunneries did not rise to more than three successful houses, while a number of female Welsh saints, on the other hand, were known to be venerated (Cartwright 2008, pp. 67–91). The paucity, real and alleged, of both material remains and documentary evidence has often been cited as the reason for the neglect religious women experienced for a long time in the historiography. Over the past decades, however, women religious in the medieval period have at last enjoyed increasing attention from scholars across the disciplines (Burton and Stöber 2015b, pp. 1–6).

From their earliest appearance in the region, Christian cenobitic communities were marked by their founders as well as by their localities with their specific customs and social structures. We thus have to bear in mind the differences in the socio-cultural, political, and economic contexts of England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland when we talk about monasticism in the British Isles. It is problematic to speak of monastic settlement patterns, but it is possible to identify certain tendencies. The early Scottish houses, for instance, were almost exclusively located in the Scottish Midlands and the east (McNeill and MacQueen 1996). In England, evidence for early monastic settlement is predominantly in those parts of the country that were less affected by the Anglo-Saxon invasions of the fifth century (Dunn 2000, p. 139). And early Welsh religious houses can often be found in the southern half of the country. It is in any case problematic to speak of a systematic monastic movement in the region at this time. The motivations of early monastic founders were not driven by a singular common goal or a common aim for some monastic ideal, but rather it would seem that several men, and a few women, were motivated by similar but not identical ideas and experimented with different ways of putting them into practice (Vanderputten 2020, p. 3). Their inspiration had at its core the search for the spiritual life and included in most cases the withdrawal from the world, the renunciation of wealth

and property, and a life of chastity. Contacts clearly existed between different parts of the British Isles. An obvious case is the monastery of Iona in north-western Scotland, founded by Colm Cille around 563, after he was exiled from his native Ireland. But just how much the various monastic communities across the Isles knew of each other, and how much contact there was between them, is in most cases a matter of speculation. In some instances, we know that one house was founded from another as in the case of Lindisfarne, established by Aidan (d. 651) around 635 from Colm Cille's monastery at Iona.

From what can be gathered, both from the written sources and from the surviving material remains, the monastic life in the British Isles thrived during the early period, both in terms of expansion and of cultural sophistication (Burton 1994, p. 3). But this "golden age" was not to last. By the eighth century, the monastic life in the British Isles was in decline, not least on account of successive Viking raids, which often had as their targets the religious houses, especially those on or near the coast (Knowles and Hadcock 1971, pp. 10–11). During the century or so after the start of the raids, the Northumbrian monasteries were either destroyed or had been abandoned, and those of the Lincolnshire and Kentish coasts subsequently shared the same fate. It is difficult to assess in any detail the state of monasticism in the British Isles during this period as the sources are scarce, but it seems that life according to the *Rule* of St Benedict, which had, in any case, not been followed exclusively in pre-tenth-century British religious communities, was disappearing from the surviving monasteries.

The tenth century, however, saw a monastic revival in England that has been described as a second "golden age" of insular monasticism (Burton 1994, p. 3). The agents of monastic reform during this period were three men—all monks who later became bishops—and a king, thanks to whose initiative and efforts the English monastic scene began to recover some of its former splendour. They were Dunstan (d. 988), abbot of Glastonbury and subsequently archbishop of Canterbury; Æthelwold (d. 984), who became bishop of Winchester; and Oswald (d. 992), who rose to be bishop of Worcester, with the support of King Edgar of England (d. 973). This collaboration of religious and secular powers was a characteristic feature of English monasticism, with subsequent kings and queens fulfilling the role of patrons and defenders of the houses of monks and nuns (Burton 1994, pp. 3–4). Our knowledge of the early organisation of religious men and women in the British Isles is less than extensive, but over time the *Rule* of St Benedict began to gain ground. To help bring about its universal application in England and ensure a greater degree of liturgical unity, certain monastic reformers, foremost among them Æthelwold, compiled a set of instructions based on Benedict's *Rule* and known as the *Regularis Concordia* (Vanderputten 2020, p. 62; Burton 1994, p. 3). The transition from early to Benedictine monasticism was thus already underway when the Normans arrived in the British Isles in the eleventh century and accelerated the process.

2. After the Normans

2.1. Benedictine Monasticism

Following the Norman Conquest of England in 1066, continental monasticism was steadily gaining ground in the British Isles, changing the monastic landscape permanently. It seems clear that monastic life in the British Isles was not derelict at that time, with the Normans restoring an ailing institution, as was claimed by some Norman chroniclers (Knowles and Hadcock 1971, pp. 13–14). New foundations were often daughter houses of continental Benedictine abbeys, established by the recently-arrived Norman lords on their new English and Welsh lands (Clark 2011, p. 54; Burton 2013, pp. 21–37). Norman monastic foundations in England and Wales at this time might be regarded as the religious element of conquest, and their expansion across the territory reflects the expansion of Norman authority and settlement.

The monasticism the Normans encountered upon their arrival and settlement in England and Wales differed sufficiently from their own monastic experience in France to induce them to bring the existing system into line with practices familiar to them.

The efforts to establish new foundations following the continental model brought with it important building and rebuilding campaigns. Roberta Gilchrist has pointed out, for instance, that there is no archaeological evidence to suggest that the monastic claustral plan was known in England prior to the arrival of the Normans (Gilchrist 2020, p. 52).

It is important to bear in mind, when talking about religious houses in the British Isles, that these were often small (sometimes very small) communities, sometimes housing little more than a monk (or canon) or two. Indeed, the issue has been raised whether it is helpful to refer to these small cells as proper monastic communities at all. As Martin Heale once put it: "one man and his dog cannot easily be considered to make up a true religious house" (Heale 2004, p. 8).

In many cases, first-generation post-Conquest Benedictine houses in England began life as daughter houses or cells of Norman or French monasteries, as a result of the grants of land made by the new Norman lords in England to religious houses in their country of origin (Burton 1994, pp. 29–30). The years after the Battle of Hastings saw a spate of new monastic foundations, the first being William the Conqueror's own abbey at Battle (colonised by monks from Marmoutier), allegedly on the spot where King Harold was slain. A parallel movement saw the revival of monasticism in the north of England, with efforts to revive former monastic centres like Jarrow, and founding such important abbeys as Whitby (in 1078/1079) or St Mary's, York (Knowles and Hadcock 1971, p. 15). Altogether, some 130 Benedictine monasteries came into being in England, counting both pre- and post-Conquest foundations; several of them failed before the Dissolution in the sixteenth century (Knowles and Hadcock 1971, pp. 52–58).[3]

The Normans made their first forays into Wales shortly after the Battle of Hastings. By around 1071, only 5 years after the defeat of King Harold, the first Norman monastery on Welsh lands was founded in Chepstow by William fitz Osbern, lord of Chepstow Castle, as an alien priory of his monastery at Cormeilles in Normandy (Cowley 1977, p. 17; Graham 1930, p. 103). William fitz Osbern's monastic foundation alongside the new castle at Chepstow and the establishment of a borough can be considered what Janet Burton has called the threefold "instruments of power" in the wake of the Norman Conquest (Burton 2013, p. 23). Fifteen further houses of Black Monks and one Benedictine nunnery were founded in Wales in the course of a century, but not all of them lasted; some, like Llanbadarn Fawr, were transformed (into a collegiate church), others, like Llandovery, dissolved (Burton 2013, p. 21). All, however, were dependent priories and all were relatively small houses.

In Scotland, the Benedictines arrived in the first half of the twelfth century, when King David I of Scotland founded the abbey of Dunfermline on the site of an earlier monastic foundation. Altogether, the Black Monks came to establish no more than six successful male houses and one nunnery north of the River Tweed (Hall 2006, pp. 14–16). Their comparatively late arrival in Scotland meant that even their earliest foundations coincided with the impact of groups of reformed Benedictines in the British Isles, most notably the Cistercians, but also the Order of Tiron (Dilworth 1995, pp. 5–6).

The study of Benedictine monasticism in Ireland was for a long time a neglected subject (Browne and Clabaigh 2005; Bhreathnach 2012, pp. 63–91). This was not, however, for want of a Benedictine presence. Early evidence is patchy, but it has been shown that the *Rule* of St Benedict was known in Ireland at least by the late seventh or early eighth century (Ó Clabaigh 2005, p. 81). As in England and on the Continent, the later eleventh and twelfth centuries saw the reform efforts of kings and bishops, which focused in the first instance on the larger and more important religious houses (Bhreathnach 2012, p. 65). In comparison with Cistercian, Augustinian or Franciscan monasteries, houses of Benedictine monks were never particularly numerous in medieval Ireland, and the dozen or so successful Benedictine foundations that can clearly be identified as such have left us very little documentary evidence to allow us to gain a sense of Irish Benedictine life during the medieval period (Ó Clabaigh 2005, p. 80).

Almost at the same time that English Black Monks were reviving the monasteries in the north of the country, the south of England saw the arrival of the first of the reformed Benedictines. Cluniac monks first settled in the British Isles when they founded the priory of Lewes in 1077, the church being granted to Cluny by William de Warenne and his wife Gundreda (Knowles and Hadcock 1971, p. 100). A little over 40 houses of the Order of Cluny were established in England, and by the Dissolution in the sixteenth century, 27 of these were still functioning. In the rest of the British Isles, the Cluniac presence was limited. There were two Cluniac houses in Scotland, the first of which, founded at Renfrew in 1163, relocated to Paisley just a few years later. A second house of the Order was added at Crossraguel in 1244. The two Scottish Cluniac monasteries were thus located in relative proximity of one another in Strathclyde (Hall 2006, pp. 14–16). What is remarkable about these is that both of them achieved the status of abbey.

Further south, Wales, too, was home to two houses of the Order of Cluny, at Malpas and at St Clears, both in the south of the country. Malpas was founded around 1122 as a cell of Montacute Priory in Somerset and remained small both in terms of brethren—perhaps only two or three—and in terms of wealth. Nonetheless, the house survived until the Dissolution in the sixteenth century. St Clears, similarly small, was a dependency of St Martin des Champs in Paris. Founded in the mid-twelfth century, the priory was granted to All Souls' College, Oxford, by Henry VI in 1442 (Smith 2008, p. 255; Burton and Stöber 2015a, pp. 176–78).

Only one single Cluniac house was ever established on the other side of the Irish Sea. The monastery of Athlone was founded in 1150 by the king of Connacht Tulough O'Conor (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, p. 110), though its association with the Cluniac Order may have been later, and the exact nature of this association is indeed uncertain (Ó Clabaigh 2005, p. 88).

2.2. The Augustinian Canons

The gradual expansion of houses of regular canons from around the turn of the eleventh and twelfth centuries brought another dimension to the monastic landscape of the British Isles (Burton and Stöber 2011). The idea of groups of clerics living in community in imitation of the *vita apostolica*, while engaging in pastoral work by serving parish churches and administering the sacraments, as well as teaching and caring for the sick, clearly appealed to twelfth-century society, as the large number of foundations of regular canons in the region indicates. In England alone, over 240 houses of Augustinian canons came to be founded from the opening years of the twelfth century onwards, which saw the establishment of their first monastery in Colchester (Dickinson 1950; Knowles and Hadcock 1971, pp. 139, 155). The popularity of the Augustinians was in part also due to their being an affordable option for potential founders and patrons of the lesser nobility. Many houses of regular canons across the British Isles were founded by members of the gentry, whose ties with their religious houses often became close and personal (S. Wood 1955, pp. 3, 41, 135; Stöber 2007, pp. 44–46). Many Augustinian priories came to house the tombs of their founders and members of the founding family.

In Wales, too, the regular canons enjoyed considerable popularity, both with Anglo-Norman and with native Welsh founders and patrons. The first of Wales's nine houses of Augustinian canons was the priory of Llanthony in the Black Mountains, founded at the turn of the twelfth century and much praised by Gerald of Wales during his travels through the country in 1188 (Gerald of Wales 1978, pp. 97–107). Regular canons settled in several cases on earlier ecclesiastical foundations, as in the cases of Puffin Island, also known as Ynys Lannog, or Beddgelert, both in Gwynedd (Burton and Stöber 2015a, pp. 52–56, 169–70; Stöber 2019, pp. 83–97). Surviving evidence suggests that their communities tended to be small. Their relations with some of the native Welsh princes involved the heads of several Augustinian priories in politics, though this was not an exclusively Augustinian feature (Stöber 2011, pp. 97–113; Stöber and Austin 2013, pp. 39–51).

With 18 successful foundations, the Augustinian canons represent the second largest religious group in Scotland, just after the Cistercians. Indeed, if we include the six Premonstratensian houses of Scotland, the regular canons form the most numerous group in terms of religious houses in Scotland (Hall 2006, pp. 14–16; Dilworth 1995, pp. 6–7). As elsewhere, they are noted for their pastoral care and their involvement in the political life outside their cloister walls. And as elsewhere, their houses were often of moderate size and wealth.

Similarly, in Ireland the Augustinian canons were the predominant religious group with some 120 foundations (Preston 1996; O'Keeffe 2011, pp. 469–84; Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, pp. 146, 199). Their expansion on the island was linked to the colonising efforts of the new Anglo-Norman lords after the twelfth-century invasion of Ireland (Clyne 2011, pp. 145–72), though a smaller number can be attributed to Gaelic-Irish founders.

Across the archipelago, the regular canons achieved great popularity with lay founders and patrons and with the population at large. In terms of investment, patronage of an Augustinian priory was an option for a new class of lay benefactors, who often developed close relations with their religious communities, manifested in donations and visits to their monasteries during their lifetimes, and burial within their walls after death. The regular canons attracted founders from across the ethnic divides in Ireland, Wales, and Scotland, and not infrequently this embroiled them in the political upheavals of the era in these regions. Through their duties as priests and their care for the sick, the regular canons had contacts with many aspects of life outside their convent walls and were hence a visible element of the religious panorama.

2.3. The Premonstratensians

The Premonstratensians, or White Canons, established their first abbey in England in Newsham (Lincolnshire) in 1143 (Colvin 1951; Knowles and Hadcock 1971, p. 183; Gribbin 2001, p. 3). Some 37 further foundations followed, some of these being alien priories dependent on Premonstratensian abbeys in France, as in the case of Cammeringham (Lincolnshire), founded as a cell of Blanchelande in Normandy and suppressed in 1396 (Knowles and Hadcock 1971, p. 186). Newsham founded its own daughter houses, among them Alnwick in Northumbria in the late 1140s. From Alnwick, the White Canons moved into Scotland, with the foundation of its daughter house at Dryburgh, whence the Premonstratensians subsequently arrived in Ireland (Knowles and Hadcock 1971, p. 183).

The majority of the Irish Premonstratensian houses were founded during the thirteenth century, at a time of "colonisation of peripheral areas" in Ireland (Clyne 2011, p. 146). One of the earliest of them was the abbey of Carrickfergus, founded by John de Courcy in the recently established Anglo-Norman lordship at Ulster, as a daughter house of the English abbey of Dryburgh (Clyne 2011, pp. 148–49; *The Monastic Ireland Project*). The Premonstratensians arrived in Ireland during a time when the reorganisation of the church was still underway. What had begun as a movement in which the Gaelic kings were instrumental, from the 1170s the reform of the church was affected by the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland and the new, Anglo-Norman, lords, became enthusiastic participants in the founding of new, reformed, religious communities, among them Premonstratensian houses.

In Wales, the only foundation of the White Canons was Talley Abbey, established by Rhys ap Gruffudd, the Lord Rhys, as a daughter house of St Jean of Amiens, in the later 1180s. Like a number of their Augustinian and Cistercian counterparts, the canons of Talley forged links with the native Welsh rulers, as a consequence of which the monastery experienced the ire of the English king and his army during the Edwardian wars. It is also known that Talley had an uneasy relationship with its Cistercian neighbours at Strata Florida and Whitland (Burton and Stöber 2015a, pp. 198–203). Despite its occasional troubles, Talley Abbey survived until 1536, when the community, whose annual income then fell below the required £200, was dissolved during the first wave of suppression of religious houses.

2.4. The Cistercians

The early twelfth century saw the coming of new reformed Benedictines to the British Isles, notably the Cistercians and Savignacs (Burton and Kerr 2011; Jamroziak 2013; Bruun 2013). These groups of monks and nuns were to have a particular impact on the British monastic landscape. The two groups merged in 1147 and from this date houses of both Orders are known as Cistercian. Theirs had already begun to be a success story on the continent when they expanded northwards and found fertile ground for their project including in areas not hitherto overly populated by religious houses. Over time they came to form an important monastic presence in all of the constituent parts of the Isles.

Both Savignacs and Cistercians arrived in the archipelago at almost the same time. The first Cistercian monastery in England was the abbey of Waverley, founded in 1128, although by this date the then Savignac abbey of Furness, the foundation of which was originally at Tulketh, near Preston, in 1124, was already in existence (Knowles and Hadcock 1971, pp. 22, 119, 127–28). Waverley was founded by William Giffard, bishop of Winchester. Giffard was not the only prelate whose initiative helped establish the Cistercian Order in the British Isles: In Ireland, too, the White Monks enjoyed the early support of the episcopacy.

The Cistercians arrived in Ireland thanks to the initiative of St Malachy, archbishop of Armagh (d. 1148), who introduced the White Monks to the Emerald Isle with a foundation at Mellifont (Co. Louth) in 1142 (Moss 2007, pp. 35–37; Ó Conbhuidhe 1958). Here, as in other parts of the British Isles, Cistercian and Savignac monasticism proved to be very popular indeed (Stalley 1987; Ó Conbhuidhe 1998). Houses of monks and nuns of the Order appeared in large numbers during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, from Macosquin in the north to Abbeymahon in the south, and from Dublin in the east to Clare Island in the west (*Map of Monastic Ireland* 1979).

Across the Irish Sea in England, a total of 76 Cistercian monasteries came to be established across the regions, and nearly all of them survived until the Dissolution in the sixteenth century. The Cistercians enjoyed considerable popularity in medieval England. Janet Burton has emphasised the diverse nature of their early communities, and the involvement of kings, bishops, and the Cistercians themselves in promoting their expansion (Burton 1994, pp. 65–66). Their spread across the country, which began with the foundation of Waverley in 1128, was expeditious, and the following century saw a spate of new Cistercian monasteries; by the mid-thirteenth century, there existed nearly 70 Cistercian abbeys in England alone.

In Wales, the White Monks were to play an important role not only in the religious history of the region. A total of 14 male and 2 female houses of the Order came into being during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The first to arrive here, too, were groups of Savignac monks, who settled at sites in Neath in the south and Basingwerk in the north, in 1130 and 1131 respectively. Almost simultaneously, in 1131, the first Welsh Cistercian abbey was founded at Tintern from l'Aumône. Sixteen houses of Cistercians came to flourish in Wales, of which two were for women: The nunneries of Llanllŷr (Ceredigion) and Llanllugan (Powys) were small throughout their history, but both survived into the 1530s when they were suppressed (Burton and Stöber 2015a, pp. 120–24).

Scotland saw its first Cistercian foundation in 1136, when monks from the Yorkshire abbey of Rievaulx settled at Melrose in the Borders, thanks to the initiative of King David I of Scotland (Hall 2006, pp. 14–16). Over little more than a century, the Order became the most numerous of all the religious groups north of the Tweed. A total of 19 Cistercian houses were founded in Scotland, five of them nunneries (Hall 2006, pp. 14–16; Curran 2005).

The medieval Cistercians have often been regarded as one of the great monastic success stories, attracting patronage and support from bishops and kings to the nobility of the various ethnic backgrounds. Across the British Isles, as elsewhere, the White Monks were also an important economic force and they became involved in a very wide variety of economic activities, including horse-breeding and bee-keeping, according to the conditions

of their respective localities. Cistercian communities moreover played a part in the political life of their regions. Where they were associated with native Welsh, Irish or Scottish patrons, they might become the target of the English king's hostility during times of political unrest.

It is interesting to note the "internal" colonisation of the Cistercian Order in the British Isles. Thus, as we have seen, the Scottish abbey of Melrose and its descendants had been colonised from Rievaulx in Yorkshire; the Irish abbey of Tintern de Voto (Co. Wexford) from the Welsh monastery of Tintern (Monmouthshire); Grey Abbey in Ireland (Co. Down) from Holm Cultram in Cumberland, and this in turn from Melrose in Scotland; the Irish abbeys of Comber (Co. Down) and Tracton (Co. Cork) were colonised from Whitland in Carmarthenshire in southern Wales; and Inch (Co. Down) and Abington (Co. Limerick) from Furness in Lancashire.

2.5. The Tironensians

The Order of Tiron, founded in the early twelfth century by Bernard of Tiron in the forest of Savigny, was another manifestation of reformed Benedictines that established successful communities in the British Isles, though it was never a large Order there. No more than four houses were founded in England, as well as some smaller cells (Heale 2004; Knowles and Hadcock 1971, pp. 106–7). In Wales, there were three Tironensian monasteries, at St Dogmael's, Pill and Caldey, all in Pembrokeshire (Knowles and Hadcock 1971, pp. 106–7; Burton and Stöber 2015a, pp. 63–65, 165–68, 179–80). Both English and Welsh Tironensians were outnumbered by Scottish houses of the Order. Altogether there were seven houses of the Order of Tiron in Scotland, though the earliest of them, Selkirk in the Borders, founded in 1113, failed before the Dissolution of the Scottish monasteries in 1560 (Hall 2006, pp. 14–16; Gilchrist 2020, p. 59). There appears to have been just one single house of Tironensian monks in medieval Ireland. This was the priory of St Mary, Glascarrig in County Wexford, founded as a dependency of St Dogmael's Abbey in Wales in the 1190s (Ó Clabaigh 2005, pp. 90, 106–7).

2.6. The Gilbertines

Among the new and reformed religious groups in the British Isles was one that was peculiar to England. The Gilbertines, also known as the Order of Sempringham, started life as a double Order for nuns and canons, when its founder, the priest Gilbert of Sempringham, in the 1130s, complied with the wishes of a group of local women and decided to help them live a cloistered life (Golding 1995; Burton 1994; Graham 1930; Sykes 2011). For the organisation of his communities, he looked to the Cistercians, who rejected his request to take his houses under their wing, but whose model of lay brothers he adopted. He also added lay sisters to serve the encloistered women. The earliest foundations of the new Order were thus double houses, and they were almost exclusively situated in Lincolnshire, where Gilbert himself was active (Knowles and Hadcock 1971, pp. 194–96), but houses that were for canons only soon came to be added. A total of 10 double houses plus 14 Gilbertine monasteries for canons were established in England, the latter no longer restricted to Lincolnshire, but rather to be found across England, from Yorkshire in the north to Gloucestershire in the south (Knowles and Hadcock 1971, pp. 197–99).

2.7. The Carthusians

Perhaps the most extreme monastic experiment to successfully establish itself in Britain was the reclusive monasticism of the Carthusian Order, whose members sought to recreate the isolation of the desert within their communities. Founded by Bruno of Cologne in the 1080s, the Carthusians established their first house in England at Witham in Somerset in 1178–1179 (Knowles and Hadcock 1971, p. 133). A second Charterhouse was founded half a century later, at Hinton, also in Somerset. After this, the Order grew very hesitantly in the British Isles. No more than nine successful Carthusian houses ever existed in England. Of these, six were founded after the Black Death in the fourteenth century (Coppack and Aston 2002, pp. 33–46; Burton 1994, pp. 80–81). The spectacular remains of

the northern English Charterhouse of Mount Grace, with its reconstructed monk's cell, grant us a vivid picture of some aspects of Carthusian life in Britain.

There was one Charterhouse in Ireland, founded in the second half of the thirteenth century at Kinaleghin in County Galway, but this foundation failed before 1500 (*Map of Monastic Ireland* 1979). One Carthusian monastery was founded in Scotland, at Perth, to which might be added the three thirteenth-century houses of Valliscaulians (the only monasteries of this Order in the British Isles), at Ardchattan in Strathclyde, at Beauly in the Highlands, and at Pluscarden in Moray, respectively. Both Beauly and Pluscarden failed before the Dissolution in 1560. No Charterhouses were ever founded in Wales.

2.8. The Friars

The last significant group of new religious communities to arrive in the medieval British Isles were the friars. Not unlike the Cistercians, the mendicants, too, have often been regarded as one of the great religious successes of the age (Lawrence 1994; Robson 2006; Andrews 2006; Röhrkasten 2021). Upon their first appearance in England in the 1220s, the Franciscans and Dominicans, and also other mendicant groups, most notably Carmelites and Austin friars, soon established houses across the length and breadth of the country. Representing in the first instance an urban phenomenon, the friars sought out the towns and cities and there were few major towns in England that were not home to at least one group of mendicants after the thirteenth century. The most numerous group of friars were the Franciscans. Over 60 houses of Grey Friars were established in England during the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, plus six communities of Observants, founded at the end of the fifteenth and as late as the opening years of the sixteenth century. There were nearly 50 houses of Black Friars in England. To this must be added some 40 friaries each of Carmelite and Austin Friars, plus another 20 or so foundations of other groups of friars, such as Friars of the Sack or Pied Friars (Knowles and Hadcock 1971, pp. 212–50).

In Ireland, too, the mendicants enjoyed great popularity (Ó Clabaigh 2012; Lafaye 2015). Upon their arrival in the 1220s, houses of the different Orders of friars appeared across the island, and by the fourteenth century they had become a notable presence. The friars first settled in the larger towns, their first foundation probably being in Dublin, but they soon expanded into the smaller, Anglo-Norman boroughs across the island, as well as into the territories of the Gaelic aristocracy (Lafaye 2021, pp. 69–70; Ó Clabaigh 2012, pp. 2–3). Foremost among the mendicant groups in Ireland were the Franciscans, who began by settling in the Anglo-Norman boroughs, with their brethren, too, being of Anglo-Norman origin, but who soon expanded into more remote parts of the country, including the south and west. The late fifteenth century saw the emergence of Observant Franciscans, and by the sixteenth century over half of the Irish Franciscan friaries had become Observant houses. The Irish Dominicans followed a similar pattern, choosing the larger towns for their earlier settlements and expanding into the more remote west in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. By 1536, Ireland was home to 38 Dominican friaries (Ó Clabaigh 2012, pp. 59–62). Other, smaller groups of mendicants were also active in Ireland, most notably the Carmelites, who arrived in the island in the 1270s, when two houses of the Order were founded, in Leighlinbridge (Co. Carlow) and in Dublin. The Order grew during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, thanks to the initiative of Anglo-Norman founders and patrons, after which the Irish Carmelites experienced decline, both in their houses and, allegedly, in their standards. Nonetheless, most of their communities survived until the 1530s, with a few of them, in northern and western Ireland, continuing until the seventeenth century (Monastic Ireland n.d.).

The presence of the friars in Wales was moderate (Easterling 1914, pp. 323–56; Röhrkasten 2013, pp. 55–70; Burton and Stöber 2015a, pp. 15–17; 2021, pp. 138–79). There were five Dominican friaries, at Cardiff, Haverfordwest. Brecon, Rhuddlan, and Bangor; three houses of Franciscans, one house of Carmelite friars at Denbigh, and one Austin friary at Newport (Monastic Wales n.d.). The Welsh friars, then, here as elsewhere, chose in the first instance the major towns for their foundations, though they were absent from some

of Wales's urban centres, such as Cardigan or Pembroke. Jens Röhrkasten has suggested that we must consider factors like the rejection of a mendicant presence by the population, or the Orders' own choice of location, to understand their distribution (Röhrkasten 2013, pp. 62–65). Looking at the five houses of Friars Preacher, however, it appears that their locations were strategically planned to ensure a Dominican presence in each of the four medieval Welsh dioceses (Burton and Stöber 2021, p. 144). Both native Welsh and Anglo-Norman founders were involved in creating the mendicant presence in Wales and their houses were present both in Anglo-Norman settled *Marchia Wallia* and in native *Pura Wallia* (Burton and Stöber 2015a, p. 16).

In Scotland, too, the mendicants enjoyed some popularity. A concentration of friaries was in the Scottish Midlands, between Glasgow in the west and Edinburgh, St Andrews, Dundee in the east, while the remaining houses were mostly situated along the eastern and north-eastern coast, with houses at Montrose, Inverbervie, Aberdeen, Banff, Elgin, and Inverness (Cowan and Easson 1976, p. 116; Gilchrist 2020, p. 61). No friaries were founded in the north-west of Scotland. The Dominican friars established 16 houses, 13 of which were during the thirteenth century (Oram 2021, pp. 112–37). There were seven Franciscan friaries, one house of Conventual Franciscans, and the late fifteenth century saw the foundation of nine houses of Observant Franciscans (Cowan and Easson 1976, p. 116). Houses of Carmelites were present in Scotland, too, with some 11 foundations; and there was one house of Friars of the Sack. In Scotland, unlike in the rest of the British Isles, friaries continued to be founded until the 1520s, when a Dominican house was established in Dundee and a Carmelite friary was founded in Edinburgh (Cowan and Easson 1976, p. 116; Gilchrist 2020, p. 61).

2.9. Religious Women

There were far fewer houses for religious women in the medieval British Isles than male monasteries. Similarly, there has until fairly recently been much less scholarly interest in British nunneries than in their male counterparts, though this imbalance has been happily redressed over the last decades (note for example, for England: Thompson 1991; D. Wood 2003; for Ireland: Hall 2003; for Wales: Cartwright 1999, 2008; for Scotland: Curran 2005). Nonetheless, even today religious women often remain on the margins of historical study. Because there can be some ambiguity concerning their religious Order, houses of nuns and canonesses have been treated collectively here by region rather than by religious affiliation.

There is early evidence for houses of religious women in England (Foot 2006, p. 82; Burton 1994, pp. 87–88). These were the preserve of the aristocracy and we know of several royal women who entered nunneries during the Anglo-Saxon period (Burton 1994, p. 88). That there was a demand for female monasticism throughout the medieval period in England is clear, and it was in response to this demand that Gilbert of Sempringham, in the twelfth century, founded what was to become the Gilbertine Order, discussed above. The spread of continental monasticism enhanced the possibilities for religious women, too, and by 1300 there were in England over 70 houses of Benedictine nuns, nearly 30 Cistercian nunneries, and two priories of Cluniac nuns, as well as 24 houses of Augustinian and 4 of Premonstratensian canonesses. There were also other options for women (as indeed for men) seeking dedication to the spiritual life, as the surviving anchoresses' cells and the early-thirteenth-century *Ancrene Wisse*, a guide for anchoresses, demonstrate.

In Wales, the provision for women wishing to enter into the monastic life was limited. Only three nunneries were established here, the Cistercian houses of Llanllŷr and Llanllugan, and the Benedictine priory of Usk. There has been much speculation as to why so few houses for religious women existed in Wales, but no entirely convincing answers have been found (Cartwright 1999, 2008, pp. 176–77).

The evidence for Scottish nunneries is patchy, and as a result they were for a long time lacking a dedicated in-depth study. This was remedied some 15 years ago by Kimm Curran (Curran 2005). Fifteen communities of nuns have been identified in Scotland, not all of which survived until the Dissolution (Gilchrist 2020, pp. 45–49). They were mostly centred in the

mid-east of the country, where as many as 14 of them were located. Only the Augustinian nunnery on the island of Iona, the Benedictine nunnery of Lincluden, and the Cistercian convent of St Evoca's fall outside this pattern. Of these three, the latter two were in the south of the country, but both failed before the Dissolution in 1560 (Gilchrist 2020, p. 64).

Recent studies have thrown considerable light on the nunneries of medieval Ireland (Hall 2003; Collins 2015). Dianne Hall has divided the foundations of Irish nunneries into four "waves", from the earliest houses, of which less is known, via those that were founded by Gaelic kings during the twelfth-century church reform; followed by the first Anglo-Norman foundations on their newly-conquered lands, and including Benedictine, Augustinian, and Cistercian nunneries; and finally, the fifteenth-century foundations mainly of nunneries affiliated to the mendicant Orders (Hall 2003, p. 63). This model shows how female monasteries, too, were instruments of conquest in medieval Ireland.

3. The Impact of Religious Communities in the British Isles

For their localities, monasteries and nunneries were much more than religious houses peopled by men and women who prayed and chanted in physical seclusion. Apart from the visual effect of even a small-scale monastery in a predominantly rural environment, being imposing stone structures with glass windows, bells, and leaden roofs, these were places that had a wider sensory impact on those who beheld them. From within could be heard the tolling of the church bells, perhaps even fragments of the brethren's chant. From their kitchens emanated the smells of monastic cooking, from their precincts perhaps those of brewing, too, as well as a myriad of other odours from stables, latrines, and orchards. One ought also to consider the psychological impact these communities might have on the outside world. After all, they housed those who had abandoned the world to dedicate their lives to God, and thereby represented a moral example to all.

Religious communities moreover had a considerable economic impact on their localities. Much has been said about the importance of the involvement of religious communities in economic activities in the medieval British Isles. Naturally the extent and nature of this varied from house to house, depending on the size and wealth of each community, on the religious Order to which they belonged, and on the localities in which they were situated. Monasteries were often important landholders and might possess properties in towns and villages. They might be responsible for transforming the landscape through deforestation or by making wasteland arable and farming it. Monks might engage in economic activities as varied as apiculture, fishing, and brewing. Their diverse economic activities brought them into contact with the lay community outside the monastery walls, with whom they traded and entered into business transactions. No less important was the role of monasteries as sources of employment in the locality. Apart from attracting recruits to the monastic life itself, the staff of a religious house, especially a large monastery, might be numerous and include servants and stable-hands, among other lay workers.

With the economy in its widest sense set aside, monasteries were of course important cultural centres, both in the sense of creating and promoting culture, through manuscript production for example, and as centres of learning and cultural exchange (Clark 2007).

Through these diverse activities, religious communities in the British Isles came into contact with the local laity, with their patrons and benefactors, and by extension were drawn into the political life of their localities. The extent and nature of these contacts depended on a range of factors, such as the type of house, whether a male monastery or a nunnery; and the type of religious order, more or less secluded, which determined to some extent how close the ties between a community and the outside world were allowed to be.

4. To Conclude

What this brief survey aimed to do is provide an overview of the main developments within monasticism in the medieval British Isles by looking at the diversity of monastic life in Ireland, Scotland, England, and Wales. Over the span of a millennium, the region

experienced the arrival and spread, as well as the rise and decline of numerous different monastic or quasi-monastic groups that contributed to shaping the history of the region. The study of monasticism in the archipelago has for a long time inspired scholars of diverse subjects, notably historians, archaeologists, theologians, and art historians, and their work has resulted in an important body of literature on just about any imaginable aspect of the topic. Yet questions keep arising. What, for instance, determined the "success" of a particular region in attracting a lively and varied monastic presence? The chief determiners in the case of the British Isles, and indeed elsewhere, would seem to be threefold, with all three elements equally important. There was the issue of the landscape in which a religious order chose to establish a community: Accessible or remote, depending on the preferences of a particular religious group at a particular time, and viable from an economic point of view, either through sufficiently fertile lands, which might be exploited, or by being in urban locations offering access to rents and properties that might safeguard the survival of a religious community over time. Then there was the important matter of precedent, i.e., earlier foundations, be they shrines, churches, or monasteries, of religious significance at the site. And finally, the crucial issue of patronage. In other words, it was the threefold combination of economic viability, religious tradition, and local support that encouraged religious settlement and favoured its success.

Why did some regions or localities attract certain religious groups while others did not? What lay behind the decision of a monastic Order to settle in any particular region? These are questions that can be applied to monasticism anywhere in Western Christendom, but a comparative overview of the monastic settlement and expansion in the different parts of the British Isles accentuates certain patterns and regional differences, however inconspicuous. A number of key factors determined why a religious group came to choose the location in which to found its monastery. Crucial among them was the role of the founders, be they religious or laymen, and their preferences in establishing an abbey or priory of any particular Order. What drove these men and women to opt for one religious Order rather than another might depend on personal preferences, on the current fashions (thus a new religious Order, for example, might be particularly attractive to a monastic founder at any given time), on precedent in the region, on a vow made in favour of one religious group, or on the external conditions (such as the site or the landscape) of any given locality. As has been shown, the Augustinian canons and the Cistercians were universally popular across the archipelago whereas Cluniacs or Carthusians were not. Nunneries and friaries were also unevenly distributed.

The monasteries and nunneries in the British Isles, as elsewhere, were closely connected to their localities and formed part of the landscapes in which they operated. As such, they were inevitably affected by external events and drawn into the affairs of the world and society around them. Thus, for example, the monasteries in the Scottish Borders suffered during the Scottish Wars of Independence in the fourteenth century, just as some Welsh houses did during the Edwardian Conquest of Wales in the thirteenth. They reflect the changes in society, such as the increasing urbanisation in the thirteenth century, and they suffered alongside it during times of crisis, such as the Black Death in the fourteenth century and its aftermath. The monastic presence in the medieval British Isles had an impact on its society more widely, notably on its religious, cultural, and intellectual life, but also on the economy, politics, and material culture. It is unhelpful, therefore, to separate the history of the British Isles from that of their religious communities, for indeed they lay at the very heart of it.

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Notes

1 Byzantine Emperor Tiberius Maurice (582–602).

2 For questions of scope, this brief discussion does not include the military orders.

3 The Dissolution of the Monasteries affected different parts of the British Isles in different ways and at slightly different times. In England and Wales, monasteries were closed between 1536 and 1540, eliminating the monastic presence in the region; in Scotland monastic life continued until 1560. In Ireland the Dissolution came about more gradually, but by the mid-1540s pressure from the English crown had resulted in the closure of about half of the country's monasteries, though some, notably houses of friars, continued.

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Article

Medieval Monasticism in Iceland and Norse Greenland

Steinunn Kristjánsdóttir

Department of Archaeology, University of Iceland, 101 Reykjavík, Iceland; sjk@hi.is

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to provide an overview of the monastic houses operated on the northernmost periphery of Roman Catholic Europe during the Middle Ages. The intention is to debunk the long-held theory of Iceland and Norse Greenland's supposed isolation from the rest of the world, as it is clear that medieval monasticism reached both of these societies, just as it reached their counterparts elsewhere in the North Atlantic. During the Middle Ages, fourteen monastic houses were opened in Iceland and two in Norse Greenland, all following the Benedictine or Augustinian Orders.

Keywords: Iceland; Norse Greenland; monasticism; Benedictine Order; Augustine Order

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The aim of this article is to provide an overview of the medieval monastic houses operating in the northernmost dioceses of the Roman Catholic Church: Iceland and Norse Greenland. At the same time, it questions the supposed isolation of these societies from the rest of the Continent. Research on activities in Iceland and Greenland shows that the transnational movement of monasticism reached these two countries as it reached other parts of Northern Europe. Fourteen monastic houses were established in Iceland and two in Norse Greenland during the Middle Ages. Two of the monastic houses in Iceland and one in Norse Greenland were nunneries, whereas the others were monasteries. Five of the monasteries established in Iceland were short lived, while the other nine operated for centuries. All were closed due to the Reformation around the mid-sixteenth century. On the other hand, the monastic houses in Greenland were closed around the time the Norse settlement there vanished in the fifteenth century. The monastic houses in both Iceland and Norse Greenland belonged to either the Benedictine or Augustinian Orders.

1. The Background of Icelanders and the Norse Greenland Settlers

Iceland was initially settled by immigrants who came mainly from western Scandinavia, the British Isles, and Ireland during the last decades of the ninth century. This has been confirmed by genetic studies, which demonstrate that the early Icelanders were a combination of Norse, Gaelic, and other mixed heritage (Ebenesersdóttir et al. 2018). Furthermore, recent studies show that the settlement period was a long one, as people continued to migrate to Iceland at least until after the formal conversion to Christianity in 999 or 1000 (Vésteinsson and Gestsdóttir 2016). The voyages of that time continued, but two areas of southwestern Greenland were settled by Icelandic settlers around the turn of the tenth century. Shortly thereafter, Icelanders extended their expeditions to North America (Eiríks Saga Rauða 1953, pp. 326–29; Karlsson 2000, pp. 28–32; Guðmundsson 2005, pp. 11–19).

The two areas settled in Norse Greenland were the Eastern Settlement, which was settled first, and the Western Settlement. Greenland had indeed been inhabited by several indigenous cultures long before the arrival of the Icelandic settlers. However, none of the indigenous cultures lived in southwestern Greenland at the time of the Norse settlement. Still, by 1500, the Thule culture occupied most coastal areas of Greenland, including the Eastern and Western Settlements, where Icelandic settlers resided from approximately 1000 to 1450 (Gulløv et al. 2004, pp. 11–24). Genetic studies on skeletal remains from Norse Greenland do not, however, show any indications of mixture between the people of the Thule culture and the Norse (Lynnerup 1998, pp. 34–38, 120–28).

The cultural background of those settling in Iceland from 870 to 1000 is observed as having been a combination of different religious views and habits originating from both Old Pagan and Christian practices, but the Christianisation of the societies in Northwest Europe had been ongoing for a while when Iceland was settled. The earliest Christian cemeteries excavated in Iceland date to the turn of the eleventh century, yet quite a few of them include burials that are older than the conversion itself, indicating that Icelanders had soon become overtly acquainted with Christian burial customs (Hugason 2000, pp. 18–30, 66–73; Vésteinsson 2005, pp. 72–76; Vésteinsson et al. 2019, pp. 171–77). Archaeological research undertaken in Norse Greenland accords with the developments described above, implying further that the first settlers were already Christian upon their arrival. No pre-Christian graves have been found with any certainty in Norse Greenland (Keller 1989, pp. 51–109, 210–12; Lynnerup 1998, pp. 9–10, 51; Arneborg et al. 1999, pp. 159–66; Arneborg et al. 2012, pp. 2–37).

Soon after the settlement of Iceland, the settlers formed their own system of government based on chieftaincies. There was no central government, but district assemblies were held regularly throughout the country. The main assembly, *Alþingi*, was established in 930 in Þingvellir in southern Iceland, where the district chiefs, *goðar*, gathered to introduce new legislation or to settle major disputes that concerned the whole nation. The *goðar* became the most powerful men in the country, along with the president of *Alþingi*, called the lawspeaker. Written descriptions indicate (see, for example, (Flateyjarbók 1945, pp. 231–32)) that the Icelanders adapted this governmental system of chieftaincy similar to the society in Norse Greenland. It is worth noting, however, that the secular governance of both Iceland and Norse Greenland was taken over by the Norwegian crown in 1262. From then until approximately 1381, executive power rested with the Norwegian king and his local officials (Karlsson 2000, pp. 83–86, 89–95). At that time, the population of Iceland is estimated at 40,000 (Karlsson 2000, p. 45) and the population of Norse Greenland at 2500 to 3000 (Guðmundsson 2005, p. 17).

Consequently, the society in Norse Greenland appears to have been organised in the same manner as in Iceland (see even (Krogh 1982a, pp. 9–26; Gulløv et al. 2004, pp. 219–40)). However, Norse Greenlandic society may have been more 'ecclesiastically' organised than Icelandic society, as it was composed entirely of Roman Catholic Christians. Recent studies show, for example, that from the beginning, Greenlandic parishes were larger and far more centralised than Icelandic ones (Vésteinsson 2010, pp. 140–49). Nevertheless, as in other Christian societies of Northwest Europe during the early Middle Ages, the Church in Iceland and Norse Greenland was based on the proprietary system.[1] A proprietary church was an ecclesiastical house founded by a landowner on his own property, and where he maintained rights of investiture. In other respects, the proprietary churches were meant to serve a larger community, usually a parish, although some of the early churches were built as private chapels intended for the sole use of a single family.[2] However, the establishment of the churches, both private and proprietary, was generally based on the private initiative of farmers, chieftains, and even bishops (Smedberg 1973, pp. 88–99; Keller 1989, pp. 212–14; Wood 2013).

During the eleventh century, the establishment of proprietary churches reached a peak in Europe, including in Iceland, causing a serious conflict between the secular and ecclesiastical authorities on the Continent. The conflicts were launched by Pope Gregory VII, who, during his tenure from 1073 to 1085, strived to differentiate administratively between secular and ecclesiastical powers. His reforms were seen, however, as bringing about a significant undercutting of secular power, including prohibiting laymen from interfering in ecclesiastical matters—in particular, the operation of churches (Wood 2013, pp. 850–64). The conflicts that arose, termed the Investiture Controversy, were more or less settled on the mainland in 1122, but had not yet started in Iceland. It was not until after the establishment of the archdiocese in Niðarós (Trondheim, Norway) in 1153 that the archbishops there started to claim rights over the churches in their provinces, as had occurred on the Continent, in addition to acquiring the right to appoint churchly officials

such as bishops and abbots (Arnórsdóttir 1995, p. 108; Guðmundsson 2000, pp. 18–24). The conflicts in Iceland, called *Staðamál*, lasted much longer than those on the Continent, pitting the *goðar* against religious chiefs such as bishops Þorlákur Þór-hallsson (1178–1193) and Árni Þorláksson (1269–1298), who supported the ongoing reform of the Church in the country. Because Iceland had been under Norwegian control since 1262, the conflicts were finally settled with an official agreement made at Avaldsnes in Norway in 1297, albeit after negotiations between royal and ecclesiastical authorities. The agreement emphasises that the operation of churches and the appointment of bishops, abbots, abbesses, and priors—specifically, in Iceland, Greenland, the Faeroe Islands, and the Hebrides—should be undertaken in consultancy with the archbishop in Niðarós (DI II 1893, pp. 325–28). The proprietary church system was not completely abandoned in Iceland, however, as some of the churches there remained in private hands throughout the Middle Ages (Stefánsson 2002, pp. 155–64; Karlsson 2000, pp. 96–99).

The growth of the proprietary church system in Iceland and the initiative to build private chapels can be seen in an increased number of farms with churches dating to the first two centuries after Christianisation. In Greenland as well, single churches seem to have grown quickly in number soon after the settlement there, as church ruins have thus far been identified in seventeen places in the Eastern Settlement and two in the Western Settlement (Smedberg 1973, pp. 89–90; Keller 1989, pp. 212–14, 262–65; Vésteinsson 2010, pp. 139–40). At the same time, monasticism gained a firm foothold in both Iceland and Norse Greenland, with fourteen monastic houses founded in Iceland and two in Norse Greenland.

2. The Expansion of the Roman Catholic Church

Icelanders decided to formally adopt Christianity as their official religion in 999/1000, and the Norse societies of the Orkney Islands, Faeroe Islands, and Norway officially converted around the same time. Ireland, Scotland, Wales, England, and Germany had all adopted Christianity some centuries earlier, and Denmark had followed in approximately 965 (Sigurðsson 2008, pp. 66–77; Walaker Nordeide 2011, pp. 79–83). Moreover, as early as 1022, Pope Benedict VIII (r. 1012–1024) declared that Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Iceland should belong ecclesiastically to the archbishopric of Hamburg (DI I 1857–1876, pp. 51–53). Pope Leo IX (r. 1049–1054) reinforced this in 1053 when he reinstated Archbishop Adelbert (r. 1043–1072) in office, but in his declaration that year, he listed Greenland for the first time as one of the countries belonging to the archbishopric of Hamburg (DI I 1857–1876, pp. 57–60).

The Roman Catholic Church had certainly strengthened its position in Iceland by the time that Icelanders received their first bishopric in Skálholt in 1056. The expansion of the Church did not become evident, however, until after Pope Paschal II (r. 1099–1118) had transferred the Nordic countries from the archdiocese of Hamburg in 1104 and placed them under a separate archdiocese in Lund. Pope Paschal II also appointed the incumbent bishop of Lund, Asser Thorkilsen (r. 1104–1137), to serve as Lund's first archbishop, whereupon Asser continued to strengthen the position of the Church in its northernmost dioceses of Europe. Two years later, in 1106, Archbishop Asser established the bishopric of Hólar in Iceland. Shortly thereafter, a bishopric was founded in Kirkjubær in the Faeroe Islands, and finally, in 1124, a bishopric was established in Garðar in Greenland. Three years earlier, Asser had appointed an Icelander, Eiríkur Gnúpsson, as bishop of Greenland and the Norse settlements in North America. Around that time, the first bishop of Hólar, Jón Ögmundsson, laid the groundwork for the earliest successful Benedictine settlement in Iceland, Þingeyraklaustur, which began operating in 1133 (Jensson 2016, pp. 20–22). Yet, when the archdiocese of Lund was split up in 1153 and the bishoprics in Iceland and Norse Greenland became part of the archdiocese of Niðarós, along with Norway, the Faeroes, the Northern Isles, the Hebrides, and the Isle of Man—all with their own bishoprics—the activities of the Church in Northern Europe expanded immensely (Figure 1). Its growth could be seen not at least in new monastic orders and monastic houses from the late

eleventh and twelfth centuries (Aston 2001, pp. 9–10). In Denmark and Norway, new monastic foundations increased greatly in number during the twelfth century, most of them following the Benedictine and Augustinian Orders, although there were Premonstratensian, Franciscan, Dominican, and Cistercian establishments as well. In Denmark, forty-nine of the approximately 140 monastic houses ever founded in the country were established during the twelfth century, as were seventeen of the twenty-seven monastic houses founded in Norway. The establishment of new monastic houses stalled again in both countries during the second half of the thirteenth century (Gunnes 1987, pp. 51–66; Lidén 1993, p. 65; Olsen 1996, p. 24; Jakobsen 2005).

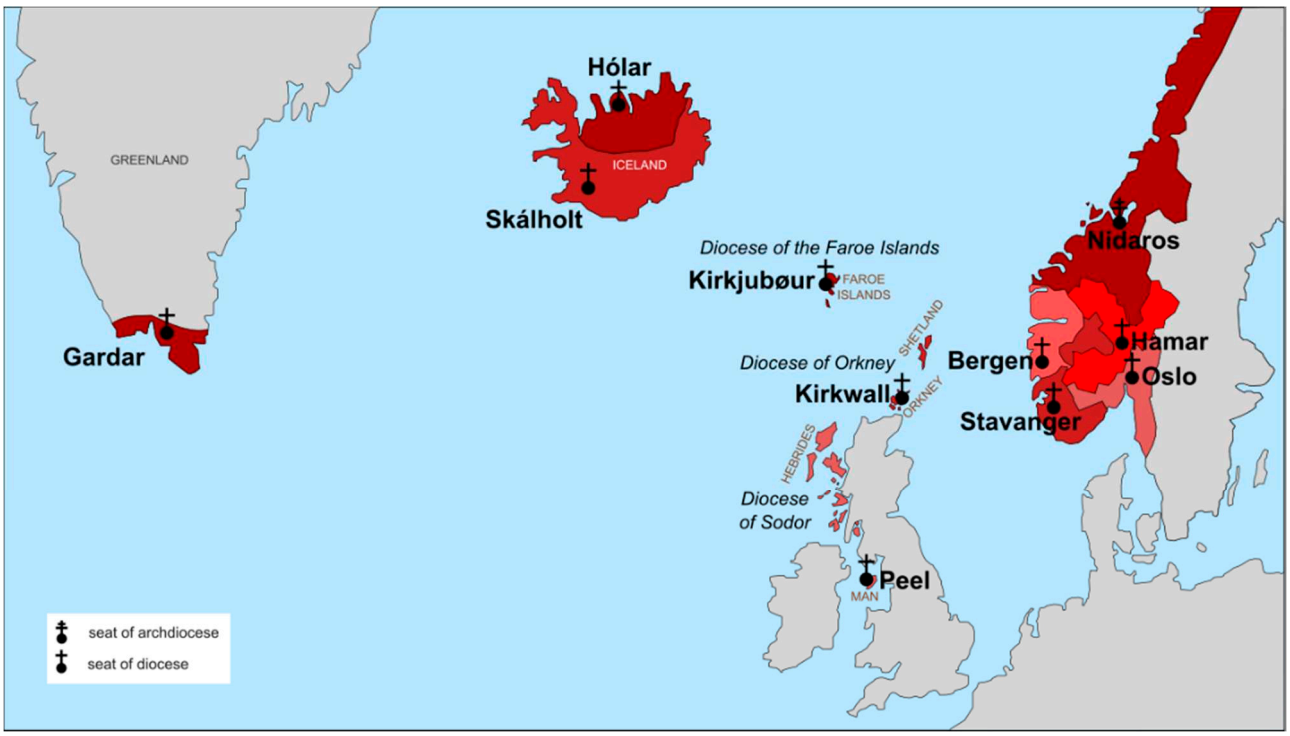

Figure 1. The ecclesiastical province of Niðarós 1153–1387.

In Iceland, three new Benedictine monasteries followed soon after the founding of Þingeyraklaustur: Munkaþverárklaustur (1155) and Hítardalsklaustur (1166) in Hólar bishopric, and Iceland's first nunnery, Kirkjubæjarklaustur (1186), in Skálholt bishopric (Kristjánsdóttir 2017). In Greenland, the Benedictine nunnery located in Uunartoq fjord may also have been founded during this initial phase of Benedictine expansion to the northernmost territories of Europe (Clark 2011, p. 53; Jensson 2016, pp. 20–24). The Augustinians began circulating their agenda as well, establishing the monasteries of Þykkvabæjarklaustur (1168) and Flateyjarklaustur/Helgafellsklaustur (1172/1184) in Skálholt bishopric in Iceland (Kristjánsdóttir 2017). The monastery in Tasermiut fjord in Greenland was probably established by then as well (Vebæk 1953, pp. 195–200).

Nevertheless, the earliest attempt to establish a monastic institution in Iceland took place before Roman Catholic Christianity had gained such a firm foothold in Northern Europe. This was Bæjarklaustur, which was established in 1030 but discontinued operation after only two decades. Bæjarklaustur was founded by a Benedictine monk, Rúðólfur, who was sent to Iceland in order to establish the monastery on behalf of the archbishop of Hamburg (Kristjánsdóttir 2017, pp. 67–78). A similar attempt to establish a monastic house appears to have been made in Nidarholm in Norway in 1028, but it failed as well (Walaker Nordeide 2011, p. 117; Haug 2014, p. 206). The early Benedictine monastery established in Schleswig (by then within the kingdom of Denmark) in 1025 continued to operate for nearly two centuries, however (Nyberg 2000; Jakobsen 2005, p. 58).

In addition to the monastic houses founded in Iceland during the twelfth century, three were established on the initiative of wealthy chieftains between 1193 and 1226, when the *Staðamál* were still unsettled. These monasteries were Keldnaklaustur, Saurbæjarklaustur, and Viðeyjarklaustur, and their founders became their lay abbots, as was customary on the mainland (Kristjánsdóttir 2017). Furthermore, while the *Staðamál* were at their peak in Iceland, all of the active monasteries and the only nunnery in operation at that time were confronted with defensive struggles that some of them—such as Hítardalsklaustur, Keldnaklaustur, and Saurbæjarklaustur—did not survive. Soon after the *Staðamál* were settled, the Church became particularly powerful in Iceland, both governmentally and economically. Two new monastic houses were founded right around the time the disputes were resolved: the Benedictine nunnery Reynistaðarklaustur (1295) and the Augustinian monastery Möðruvallaklaustur (1296), both belonging to Hólar bishopric. The growth of the Church continued until the Reformation, but the last monastery in Iceland was established in Skriðuklaustur in 1493 (Kristjánsdóttir 2017, pp. 46–49), by which time the Norse settlement in Greenland had vanished.

Due to a lack of sources, it is not known precisely when the Benedictines and Augustinians arrived in Norse Greenland. It may have been during the initial expansion phase of monasticism to Northern Europe as described above, or later, when the Roman Catholic Church had gained a proper foothold there by end of the thirteenth century with the resolution of the *Staðamál*. On the other hand, written sources on the monastic houses run in Iceland are abundant. Their foundation dates are known in nearly all cases, as are their orders, the assessed incomes of the larger ones, their furnishings, their internal activities and noteworthy events, the dates of their dissolution, and the names of their chiefs (abbots, abbesses, priors, and prioresses). Furthermore, the names of other residents such as corrodians, novices, male and female students, and lay workers are known in many cases. Knowledge of the existence of the Norse Greenland monastic houses is based almost entirely on a description made by Ívar Bárðarson, an official agent of the bishopric of Bergen who went to Greenland to record the churches located there in the mid-fourteenth century (see, for example, Halldórsson 1978, pp. 133–37). In his records, Ívar lists the two monastic houses, a Benedictine nunnery and an Augustinian monastery, as well as eight churches. Both appear to be rich in land, but like the successful ones run in Iceland, their estates must have been the mainstay of their economic strength. The nunnery is reported as owning nearly all of the farms in the fjord where it was located and half of the islets there, while the bishopric in Garðar owned the other half. The monastery is described as 'large', but no further detail is given. The record states that it was dedicated to St Olav the king and owned all farms in the fjord where it was based (see, for example, Halldórsson 1978, p. 135).[3]

The monastic houses in Norse Greenland are also briefly mentioned 22 June 1308 in a letter from Bishop Árni Sigurdsson in Bergen designated to Bishop Þórður in Garðar, thus providing further proof of their existence. In the letter, Bishop Árni expresses his gratitude to Bishop Þórður by sending him various gifts for having prayed for the soul of King Erik II (d. 1299), as well as the souls of five recently deceased Norwegian bishops. A portion of the gift was intended for the monastic houses in Greenland, including skins, a light blue *chaperon,* and a gown made of the same fabric. Also given was a barrel of grapes (Grønlands Historiske Mindesmærker 1845, pp. 94–98[4]). Interestingly, on the same day, Bishop Árni in Bergen sent almost an identical letter to Bishop Árni Helgason in Skálholt in gratitude for him having prayed for the soul of King Erik II and five recently deceased Norwegian bishops. Gifts to the bishop of Skálholt included, on the other hand, wax and beer, but no grapes or textiles (DI II 1893, pp. 362–63).

3. Research on the Monastic Houses in Iceland

Monastic and Church archaeology has been growing as a field of research for some time in most Northwest European countries (McClain 2012, pp. 131–70; Gilchrist 2014, pp. 235–90). Iceland has been part of this trend. Four monastic sites—Viðeyjarklaustur,

Kirkjubæjarklaustur, Skriðuklaustur, and Þingeyraklaustur—have been fully or partly excavated in recent years. In addition, all fourteen monastic sites in Iceland were recently surveyed and documents on their activities systematically investigated (Kristjánsdóttir 2017).

The excavations carried out to date on the four Icelandic monastic sites investigated archaeologically vary in scale and scope. The excavation on the island of Viðey, where the Augustinian monastery Viðeyjarklaustur was located, began in 1987 due to construction work and continued until 1995. During this period, the ruins of the monastic house there were not identified with any certainty, perhaps due to the long history of occupation on the spot where the monastery is supposed to have stood. Viðeyjarklaustur is also the only monastic house to be demolished in an attack by Protestant followers during the initial phase of the Reformation in Iceland. This raid, which took place in 1539, forced the closure of the monastery after over three centuries of successful operation. After that, the monastic buildings were converted to a residency for the superintendents of the Danish king, who were tasked with caring for the properties formerly owned by the monastery. However, some artifacts from the monastic period were found, including a likeness of St Dorotha and three wax tablets (Hallgrímsdóttir 1991, pp. 102–21; Kristjánsdóttir 1995; Kristjánsdóttir 2017, pp. 325–55). Like many other monastic houses, Viðeyjarklaustur became very wealthy after the *Staðamál* had been settled. In 1313, it owned fourteen farms, but by 1395, the number of farms it owned had risen to fifty (DI II 1893, p. 377; DI III 1896, pp. 597–98).

In contrast to the excavation in Viðey, the excavations conducted on the sites of the Benedictine nunnery in Kirkjubær and the Augustinian monastery at Skriðuklaustur were organised as research projects. Both excavations started in 2002, and both were also intended from the outset to locate and investigate the lodgings and activities of monastic houses on the two sites. Kirkjubæjarklaustur was run for nearly four centuries, from 1186 to 1541, albeit with a break of approximately seven decades during the thirteenth century due to the *Staðamál* conflicts (Kristjánsdóttir 2017, pp. 274–80). Skriðuklaustur, on the other hand, was established in 1493 and had only been in operation for five decades when the clergy of Skálholt bishopric officially changed their allegiance from Catholicism to Lutheranism in 1541. The residents were allowed to remain in their institutions afterwards, however, as was permitted in the other administrative provinces of the Danish kingdom, to which Iceland belonged by then. The residents in Kirkjubæjarklaustur had all left the nunnery in 1548, and Skriðuklaustur residents left in 1553 or 1554 (Kristjánsdóttir 2012; Kristjánsdóttir 2017, pp. 271–97, 419–49). Iceland remained semi-Catholic and semi-Lutheran from 1541 to 1550 because the bishop of Hólar diocese, Jón Arason, refused to accept the Lutheran Church ordinance and remained the representative of Catholics until he was forcibly removed from his post and executed late in 1550. The remaining monastic houses—three monasteries and one nunnery belonging to Hólar bishopric—were dissolved the following year (Kristjánsdóttir 2017).

During the archaeological investigation in Kirkjubæjarklaustur, which lasted for five years, only the northeastern corner of the nunnery's lodgings was excavated. The parts excavated were nevertheless sufficient to show that the nunnery was built with the rooms arranged in a square by a cloister garth. No graves were exhumed, however. Pieces of glass decorated with ecclesiastical images were found, as was an altar stone. No other ecclesiastical items were found (Mímisson and Einarsson 2009, pp. 44–49). Even so, the findings supported what may be read from written sources that place primary importance on the nunnery's textile work, which was officially praised by Bishop Vilchin (r. 1391–1405) during a visitation in 1397. Soon after his visitation, Bishop Vilchin purchased tapestries from the nuns to cover all four walls of the so-called large hall in Skálholt episcopal see, as well as a number of ecclesiastical garments for the cathedral (Lögmannsannáll 1888, pp. 287–88). Moreover, an inventory made in Kirkjubæjarklaustur in 1343 listed not only wall hangings around the nunnery's church but also fourteen antependia, twelve cloths for the lectern, twenty-two chasubles (including twelve made of elaborate silk), twenty gowns, six dalmatics, and eight robes. The most elaborate chasuble, which was blue, is listed separately (DI II 1893, p. 781; DI IV 1897, p. 238; DI VIII 1906–1913, p. 5). This

means that in Kirkjubæjarklaustur there were enough chasubles for at least twenty priests in 1343. In 1397 there were twenty-four chasubles. Given that there never seem to have been more than one or two priests serving the nuns in Kirkjubæjarklaustur at any time, the extra chasubles may have been stock from their textile manufacturing. Embroidered chasubles, gowns, antependia, and tapestries were extremely valuable, as were most other ecclesiastical textiles. An elaborate chasuble, for example, could have a value comparable to that of three or four farms (Jónsson 1915–1929, p. 234). In fact, it even is safe to say that ecclesiastical tapestries were even more desirable among the clergy and the aristocracy than most other works of art and crafts, including books, during the Middle Ages. Although the excavation of the ruins of Kirkjubæjarklaustur covered only one corner of the nunnery's lodgings, it revealed clear evidence of textile work, besides miscellaneous utensils for the household. In the ruins, the remains of a nearly complete warp-weighted loom were found, in addition to at least 48 single loom weights, ten needles, and four spindle whorls (Mímisson and Einarsson 2009, p. 49; Parsons 2018). It is also noteworthy that the nunnery had a significantly larger number of sheep than any other monastic house in Iceland when the livestock inventory was compiled in 1343. By then, the home farm of Kirkjubæjarklaustur had ninety-four cattle and nearly 750 sheep, which were apparently bred to produce wool for the nunnery's textile production (DI II 1893, p. 781; DI VIII 1906–1913, p. 5). In contrast, the other monasteries ran large cattle ranches, most likely for manufacturing manuscripts. According to an inventory made due to its temporary closure in 1218, Kirkjubæjarklaustur already owned all or part of nine farms by then, in addition to receiving rents from another nine farms owned by others (DI I 1857–1876, p. 394). Farms owned by Kirkjubæjarklaustur were inventoried two more times, and both inventories show considerable growth. In 1343, the nunnery owned nineteen farms, and by 1397, it owned twenty-three (DI II 1893, p. 781; DI IV 1897, pp. 238–40).

The excavation in Skriðuklaustur, which began in 2002, continued until 2012. During this ten-year period of research, the monastic ruins, including the adjacent cemetery, were excavated in their entirety. The monastic complex and the adjoining church, both partially two-storied, occupied an area of just over 1500 square metres. Thirteen rooms were detected, used for both ecclesiastical and secular work (Kristjánsdóttir 2012, pp. 59–64). A total of 298 graves were discovered in the monastic cemetery, some inside the church and in the rooms in close proximity to it. All of the burials provided, through their presence, important information about the residents of the monastery. The bones of foetuses, neonates, young children, adolescents, and adults (both men and women) were discovered in the graves, and more than half of the skeletons showed identifiable signs of various chronic diseases, illnesses, or traumas. Besides this, both the artefacts and non-native medicinal plants found on the site reveal that Skriðuklaustur had served as a hospital during its operation, as many other monasteries on the mainland did. It is worth noting here that Skriðuklaustur never served as a parish church because the church serving the people living in the valley was situated only two kilometres away (Kristjánsdóttir 2012, p. 277–83). Further examination of the human bone collection from Skriðuklaustur showed that imported mercury was also used as a treatment for healing diseases such as syphilis, and indeed, at least sixteen individuals with syphilis were buried in the monastic cemetery there (Kristjánsdóttir 2011; Kristjánsdóttir 2012, pp. 198–207; Walser et al. 2019, pp. 48–61). In addition to the mercury, imported healing plants, surgical equipment, and the bones of seabirds and sharks caught in the waters off Iceland's eastern coast were found at the site, as were fragments of pottery and an abbey token from the south of France. A likeness made in the Netherlands of St Barbara, one of the fourteen saints venerated as holy helpers, stood in the church. A horn for calling the canons to services was also imported from the Netherlands; it was found broken in the monastic ruins, as was the figurine of St Barbara. Skriðuklaustur owned forty-one farms at the time of its dissolution in 1541 (Kristjánsdóttir 2012; Kristjánsdóttir et al. 2014).

The principal aim of the ongoing research at Þingeyraklaustur is to investigate the manuscript making that took place there. The research, therefore, has roots in literary

studies and archaeological excavation (Kristjánsdóttir 2018). Þingeyraklaustur operated uninterrupted from 1133 to 1551 and thus became the most successful and longest lived of all Icelandic monastic houses. It soon gained a prestigious reputation for its manuscript and book production—a reputation that reached far beyond the country's borders (see the article by Jensson in this volume). Not only were the Benedictine monks there involved in writing religious and historical texts in Latin and Old Norse/Icelandic for Christian kings in northern Europe, but they were also responsible for writing histories for some of the leading chiefs—ecclesiastical and secular—in Iceland (see also Jensson 2017, pp. 875–49).

The surveying of all fourteen monastic sites in Iceland, performed during the period from 2013 to 2017, proved that the nine successful houses became well staffed with both religious and lay members, as the excavation of Skriðuklaustur had shown. The sources showed, moreover, that these nine monastic houses came to be wealthy landholders that owned a number of valuable farms, particularly after the *Staðamál* conflicts ended in the late thirteenth century. It is estimated that they owned approximately 10% of the 5000 farms in the country, or an average of fifty farms per monastery. In 1525, for example, Þingeyraklaustur owned 100 farms and Munkaþverárklaustur sixty-three (DI IX 1909–1913, pp. 309–16). The farms were either donated to the monastic houses for religious reasons or purchased by their chiefs, abbots, or abbesses. In addition, monasteries and nunneries alike successfully ran large cattle and sheep ranches, manufactured manuscripts and textiles of various kinds, and provided a broad range of social services to their local communities. Most of them made agreements with corrodians but also hired lay workers to carry out the work that was needed. The monastic houses even provided novitiate placements for future canons and nuns, as well as offering academic and vocational training to boys and girls, as they did widely in medieval Europe. Simultaneously, the monastic houses had a broad range of mandatory tasks to carry out in the name of charity and salvation (Kristjánsdóttir 2017; see also the article by Åsen in this volume).

4. Research on the Monastic Houses in Norse Greenland

There is no reason to doubt that two monastic houses were established in Norse Greenland, although sources about their founding and activities are very sparse. Both were situated in the Eastern Settlement, but what has made the exact locations of these two monastic sites uncertain is the inaccurate placename usage in Ívar Bárðarson's descriptions. Ívar says that the monastery is located in Ketilsfjörður and the nunnery in the next fjord, which he calls Hrafnsfjörður (Halldórsson 1978, p. 135; Guðmundsson 2005, p. 24). As we will see, the location of the ruins of the Benedictine nunnery may have been confirmed during an excavation conducted in Uunartoq fjord in 1945–1946, but the supposed ruins of the Augustinian monastery have only been surveyed, so their location is still uncertain (Roussell 1941, pp. 48–51; Lynnerup 1998, pp. 20–22, 30). Nevertheless, the estates of the monastic houses in Norse Greenland indicate their strong position in the society there. The nunnery is estimated to have owned thirty to thirty-five farms and the monastery ten to fifteen farms, based on the number of farms identified in their immediate vicinity (Vésteinsson 2010, p. 146).

During the expedition to the supposed site of the nunnery, named Narsarsuaq (labelled Ø149) in Uunartoq fjord (Hrafnsfjörður), twenty-five ruins were detected in 1945–1946. The ruin of a church and a surrounding cemetery was excavated, along with six ruins belonging to the site complex (Vebæk 1991, pp. 27–28). Skeletons of at least fifty-seven individuals were exhumed, and an unspecified number of loose bones were detected scattered around the site, in addition to one mass grave. Not all of the bones were collected, and only the upper layers of burials in the cemetery were excavated. Still, twenty of these fifty-seven were found inside the church, while the rest were found in the surrounding cemetery (Vebæk 1991, pp. 28–43, 44–46). Some of the human bones were radiocarbon dated to the period 1322–1428 (Lynnerup 1998, pp. 24, 147–48; Arneborg et al. 1999, p. 161). This dating fits well with the time of the Norse occupation in the Eastern Settlement. Vague traces of an earlier church or building were detected beneath the church ruin, indicating that

the site covered two phases of the Norse settlement: one from approximately 1000 and the second one from the time of the nunnery there (Vebæk 1991, pp. 25, 27–28; Lynnerup 1998, pp. 20–22). What surprised Vebæk, however, was that people of both sexes and all ages were exhumed from a cemetery belonging to a nunnery. Nine of those buried there were children up to age 12/14, two were subadults aged 12/14 to 18/21, thirty were adults up to age 35, eight were of mature age, and another eight were of unknown age at death. There were twelve females and five males, but in forty instances the person's sex could not be identified, indicating that the site may have been occupied mainly by females (Vebæk 1991, pp. 31, 46; Lynnerup 1998, p. 45). Vebæk (1991, p. 31), therefore, suggested that the nunnery's church may have been a parish church, in addition to serving the nuns. This could certainly have been the case, but the fact is that nunneries were dependent on stewards and priests for both household labour and religious services, an arrangement that often led to the combination of nunneries with parish churches in one or another way (Gilchrist 1994, p. 90). The recent investigations on the Benedictine nunneries run in Iceland, at Kirkjubæjarklaustur and Reynistaðarklaustur, show that they were inhabited mainly by females, although there were also other residents of both sexes and all ages. Among these were male stewards, the nunnery's priest, and male and female lay workers who cared for the nuns' livestock. The stewards and lay workers even had their families residing with them in the nunneries. Other residents included novices and students of both sexes, as well as corrodians who brought their families and servants with them to their corrody (Kristjánsdóttir 2017). The cemetery in Narsarsuaq may, therefore, represent a community similar to those found in the Icelandic nunneries.

Vebæk was also concerned about the lack of findings proving that the ruins of the settlement complex in Narsarsuaq were actually of the nunnery, as fragments of a church bell were the only ecclesiastical item found (Vebæk 1991, pp. 74, 75). However, browsing through the list of findings from the excavation there strongly suggests activities like those expected in a nunnery: the miscellaneous utensils for a common but large household, besides the various tools and equipment needed for textile work (see Vebæk 1991, pp. 75–80). The large number of artifacts connected to the household, such as barrels, vessels, plates, spoons, and ladles, imply abundant food supplies for the houses in Narsarsuaq, as can in fact be observed from inventories of the Icelandic nunneries. Moreover, research on nunneries in England shows that the nunneries there normally produced surplus foodstuffs, which enabled them to feed their own residents, provide food charity to the wider community, and even sell it for profit, as they did with their textile production (Gilchrist 1994, pp. 85–88). The remains of the household and the site complex—counting twenty-five ruins—certainly show that this was a residence housing many people, but spindle whorls, weight looms, and needles found during the excavation are evidence of work similar to that performed in Kirkjubæjarklaustur in Iceland. It is nevertheless worth noting that spindle whorls are among the most frequently found tool in excavations of living quarters in both Iceland and Norse Greenland, as they were necessary for making clothing of any kind.

The supposed site of the Augustinian monastery at Taserminutsiaq (labelled Ø105) in Tasermiut fjord (Ketilsfjörður) was located in 1932 (Vebæk 1991, pp. 5–6). No excavations have taken place on the settlement and only eight ruins have been detected on the surface ground there. Among them is a ruin of a church and cemetery (Roussell 1941, pp. 48–51; Vebæk 1953, pp. 195–196; Krogh 1982b, p. 286). The Augustinian monastery Skriðuklaustur, which is the only monastic house that has been excavated in its entirety in Iceland—and in fact the northernmost one to have been excavated in Europe—in fact differs vastly in size and organisation from the site in Taserminutsiaq. Ívar Bárðarson had claimed that the monastery there was 'large', but the ruins in Taserminutsiaq do not indicate a large-sized house complex. Only an excavation could verify this.

5. Conclusions

Research undertaken on the activities of the monastic houses in Iceland and the Benedictine nunnery in Norse Greenland indicate that their operation was in line with practices in other monastic houses of the Benedictine and Augustinian Orders in Europe. By and large, they served not only the Church itself but also the needs of the surrounding society. In addition to fulfilling their mandate of providing charity and salvation, the monastic houses produced their own agricultural products, textiles, and books, and they even offered academic education and vocational training based on the fields in which they specialised. Some monastic houses even offered hospital services, as can be seen in the case of Skriðuklaustur.

Generally, the business of the monastic houses was based on donations or alms, in addition to rental income and revenues from their own manufacturing. In this way, the monastic estates were extremely important for the agricultural revenue that they generated, and coastal farms provided the monastic houses fishing rights and access to stranded valuables on their beaches. Moreover, the multiplex production of the monastic houses required a range of raw materials, either imported or locally provided through the herding of domestic animals on their farms. At the same time, a large lay workforce was needed to collect and utilise the diverse valuables, and religious personnel with appropriate academic capacity were necessary to carry out the ecclesiastical work. Similarly, running the monastic household demanded considerable labour, with the household work and herding usually carried out by the laity and the mandatory work of charity and salvation in the hands of the religious personnel. This may at least be observed from the various sources on the monastic houses in Iceland and even from the supposed ruins of the Benedictine nunnery in Norse Greenland. Written and archaeological sources prove that this pattern characterised life in the monastic houses in Iceland, and there is no reason to believe that those located in Norse Greenland were run differently. Moreover, the nunnery in Kirkjubæjarklaustur appears to have had the task of supplying Skálholt cathedral with valuable textiles and offering educational training in that field. The excavation on the supposed site of the nunnery in Unartoq fjord likewise indicates an emphasis on textile making, perhaps to provide the cathedral in Garðar with churchly garments and textiles, in addition to food products acquired from the nunnery's properties. Similar sources for Reynistaðarklaustur are lacking, but it may be speculated that the nunnery there provided Hólar cathedral with supplies comparable to those provided by the two other nunneries mentioned here. However, there are some indications suggesting that the nuns in Reynistaðarklaustur also contributed to the ongoing production of books (Óskarsdóttir 2000). On the other hand, the monasteries appear generally to have focused on educating future priests and producing books, both liturgical and non-liturgical (Kristjánsdóttir 2017).

As may be expected, both written and archaeological sources show that the monasteries and nunneries in Iceland were staffed by people who dealt with the many and varied tasks of the monastic communities living there. Likewise, the excavation on the supposed site of the Benedictine nunnery in Uunartoq fjord in Norse Greenland points towards a large household, but further research on the Augustinian house operating in the country is lacking. Still, in both countries, Iceland and Norse Greenland, the monastic houses appear not to have competed with one other but rather to have shared the tasks of meeting the needs of the community, based on the skills and resources each possessed. Regardless, in light of the overall organisation of the Church in Iceland and Norse Greenland, the Benedictine nunneries and Augustinian monasteries seem to have been well suited to both societies, despite being located in the northernmost periphery of the Roman Catholic world.

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Notes

1 The so-called *Eigenkirckenwesen* in German and *privatkyrkosystem* in Swedish.
2 In Icelandic: *bænhús*.
3 A contemporary source, Flateyjarbók (1945, p. 241), also lists the churches in Norse Greenland, including the cathedral in Garðar, but the monastic houses are not mentioned explicitly there.
4 The original is published in *Diplomatarium Norwegium*, vol. 10, p. 15.

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A Brief History of Medieval Monasticism in Denmark (with Schleswig, Rügen and Estonia)

Johnny Grandjean Gøgsig Jakobsen

Department of Nordic Studies and Linguistics, University of Copenhagen, 2300 Copenhagen, Denmark; jggj@hum.ku.dk

Abstract: Monasticism was introduced to Denmark in the 11th century. Throughout the following five centuries, around 140 monastic houses (depending on how to count them) were established within the Kingdom of Denmark, the Duchy of Schleswig, the Principality of Rügen and the Duchy of Estonia. These houses represented twelve different monastic orders. While some houses were only short lived and others abandoned more or less voluntarily after some generations, the bulk of monastic institutions within Denmark and its related provinces was dissolved as part of the Lutheran Reformation from 1525 to 1537. This chapter provides an introduction to medieval monasticism in Denmark, Schleswig, Rügen and Estonia through presentations of each of the involved orders and their history within the Danish realm. In addition, two subchapters focus on the early introduction of monasticism to the region as well as on the dissolution at the time of the Reformation. Along with the historical presentations themselves, the main and most recent scholarly works on the individual orders and matters are listed.

Keywords: monasticism; middle ages; Denmark

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For half a millennium, monasticism was a very important feature in Denmark. From around the middle of the 11th century, when the first monastic-like institutions were introduced, to the middle of the 16th century, when the last monasteries were dissolved as a consequence of the Protestant Reformation, religious communities of monks, nuns, friars and sisters played a central and many-sided role in Danish society. Twelve monastic orders were eventually represented in Denmark, some even with differing congregations, and besides offering a variety of kinds of religious lives for their affiliated members, the altogether 140 monastic houses that at one point existed in the medieval Danish church province also held a significant impact on the rest of society.[1] The 'regular clergy', so termed because they followed monastic rules, constituted an important additional axis within the medieval Church to the 'secular clergy' of bishops, canons secular, parish priests and vicars, often supplementing and assisting the latter group in numerous ways. Several monasteries were intellectual centres at the same level as the secular cathedral chapters, or even above, and numerous secular clergy began their ecclesiastical training in a local monastery. Occasionally, some monasteries functioned as rivals to the secular church, for instance by contesting the theological and pastoral authority of bishops and parish priests or by competing for donations and devotional attention from lay society, but on a whole, the two groups saw each other as parallel columns collectively carrying the roof of the Church. Indeed for religious women of the Middle Ages, the monasteries offered the main genuine possibility for a fully approved life in religious devotion, whereas the alternative of semi-regulated female beguinages were often looked upon with deep concern and mistrust by the Church.

For medieval lay society, the monasteries offered an additional place to hear sermons, to attend Divine Office, to found perpetual masses, altars and chapels and to choose burial places. Numerous medieval Danes engaged in special contacts with one or more monastic institutions, either as individuals, family members or confraternity members. Monasteries were situated all around society, in the big cities, in the smaller towns and in

the countryside, which meant that virtually all Danish men, women and children would, no matter where they lived, see the monasteries and their inhabitants on a regular basis. Especially for the nobility and the bourgeoisie, most would even have family members living in the monasteries. For medieval people, religious devotion also had a physical and spatial side to it, and the monasteries were considered more sacred than any other place most people were likely to ever meet—the closest thing to Heaven you could hope to see in this life. In addition, an amicable relation to the people of the monasteries constituted the best chance for your soul to get through purgatory as quickly as possible. Furthermore, since a significant proportion of the arable land in medieval Denmark was owned by the monasteries, these institutions also played an important economic and juridical role in the lives of the numerous families working as tenants and labourers at the monastic estates.

This article provides a brief history of monasticism in medieval Denmark by presenting the number of houses and main characteristics of each monastic order in a chapter of its own one by one (for a map of all the monasteries, see Figure 1).[2] As a consequence of the high number of houses and orders, the focus here has to remain on an overview basis, while deeper insight to specific houses, orders and thematic issues would have to be met elsewhere; references to such literature, especially the more recent ones, are provided.[3] This brief and collective presentation does, however, hopefully give the reader a comprehensive understanding of both the scale and the pluralistic form and impact that monasticism had in medieval Denmark.

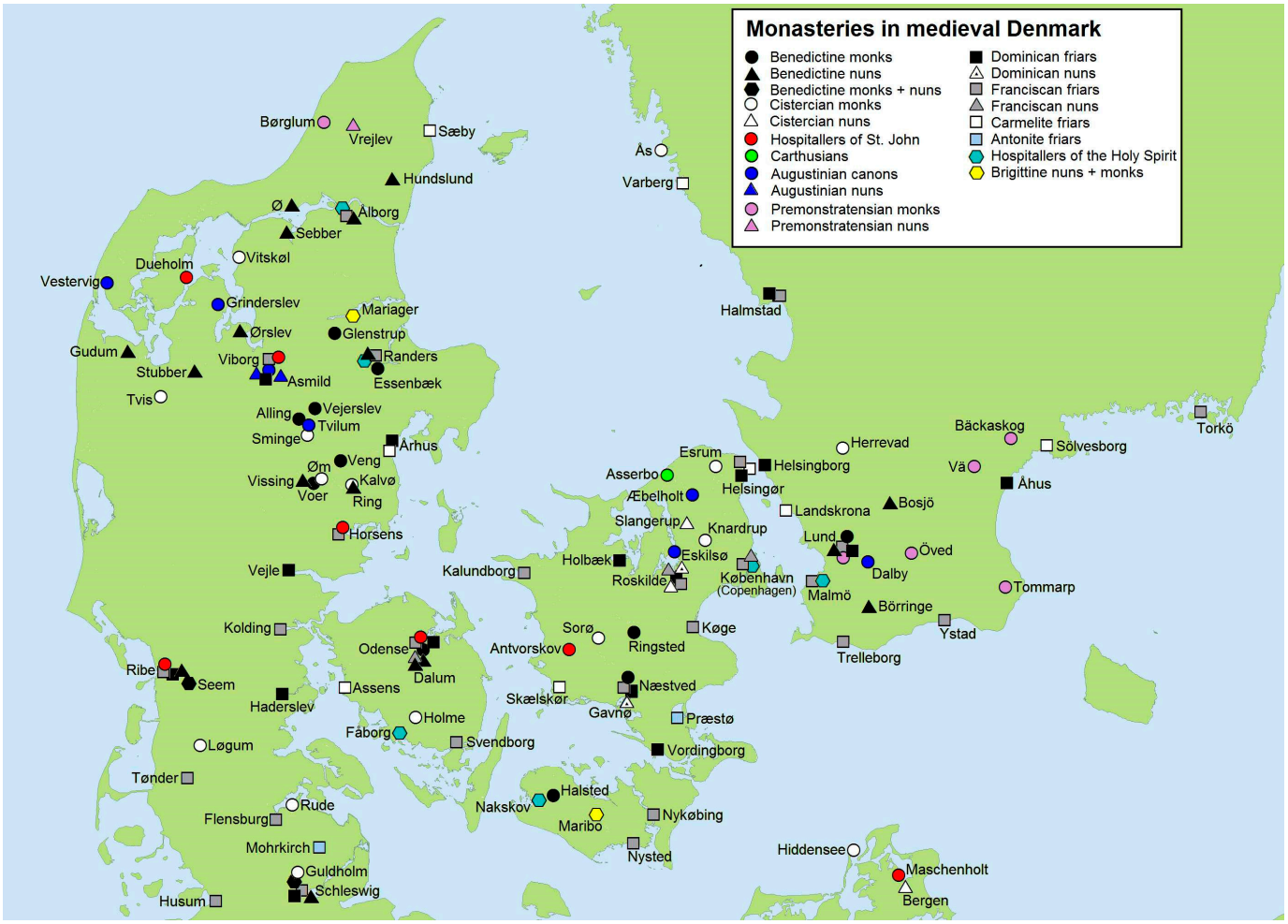

Figure 1. Location of monasteries in the Danish church province in the Middle Ages (the diocese of Tallinn, Estonia, not included). Map by author.

1. The Early Introduction of Monasticism in Denmark (before 1100)

It is unclear when Christianity first reached Denmark, but several of the initial missionary attempts were carried out by monks following the Rule of St Benedict. These include the Frisian apostle Willibrord, who may have Christianised the first Danes in Ribe in the early 8th century, while the missionary campaigns of Ansgar in the 820–850s had more lasting effect, leading to the constructions of the first Danish churches in Schleswig/Haithabu and Ribe. Since the late 10th century, Danish kings brought home with them priests and monks from their military campaigns in England. Although several of these first missionaries and royal chaplains may have been accompanied by fellow monks to Denmark, no actual monastic foundations appear to have existed here until the mid-11th century.

Several monastic houses have been suggested to take the prize as the first Danish monastery, but the true chronology for this earliest phase is not really possible to establish. The first written references to monasteries in Denmark are made by Adam of Bremen around 1075, and it would seem that a reorganisation of the Danish diocese structure around 1060 were accompanied by the establishing of a number of clerical communities to assist the bishops at the cathedrals and to help root Christianity around the dioceses. Some of these communities appear to have followed various sets of regulated life, which for some was short lived and for others developed into actual monasteries.

St Michael's Abbey in Schleswig, Seem Abbey just outside Ribe, St Cnut's Abbey in Odense and All Saints' Abbey in Lund belong to this possible group of early Danish monasteries, most likely established by the local bishops in the 1070–1090s.[4] All of them followed the Rule of St Benedict, the one in Ribe and perhaps also the one in Schleswig at first as 'double monasteries' with sections for both monks and nuns. Best information about these foundations is provided for Odense, where monks from Evesham, England, in 1095–1096 were called in to administer the saintly cult of King Cnut the Holy (+1086) and to form an actual cathedral chapter, the only (lasting) Benedictine example of its kind in medieval Denmark.

In addition, the cathedral chapters in Lund and Roskilde, both founded in the 1080s, at first appear to have been regulated, probably following variants of the 'Aachen statutes', and even if regular life was soon abandoned in both places, the cathedral monastery remained in Roskilde until the 13th century, from which the archaeological finds constitute the oldest physical remnants of monasticism in Denmark.[5] When the initial dioceses of Lund and Dalby were merged in the late 1060s, the bishop—now seated in Lund—decided that the canons left behind in Dalby were to be reformed and regulated, but this does not seem to have been fully implemented until the early 12th century, when the canons submitted to the Rule of St Augustine.[6]

2. The Benedictines

From the abovementioned five Benedictine houses in Denmark (at least possibly) founded before 1100 already, the Benedictine Order enjoyed an extensive Danish expansion throughout the 12th century.[7] Most knowledge about the foundations is preserved for the four male abbeys on the island of Sjælland (Zealand), which all took place in the 1130–1140s: Ringsted (1135),[8] Næstved (=Skovkloster, 1135),[9] Sorø (1142)[10] and Esrum (1143–48).[11] While the abbey in Ringsted was a royal project, aimed to administer a memoria cult for the ruling branch of the royal Danish dynasty, the ones in Sorø and Næstved were founded by rivalling magnate families, and the one in Esrum by the Archbishop of Lund. Less information is extant about another five Benedictine abbey foundations in Jylland (Jutland), probably contemporary to those on Sjælland: Veng, Glenstrup, Randers (moved to Essenbæk in 1179), Voer, and Vejerslev (moved to Alling around 1250).[12] In addition, here was the possibly oldest of them in Veng founded on royal initiative, while the rest are most likely to have had local magnate founders. A final Danish priory of Benedictine monks was established in Halsted on Lolland. Since it is not explicitly evidenced in the written sources before 1305, it has traditionally been seen as an unusually late Benedictine

foundation from the 1290s, but recent studies suggest that it was founded in 1150–1175 already.[13]

In addition to the fourteen male Benedictine houses founded in medieval Denmark, about a similar number of female Benedictine houses were established in the kingdom.[14] In most cases, the exact year of foundation is unknown, but the oldest series appears to origin from around the mid-12th century, where Benedictine nunneries were established in major cities on the initiative of local bishops and cathedral canons: Ålborg, Odense (moved to Dalum c. 1200), Lund, and possibly Roskilde and the smaller town of Slangerup.[15] In the second half of the century, the trend was followed in Ribe (1171) and Schleswig (c. 1192) in connection to a dissolution of the existing double monasteries.[16] Outside the cities, a further ten Benedictine nunneries were established at unknown years in the period 1150–1250, two of them in Skåne (Scania): Bosjö and Börringe; and no less than eight in the northern and central parts of Jylland: Stubber, Gudum, Ring, Vissing, Sebber, Ørslev, Hundslund and Ø.[17] Hardly anything is known about the founding phase of these rural, female Benedictine houses, but they were most likely initiated by local bishops, canons and magnates.

Along with the continued series of new Benedictine foundations in Denmark into at least the early 13th century, the order experienced an increasing Cistercian competition from the mid-12th century. Not only did still more new foundations go to the Cistercian Order rather than to the Benedictines, but several existing Benedictine houses in Denmark were converted to the Cistercian constitutions, each time, it seems, on episcopal orders and initiative. This happened to the abbeys in Esrum (1151–52), Sorø (1161) and Veng (1165–66), where 'the black monks' on each occasion were claimed to have practised a scandalous life and, thus, were in need of a disciplined reform. This allegedly also applied to the Benedictine double monasteries in Seem and Schleswig, which were dissolved in 1166–1170 and 1190–1191, respectively. While the nuns in each place continued as Benedictines in new nearby premises, the male convents were converted to Cistercian regulations and transferred over some distance to Løgum and Guldholm, respectively. In addition, the Cistercian nunneries in Roskilde and Slangerup may have started out as Benedictine houses, which, if so, ended in the 1170–1180s.[18]

Even if new and influential monastic orders kept coming to Denmark throughout the Middle Ages, it is worth stressing that the bulk of Benedictine monasteries remained alive and very well indeed, right until the time of the Reformation. Most of them possessed substantial landed estates, and several held high political influence in the diocese or even nationally; usually, at least one of the abbots from Ringsted, Næstved and Lund held a seat in the council of the realm. The abbeys in Odense and Næstved were especially known for a literary production, just as the cathedral monks in Odense exercised a huge influence on the liturgy of the diocese. Finally, the Benedictine Order should be acknowledged for having played an important role in the introduction of Romanesque architecture in Denmark.

In the beginning of the 13th century, the Archbishop of Lund tried to promote the formation of a Benedictine province for all the order's houses in Denmark, with annual chapter meetings under supremacy of the abbot in Lund as 'provincial father abbot'. It is unclear whether this organisational idea was ever truly implemented, but at least, the abbot in Lund still claimed his superior rank in 1497.[19]

Several Danish Benedictine abbeys—especially those in Lund, Schleswig, Voer and Odense—have been identified by later scholarship as Cluniac, based on various indications and references in the medieval sources. The truth is, however, that not one single Benedictine house in all of Scandinavia can be shown to have belonged to the Cluny Congregation in its full sense. This is not to say that there were no Benedictine attempts to reform houses in Denmark, as, for instance, a transcript of Pope Gregory IX's reform statutes for the Benedictine Order of 1237 is preserved in a Danish manuscript from around 1300. In addition, the order's late medieval reform movement of the Bursfelder Congregation reached Denmark, where a reformed monk from Cismar Abbey in Holstein visited several Danish abbeys around 1460, and even if none of them at first joined the congregation,

the reform-minded ideas still flourished in houses such as Odense, Næstved, Gudum and Sebber in the 1480s—and Voer Abbey fully joined the Bursfelder Congregation in 1486–1488, as its sole Scandinavian member.[20]

3. The Cistercians

The introduction of the Cistercian Order in Denmark was not least promoted by Archbishop Eskil of Lund, who was a close friend of the order and of Bernard of Clairvaux personally.[21] On Eskil's initiative, the first Cistercian abbey in Denmark was founded within his archdiocese in Herrevad in 1144,[22] and the Benedictine abbey that Eskil had founded around the same time in Esrum on Sjælland was soon after converted into a Cistercian house in 1151–1153, also at the archbishop's will.[23] Within the organisation of the Cistercian Order, these two initial Danish abbeys where direct 'daughter houses' of Cîteaux and Clairvaux, respectively, and they became 'mother houses' themselves for all subsequent foundations of the order in Denmark. When King Valdemar I came out victorious in a fight for the throne with two of his cousins in 1158, an exiled group of Cistercian monks from Sweden happened to be in Denmark, whom the king invited to instead establish an abbey in Vitskøl out of gratitude for his fortune.[24] Another royal relative, Earl Buris, decided to found a Cistercian abbey in nearby Tvis in 1163.[25] King Valdemar made a second Cistercian foundation in Holme on Fyn in 1172, this time along with the local bishop.[26] In 1194 an abbey was founded in the northernmost part of Halland in Ås on the initiative of the Archbishop of Lund.[27] Along this line of new monastic foundations, Cistercian history in Denmark is characterised by a parallel series of conversions of hitherto Benedictine houses: besides Esrum, this include Sorø (1161),[28] Øm (based on Veng 1172),[29] Løgum (based on Seem 1173)[30] and Guldholm (based on Schleswig, 1191–1194, moved on to Rude in 1210),[31] as well as the two only female Cistercian abbeys in Denmark: Roskilde Our Lady and Slangerup (1160–70s).[32] All the Cistercian takeovers happened on local episcopal initiative.

Within a 50 year period, the Cistercian Order had acquired twelve abbeys in medieval Denmark. However, an additional number of Cistercian abbeys were established on (partly) Danish initiative outside the kingdom itself. When the Wendic island of Rügen had been subdued by Danish forces in 1168 and integrated into the diocese of Roskilde, the local Prince Jaromar I in 1193 decided to found a Cistercian nunnery on the island in the town of Bergen, with nuns from the abbey in Roskilde.[33] Likewise, the Danish conquest of Tallinn in Estonia in 1219 was followed up by yet another foundation of a Cistercian nunnery in this city around 1249.[34] Apparently, the foundation of Cistercian houses was, at least for a while, considered an integrated element of Danish crusade and missionary activity in the Baltic Region, as daughter houses of Esrum Abbey were established in Dargun (1172) and Colbaz (1174) in the newly conquered regions of Mecklenburg and Prussia, respectively.[35] In 1296, Prince Wizlaw II of Rügen founded a second Cistercian abbey within his principality, this time for monks on the island of Hiddensee, which, unlike any of the Danish houses, belonged to the Morimond branch of the order.[36] In 1305–1310, King Erik VI of Denmark allowed Cistercian monks from Daugavgrīva (Dünamunde) in Latvia to relocate in Padise in northwestern Estonia, since the Teutonic Order had taken over their former abbey.[37] The final Cistercian house within the Danish realm was founded in Knardrup by King Christoffer II in 1326.[38]

The Cistercians in western Denmark made a habit out of creating poetic Latin names for their houses based on the original Danish place names. Vitskøl became Vitae schola ('school of life'), Tvis Tuta vallis ('safe valley'), Løgum Locus Dei ('God's place'), Holme Insula Dei ('God's island') and Øm Cara insula ('beloved island'); only in the two latter cases did the Latin names refer to the actual etymology of the Danish names, as both holm and ø do indeed mean 'island'.[39]

While virtually all the Cistercian abbeys soon acquired significant landed estates based on donations from royalty, bishops and magnates, Sorø Abbey reached a level of extraordinary wealth, as it became 'house monastery' for the Hvide family, the most

powerful magnate family in 12th and 13th century Denmark.[40] Some sort of rivalry can be noted between Sorø and her 'mother abbey' in Esrum, who long held rank as the intellectual centre of the order in Denmark.

Unlike their Benedictine predecessors, the Cistercian monks in Denmark avoided urban locations, as all their male houses were situated in the rural landscape; all their female houses, however, were urban. An important part of Cistercian self-image and -presentation was that the monks not only saved souls but also indefatigably transformed the infertile desert into arable land. In 12th century Denmark, 'infertile desert' was still available in the shape of forested areas in hilly terrain, but the Danish Cistercians preferred to leave these lands for others to clear, as most of their received estates were already settled and had been cultivated for generations.[41] Numerous peasant villages were dissolved by the abbeys and replaced by granges, from where the lands were cultivated by laybrothers. As laybrothers became increasingly difficult to recruit from the mid-13th century onwards, Cistercian estates gradually became more dependent on traditional peasant tenancy and even began to establish new villages.[42]

It has been suggested that the Cistercians introduced new agricultural technology and knowledge to Denmark, but apart from the organisational feature of the granges, actual evidence of this is scarce. It is evident, though, that the Cistercians brought in a hydrological knowhow that was unique for their time. While Cistercian abbeys throughout Europe are known for their ability to include running water in the monastic architecture, the monks were met by an extra challenge in the relatively flat, insular landscapes of Denmark, without any mountain streams or large inland waters. The Danish Cistercian abbeys, however, learned how to exploit the limited given possibilities by impressive systems of canals and accurately calculated differences in water levels of nearby lakes.[43]

An additional expertise beyond the norm can be ascribed to the monks of Øm Abbey, who by the end of the Middle Ages appear to have managed an extensive hospital at their abbey, where laypeople have received nursery treatment of long duration and rather complicated surgery.[44]

4. The Augustinians

The introduction in Denmark of monastic life according to the *Rule of St Augustine* appears to have happened as a gradual transition in the early 12th century, when several chapters of canons replaced existing regulations with those accredited to the ancient Bishop of Hippo.[45] In none of the Danish cases is the exact year of transition recorded, but an initial series of 'foundations' of Augustinian convents of canons regular seems to have taken place around the same time in Dalby, Vestervig and Viborg, all with a possible beginning in the 1110–1120s or the early 1130s at the latest.[46] Shortly after, probably in the mid-1130s, a fourth Augustinian priory was established on the small island of Eskilsø in the fiord outside Roskilde. On each occasion, initiative for introducing regulated canon life most likely came from the local bishops. It is interesting to note that apart from the case of Viborg, it was not the actual cathedral chapters, which were reformed, but nearby collegiate chapters of canons. The Bishops of Viborg must have had a special liking to Augustinians, because not only were they capable of introducing the regulated monastic life of St Augustine at their cathedral chapter, but an additional collegiate chapter of Augustinian canons was here too established within their diocese in Grinderslev in the 1170s.[47] Furthermore, two Augustinian nunneries were founded by the bishops within and just outside Viborg (the latter in Asmild) around 1150 and 1170.[48] Around 1175, it was decided to move the Augustinian priory on Eskilsø to one of its estates on 'mainland' Sjælland, Æbelholt, as it had proven logistically difficult to maintain modern monastic life on such a small and partly isolated island.[49] As elsewhere in Europe, Augustinian monastic foundations in Denmark were predominantly a phenomenon of the 12th century, but a final latecomer was established in the late 1240s in Tvilum, also this time on episcopal initiative—although not from the local bishop.[50] Bishop Gunner of Ribe had in vain tried to reform his own

cathedral chapter of canons to the *Rule of St Augustine*, and after having resigned office, he decided to donate his paternal estate within the diocese of Århus for an Augustinian priory there.

The priory in Vestervig may partly have been formed to administer the cult of a local saint, Theodgar, whose remains were translated to the church in 1117.[51] In 1188–1189, the Danish Augustinians obtained a local saint of their own, the Blessed Kjeld, who had been provost at the cathedral chapter in Viborg in the 1140s.[52] In 1224, the former Abbot William of Æbelholt received the full papal sanctification for miracles reported to occur at his grave.[53] The French William had been called in by the Bishop of Roskilde in 1165 to reform the priory on Eskilsø after the strict discipline of the Victorine congregation. He became one of the most influential Danish clergy of his time and was given the rank of abbot, unlike what was customary among Danish Augustinians.[54]

It is unclear if another Augustinian congregation of Windesheim obtained a full Danish member in Grinderslev, but the canons here had close contacts with the congregation. This is partly seen in an extant 15th-century manuscript, in which the canons of Grinderslev had translated a number of monastic masters from Latin into Danish—among them Thomas à Kempis.[55] The Augustinian houses in Denmark constituted an organisational unity themselves, at least from the 13th to the mid-14th century, where several provincial chapters are known to have been held.

While the Augustinian canons in Vestervig, Viborg, Æbelholt and Dalby held relatively large and widespread estates of donated land, the rest of their houses only had smaller and locally based estates. In addition, the canons held the income of numerous parish churches, for which they administered the pastoral tasks. In the cases of Grinderslev and Asmild, the monastery churches also functioned as local parish churches. Æbelholt Abbey appears to have included a hospital offering medical treatment for outside visitors.

In 1440, the Augustinian cathedral chapter in Viborg was secularised. The dissolution of the male convent also meant the closing of the female monastery in Viborg, whose nuns were probably transferred to the nearby nunnery in Asmild. Likewise, the most monastically minded Viborg canons may have continued regular Augustinian life in Grinderslev or elsewhere in Denmark.

5. The Premonstratensians

The canons regular of the Premonstratensian Order, also following the *Rule of St Augustine* along with statutes set by the mother abbey in Prémontré, established five Danish convents around the mid-12th century: Lund St Saviour, Tommarp, Öved, Vä and Børglum.[56] For all of them, the exact year of foundation is unknown, but most scholars agree that the 'white canons' were introduced in all five places within the period 1140–1170. Four of the convents were situated in Skåne, showing a special preference with Archbishop Eskil of Lund.[57] The one in Børglum was also initiated by the local bishop, and here the canons were even to form the cathedral chapter.[58] For unknown reasons, the abbey in Lund was dissolved around 1200 already, and its brethren most likely transferred to Öved. Vä Abbey was destroyed by fire in 1213, after which a new monastery was built in nearby Bäckaskog to replace it.[59] A female Premonstratensian monastery was founded in the early 13th century in Vrejlev, located close to Børglum.[60] References to Premonstratensian sisters at the abbeys in Tommarp and Öved during the 13th century suggest a possible (but then short-lived) function as double monasteries(Wallin 1989, pp. 63–64), which may as well have been intended in Vrejlev, where it is possible that the canons serving at Bøg–lum cathedral resided until after 1216 (Nyberg 2000, pp. 163–64, Kristensen 2013a, p. 13).

The Premonstratensian monasteries in Denmark were generally quite rich on landed estates, especially the one in Børglum, and they were moreover incorporated with usually 5–10 parish churches and hospital chapels, for which the canons administered the pastoral tasks.

6. The Dominicans (Friars Preachers, Blackfriars)

Only six years after its formation, the Dominican Order had its first Danish convent established in Lund in 1222.[61] Within the next thirty years, Dominican convents were founded in basically every urban centre in Denmark of ecclesiastical importance: Ribe (1228), Roskilde (1231–34), Schleswig (1239), Viborg and Århus (both before 1246), Haderslev (1251), Odense (before 1252) and Åhus (before 1254);[62] the only missing church centres were Børglum (which had no town) and Copenhagen. The main initiators behind these foundations were the bishops.[63] A short-lived convent existed 1253–1261 in Vordingborg, the centre of Danish crusades into the Baltic Sea region, which Dominican friars promoted through preaching and the collection of vows, payments and redemptions.[64] Then followed a later series of Dominican convents in market towns of regional importance—Halmstad (1250–60s), Næstved (1260s), Holbæk (1275), Helsingborg and Vejle (1325)—where the prime initiative was taken by local magnates and town councils, the latter to secure continued urban status and privileges.[65] Finally, in 1441, a Dominican convent was founded as one of three mendicant houses in a grand-scale royal project to promote Helsingør as the new urban centre of the Kalmar Union.[66] In addition to the male convents, two Dominican nunneries were founded in Roskilde (1263) and on Gavnø (1403).[67] Within the Danish-governed provinces outside Denmark, a male Dominican convent was established in Tallinn (1229/46), which was included in the order's Scandinavian province of Dacia.[68]

Especially in the 13th century, leading friars of the Dominican Order held high esteem in Denmark as experts on theology and foreign diplomacy.[69] The friary schools were to some extent open to outside students, especially parish clergy and young people aimed for an ecclesiastical career.[70] The outward pastoral orientation of the mendicant orders meant that their friary churches were located in urban centres or by city gates to become as visible and easily accessible as possible for lay visitors, who would come to the churches to hear sermons, attend masses and give confession.[71] Although based in urban locations only, the Friars Preachers—in Danish also known as *Sortebrødre* ('Blackfriars')—were also very much present in the surrounding countryside, where all rural parish churches were likely to see a Dominican 'guest preacher' twice a year. In return, the friars performing these biannual rural campaigns of *terminario* brought home alms of money, food and other material goods to the convent.[72] As mendicant friars, the Dominicans were not formally allowed to own any rent-giving property outside their own friaries, but virtually all Danish convents held some urban houses and meadows to support their livelihood.[73] The convents in Vejle and Odense were unusually rich on such outside property, the former almost owning half of the urban houses, meadows and cabbage gardens in Vejle.[74] This relaxation was encountered by an internal Observant reform within the order in the late 15th century, as part of which the convents in Schleswig, Haderslev, Ribe and Vejle, along with the Estonian convent in Tallinn, joined the reformed Dutch Congregation.

7. The Franciscans (Friars Minor, Greyfriars)

In terms of number of convents, the Franciscans became the largest monastic order in medieval Denmark, with a total of twenty-eight houses by the time of the Reformation.[75] Most of them were founded in the 13th century: Ribe (1232), Schleswig (1234), Viborg (1235), Randers (1236), Svendborg (1236), Roskilde (1237), Copenhagen (1238), Tønder (1238), Lund (1238–39), Kalundborg (c.1240), Næstved (c.1242/1270), Ålborg (c.1250), Horsens (1261), Flensburg (1263), Trelleborg (1267), Ystad (1267), Odense (1279), Nysted (1286) and Kolding (1288).[76] While four of them had bishops and canons secular as their main initiators, the bulk was founded by noble magnates; Countess Ingerd von Regenstein especially stands out with no less than five foundations! An additional series of new houses came in the 15th century: Nykøbing (1419), Malmö (1419), Helsingør (1420), Køge (1484), Torkö (c.1489) and Husum (1494);[77] all these late medieval houses were established on royal (or ducal) initiative. Moreover, three female Franciscan or 'Clarissan' convents were founded in Denmark: Roskilde (1256), Copenhagen (1497) and Odense (1522).[78]

Due to their higher number of convents, the Friars Minor or *Gråbrødre* ('Greyfriars'), as they were also known in Danish, were more commonly based in the smaller towns than were the Dominicans, but it is otherwise quite difficult to identify any systematic differences in their activities in Denmark. The convents of both orders were highly focused on the rural *terminario* campaigns with a combination of preaching and collection of alms,[79] and in spite of scholarly attempts to claim particular connections to certain groups in society (including a claim for a female preference for the Franciscans), actual analyses of recorded donations show almost identical patterns between them. In both cases, the main donors were found among the higher clergy and the nobility, whereas the often-claimed dependence on urban bourgeoisie is hard to see for any of them.[80]

Just like the Dominicans, the Franciscan convents in Scandinavia were organised in a semi-autonomous province by the name of Dacia. After the de facto formation of the Kalmar Union in 1389, national tensions began to emerge between the Danish convents and the Swedish–Norwegian convents, as the latter—probably rightfully—complained that the Danes controlled the province unfairly.[81] When the Franciscan Observance began to spread in the second half of the 15th century, almost all the Danish convents were eventually reformed, while the others in Dacia remained conventual—and thereby freed themselves somewhat for the Danish influence.[82] Four of the Franciscan convents in Denmark were even established as Observant houses: the two male ones in Køge and Husum and the two female ones in Copenhagen and Odense. Unlike the conventual Clares in Roskilde, who owned extensive estates all around Sjælland, the Poor Clares in Copenhagen and Odense were not allowed this type of income, and the two Observant nunneries soon experienced grave financial difficulties—especially as the Reformation began to kick in.[83]

8. The Carmelites (Whitefriars)

As the third and final mendicant order represented in medieval Scandinavia, the 'Whitefriars' of the Carmelite Order were introduced to Denmark in the early 15th century.[84] This seems to have happened on the initiative of King Erik VII 'the Pomeranian' (r.1396–1439), who chose some rather remote coastal locations for the first Carmelite convents, where he had plans for future urban sea ports: Landskrona (1410), Skælskør (1418–23) and Helsingør (1430).[85] Especially for the latter, the urban project did in fact develop into an actual city, as the only Scandinavian city with all three mendicant orders represented. Eventually, more Carmelite convent foundations followed in Sæby (1469), Varberg (c.1470), Århus (c.1480), Sölvesborg (c.1485) and Assens (c.1500).[86] All eight Carmelite convents in Denmark were male, and they all had churches dedicated to the patron saint of the order: the Holy Virgin Mary. In 1462, it was decided to segregate the then four Scandinavian convents—three Danish and one Swedish—into a province of their own called Dacia. Even though the convent in Landskrona formally maintained a superior rank due to its seniority, the convent in Helsingør appears to have been the actual power centre of the province. Unlike the two major mendicant orders, the Carmelites in Denmark do not appear to have been involved with rural *terminario*; several of the friaries administered hospitals for people outside the order; and Carmelite theologians played a significant role at the University of Copenhagen founded in 1479.

9. The Hospitallers of St John

The Hospitallers of St John is the only military order of the Middle Ages present in Scandinavia.[87] Although devoted to the crusade to the Holy Land and the care for pilgrims going there, King Valdemar I and Archbishop Eskil of Lund invited the order to settle in Denmark in the 1160s, possibly as support for the increasing Danish crusade efforts in the Baltic Sea region. Some Knights Hospitaller may in fact have taken part in the Danish conquest of Rügen in 1168, and it is noteworthy that the Danish flag, which according to legend dropped from the sky during a battle in Estonia in 1219, is identical to the war banner of the Hospitallers. Apart from that, only the clerical and caritative branches of the order are known to be present at the monasteries in Denmark. The Danish mother

abbey of the Hospitallers was founded in Antvorskov in the mid-1160s, to be followed by monasteries in Viborg (1280s), Odense (1280–1311), Dueholm (c. 1370), Horsens (1360–1390) and Ribe (15th century).[88] In most cases, it is difficult to find even approximate years for the time of these foundations, partly due to lack of sources and partly because several houses started out as commanderies before gradually increasing to the full rank of priory or abbey. Such a commandery under Antvorskov was established in Maschenholt on the island of Rügen in the early 15th century, which became a priory of its own in 1435.[89] Another commandery was established from Antvorskov in Nyborg in 1441, where the monks resided in a fine stone-built house, had their own cemetery and administered landed estates of their own—but never gained full rank as priory.

All the order's monasteries and churches in Denmark were dedicated to St John the Baptist. In later Danish literature, the members of the order are termed *johanniter*, but in contemporary sources, they were called *korsbrødre* ('Brethren of the Cross'). The overall purpose of the Hospitallers of St John in Denmark was to collect money for the military campaigns of order, which each year was sent to the headquarters. The income was mainly generated from huge estates around Denmark donated by the nobility, either as support for the crusade or in return for perpetual masses and burial places. Furthermore, many Danish nobles—male and female—chose to live at the monasteries, either as nominal 'monks' and 'sisters' or as paying guests. In addition, the monasteries administered various types of hospitals. Based on this, especially Antvorskov Abbey became extremely wealthy, the second-largest monastic landowner in medieval Denmark, and its abbots held seat in the national council with rank just below the Bishop of Roskilde. The main tasks of the Hospitaller monks were to preach in favour of the crusade, pray for the souls of the patrons and benefactors, perform pastoral services in the monastery church and in parish churches administered by the monastery and act as confessional fathers for the lay residents.

10. The Hospitallers of St Anthony

The Hospitallers of St Anthony or 'Antonines' were established in Denmark in 1391, when the order's monastery in Tempzin, Mecklenburg, bought a demesne Mohrkirch in the duchy of Schleswig and turned it into a daughter house. From Mohrkirch, a second Danish monastery was made in Præstø in 1470.[90] While the latter was founded by King Christian I, the former was initiated by the order itself. The Hospitallers of St Anthony was a caritative order devoted to the treatment and care of people suffering from various diseases, but there is no evidence that any of the two Danish houses ever engaged with such caritative work. The Antonines also offered lay people a popular confraternity with their order, which may have been seen as a 'spiritual insurance' against all such diseases, including plague, and in return, the monks received donations of money and land. The main income in Denmark did, however, come from their immense *terminario* activity, i.e., preaching and questing in the countryside, which fully equalled that of the Dominicans and Franciscans. Monks from Mohrkirch at first toured the entire Danish kingdom, and the monastery in Præstø was primarily made to help cover the regions of Sjælland and Skåne. A special Antonine feature was their pigs, which wore bells and enjoyed special privileges in terms of roaming and feeding in the local community, before they were brought home and slaughtered by the monks.

11. The Hospitallers of the Holy Ghost

Hospitals of the Holy Ghost (Da. *helligåndshuse*) were a common feature in numerous Danish towns since the mid-13th century, established by magistrates or pious burghers to take care of poor, old and sick people.[91] In the period 1451–1485, six of these urban hospitals were admitted into the monastic order of Hospitallers of the Holy Ghost, not least on the initiative of King Christian I (r. 1448–1481): Ålborg (1451), Copenhagen (1469), Nakskov (1470), Fåborg (1478), Malmö (1474–80) and Randers (1485).[92] By converting the hitherto secular hospitals into monasteries, the authorities partly addressed a growing concern about the spiritual health of the poor, but it also attracted a new line of income,

as the monastic hospitals in addition to the caritative personnel (male and female) also included priests, who offered perpetual masses and letters of indulgence in return for donations. The order was also qualified to receive foundlings, an increasing problem in especially Copenhagen. Just like the mendicant orders and the Antonines, the Hospitallers of the Holy Ghost were allowed to send out 'questors' to collect alms, but unlike the former, this was not accompanied by preaching. The monastery in Ålborg was furthermore incorporated with a couple of parish churches in Vendsyssel, for which the monks received the tithe, but they allegedly neglected to provide the churches with priests, which led the parishioners to call in Dominican and Franciscan preachers instead.

12. The Bridgettines

The Bridgettine Order is the only monastic order to originate from medieval Scandinavia.[93] Around 1400, Queen Margrethe I of Denmark–Norway–Sweden grew extremely fond of the new order, as she and her successors decided to promote its founder St Bridget as patroness saint for the Kalmar Union. From the mother abbey in Vadstena, Sweden, monks were sent to Denmark in 1416 to found a monastery on the island of Lolland, which was given the name Maribo ('Mary's home').[94] While Maribo Abbey initially was a royal project, it soon received plenty support from both bishops and nobles. In the 1440s, a second abbey, named Mariager ('Mary's field'), was founded in Jylland on the sole initiative of the local bishop and nobility.[95] The latter foundation was partly based on a failed Carthusian project in the area,[96] and while the existing orders at first welcomed St Bridget and her followers, their feelings soon cooled off as they began to realise that the Bridgettines had become the new monastic darlings of the elite. Not only did the Bridgettine success of re-introducing double monasteries for both men and women put an almost complete stop to new foundations of any other female monasteries, the mendicant orders especially also saw how the newcomers attracted a huge bite of all future donations, mass foundations, lay burials, rural *terminario* questing and the growing sale of indulgence; even the mendicant role as chief theologians of the Church was now challenged by the Bridgettines and their almost insatiable thirst for qualified theological literature.

Based on this favourable attention from both lay and ecclesiastical donors, the Bridgettine abbeys developed extensive estates, which easily equalled the wealthiest monasteries of the old orders. The pivotal point of Bridgettine monasticism, both in terms of income and religious life, was, however, St Bridget herself. She became the perhaps single-most popular saint in late medieval Scandinavia, and pilgrims by the thousands sought not only her grave in Vadstena but also her distributed relics in, for instance, the Danish abbeys. An important task for the Bridgettines was therefore to serve this extensive and continuous pilgrimage to their churches. A specific feature characterising several of the Bridgettine abbeys in Scandinavia, including the mother abbey in Vadstena, is that while no urban community existed at the place of the abbey beforehand, the foundations were immediately followed by royal privileges for the formation of an adjacent town, primarily aimed at facilitating visiting pilgrims with accommodation, food, clothes and other supplies, as well as treatment for diseases. Such towns also emerged in both Maribo and Mariager, and since they were fully owned by the abbeys, this generated an additional income for the order.[97]

In the former Danish-ruled province of Estonia, initiative was taken in 1407 already by local merchants to found a Bridgettine abbey just outside Tallinn. The first nuns arrived in 1412, the construction of Pirita Abbey was begun in 1417 and it was consecrated in 1436. It was supported by the Teutonic Order, local burghers and nobility, and it became one of the wealthiest monasteries in Livonia, with the largest church in medieval Estonia.[98]

13. The Reformation and the Dissolution of Monasticism

When the last monastery was founded in medieval Denmark in 1522 (Odense St Clare), the age of monasticism had in fact already ended with the death of Dowager Queen Christine the year before.[99] Neither her son King Christian II (r. 1513–1523) nor his successor Frederik I (r. 1523–1533) showed any favourable concern for the monasteries.

On the contrary, since the early 1520s, all the landowning monasteries in Denmark were increasingly treated as financial 'milking cows', continuously enjoined by the kings to cover various military and courtly expenses, even by accommodating horses and troops for the cavalry. While the mendicant orders held no landed fortunes to be milked, the friars since the mid-1520s had to engage with an increasing hostility from Evangelical preachers, mainly of Lutheran conviction, who successfully presented the friars as the incarnation of all the evils of the Catholic church. The mendicant orders were themselves divided by a reform-minded faction among especially the Carmelites, inspired by Erasmus of Rotterdam, and a more conservative faction of Dominicans and the majority of the Franciscans. While many of the reform-minded mendicants ended up becoming leading Evangelical preachers themselves, the conservative mendicants became the spearhead of the Catholic defence in terms of combative sermons and theological writs—and even took part in some of the bishops' attempt to put an end to the turmoil with an inquisition-like trial in Malmö during the interregnum after King Frederik's death in 1533. The convictions of the trial only sparked a complete mayhem with the war of Grevens Fejde ('The Count's Feud') 1534–1536, which the Catholic church was bound to lose, as none of the involved pretenders for the Danish throne were Catholic.

Being in the centre of the theological dispute, the mendicant friaries were the first to fall when the monastic dissolution began to set in. It started in the duchy of Schleswig, where Duke Christian—the later King Christian III—had openly converted to Lutheranism in 1525–1526. The Dominican friars in Haderslev were expelled as the first in 1527, and by 1530, all six mendicant friaries in the duchy had been dissolved. The flood of mendicant dissolution spread to the actual kingdom, where twenty-five friaries were closed in the years 1529–1532. The subsequent war actual brought a pause to the monastic closings, and eighteen friaries of all three orders were still around when the war ended in 1536; Helsingør and the cathedral cities of Ribe, Odense, Roskilde and Lund especially had proven themselves as Catholic strongholds.

When the new King Christian III introduced Lutheran Evangelism to the entire kingdom in 1536–1537, it included a complete prohibition against mendicant presence in Denmark henceforth. The monasteries of the remaining orders were allowed to continue in an Evangelical form and under royal administration, which actually only meant that the financial draining of their manorial wealth continued at increased speed. Some of the larger male abbeys were for a while attempted to be converted into schools for Evangelical priests. As economic means and convent members began to die out, the monasteries closed one by one and were either turned in to royal or private manors, parish churches, urban hospitals and schools, or simply torn down. Depending on how to determine the final termination of a convent, the last medieval Danish monasteries were dissolved in the 1580s.

Further south on the island of Rügen, which was still a part of the diocese of Roskilde, the Cistercian abbey in Hiddensee had been attacked by a Protestant mob from Stralsund in 1529, and it was dissolved along with the Hospitallers of St John in Maschenholt in 1534, when it was decided that all of Pomerania was to be Evangelical henceforth. At the same time Rügen was segregated from the Bishop of Roskilde and incorporated in the diocese of Stralsund instead. The Cistercian nunnery in Bergen was allowed to continue as a Catholic institution until 1569, when it was converted into a Protestation aristocratic nunnery.

Lutheran Evangelism had reached Livonia and Estonia in 1519–1520 already, and here too, local Dominicans soon became the main defenders of the old belief. This only led to increased conflicts with the Evangelicals, who had a strong influence on the city council, who decided to prohibit the friars from preaching in 1524 and ordered the dissolution of the convent the following year. The Cistercian nuns in Tallinn on their part managed to endure the first Lutheran storm as they had strong family connections to the generally anti-Evangelical nobility living outside the city. It was not until 1545 that the nuns were enforced to engage a Lutheran priest for their services, and the nunnery was finally dissolved by the Swedes in 1631. The male Cistercian Padise Abbey was dissolved by the Livonian Order in 1559, mainly out of fear that it would be used as military stronghold by either the Swedes

or the Russians. Finally, the Bridgettine Pirita Abbey was allowed to continue until the mid-1570s, when it was destroyed by Russian troops.

14. Epilogue

By the end of the 16th century, the Danish church province had seen the coming and going of about 140 individual monasteries representing twelve different monastic orders within a period of 500 years. In the Protestant aftermath of the Reformation, medieval monasticism was often portrayed as a parasitic and increasingly depraved institution, visualising all the errors of the medieval Catholic Church. In Denmark, such a view has to some degree been rooted in historical scholarship way into the 20th century, where monasticism until recently was commonly treated as a curious sidekick to Christianity in medieval society, failing to fully comprehend its interaction with people living outside the monastery walls. However, for half a millennium, monasteries were just as integrated parts of life and society for all Danes as schools and hospitals are today. Even for those of us who do not attend these institutions in daily life, they are hard to imagine not being there. If we want to improve our understanding of medieval life and society in a country such as Denmark on a general basis, we need to acknowledge the profound role of Christianity for all people in the Middle Ages—and that the monasteries, with all their nuances given by the different monastic orders, played a significant part of this.

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Notes

1 In addition to present-day Denmark, the medieval Danish church province also included the diocese of Lund (Skåne, Halland and Blekinge), the diocese of Schleswig, the diocese of Tallinn (northern Estonia) and the island of Rügen (as part of the diocese of Roskilde). The exact number of monasteries may vary in literature according to different terms on how to define a religious community as an actual monastery.

2 The Carthusian Order was represented in Denmark with two very short-lived monasteries in Asserbo (1160s) and Glenstrup (1430s), which has not qualified for a chapter in this presentation.

3 For the basic overall works to monasticism and monasteries in medieval Denmark, see Daugaard (1830); Lorenzen (1912–1941); Jørgensen and Thomsen (2004); Kristensen (2013a). Short lexicographical articles with up-to-date overviews of the history and archaeology of each individual monastery are currently being published in *Trap Danmark* 6th edition. For the included regions outside present-day Denmark, see also Auge and Hillebrand (2019) (Schleswig); Hoogeweg (1924–1925) (Rügen); Cinthio (1989) (Skåne); Tamm (2002) (Estonia).

4 For a general introduction and discussion to the earliest monasticism in medieval Denmark, see Nyberg (2000). On the individual early monasteries, see also Radtke and Hillebrand (2019) (Schleswig); Hill and Magnussen (2019) (Seem); King (1966) and Nyberg (1986) (Odense); Andersen (2002) (Lund).

5 (Helveg 1855, pp. 11–13; Moltke and Møller 1951, pp. 1270–74, 1295–98; Pirinen 1958, p. 186; Nyberg 2000, pp. 46–47).

6 (Nyberg 2000, pp. 44–45; Borgehammar 2012).

7 For the most recent introductions to Benedictine history in medieval Scandinavia (including Denmark), see (Nyberg 2006; Kelly 2006; Jakobsen forthcoming-a).

8 (Nyberg 2000, pp. 40–42, 99–100, 103–4; Bysted 2010).

9 (Helms 1940; Nyberg 2000, pp. 104–7, 109).

10 (McGuire 1974; Nyberg 2000, pp. 194–96; Esmark 2006).

11 (McGuire 1997; Nyberg 2000, pp. 117–18, 145–46).

12 Mehlsen (1919) (Randers); Kerff (1919) (Voer); Nyberg (2000), pp. 109–13 (Veng), 204 (Glenstrup), pp. 113–15 (Randers), 194 (Voer).

13 (Bisgaard 2006).

14 For a comprehensive introduction to female Benedictine monasticism in Denmark, see (Langkilde 1987).

15 Of these, only the nunnery in Ålborg has received the attention of a comprehensive article: (Olesen 1978).

16 Greinert and Lafrenz (2019) (Schleswig).

17 Of these, some have received the attention of a monograph or a comprehensive article: Christensen (1911) (Stubber); Christensen (1913) (Gudum); Ingvordsen (1991) (Ring); Møller (1937) (Sebber); Langballe and Olsen (1975) og Olsen (1975) (Ørslev); Andersen (2006) (Hundslund).

18 (McGuire 1982; Nyberg 2000).

19 (Gallén 1956).
20 (Dahlerup 1963–1965).
21 The main works on the history of the Cistercian Order in medieval Scandinavia and Denmark are (McGuire 1982; France 1992). In addition, a multitude of monographs, anthologies and articles exist for individual Cistercian abbeys.
22 In addition to McGuire and France, see (Rosenberg 1988).
23 The literature on Esrum Abbey is exhaustive. See, for instance, the anthologies by (Frandsen et al. 1997; Jørgensen and Thomsen 2015).
24 (Nielsen 1980; Nyberg 2000, pp. 176–80, 188–91; Hjermind and Jensen 2016).
25 (Nyberg 2000, pp. 196–99; Callesen 2011).
26 (Venge 1982; Nyberg 2000, pp. 199–203).
27 (Skogsberg 2005).
28 (Nørlund et al. 1924; McGuire 1974).
29 Also the literature on Øm Abbey is exhaustive. See, for instance, (McGuire 1976; Gregersen and Jensen 2003; Kristensen 2020a).
30 (Bartholdy [1973] 2006; Sterum 2010; Kragh-Warming and Kristensen 2019).
31 (Kragh 2019; Bauch et al. 2019).
32 Hill (1992), pp. 158–60 (Slangerup) and pp. 277–86 (Roskilde); McGuire (2005).
33 (Hoogeweg 1924–1925, vol. 1 pp. 92–163; Wichert 2005).
34 (Tamm 2009).
35 Hoogeweg (1924–1925), vol. 1, pp. 223–309; Jensen (2011), pp. 223–26; Reimann (2016) (Dargun).
36 (Niemeck 2002).
37 (Tamm 2010).
38 (Christensen 1914).
39 (Wohlert 1974).
40 (Esmark 2006).
41 (McGuire 1997).
42 (Kramer 2015).
43 (Kristensen 2020a, pp. 185–206).
44 (Isager 1942; Kristensen 2003).
45 A basic work on the history of the Augustinian Order in medieval Denmark still awaits to be written. For the foundation of the monasteries, see Nyberg (2000). A recent, comprehensive anthology on Dalby Priory (Borgehammar and Wienberg 2012) also provides a lot of general information on the order.
46 In addition to (Nyberg 2000), see Borgehammar and Wienberg (2012) (Dalby); Jakobsen (2016a) (Vestervig)).
47 (Riisgaard 1980).
48 (Hjermind 2013).
49 (Møller-Christensen 1958; Kramer et al. 2013).
50 (Kristensen 1996).
51 (Nyberg 2004).
52 (Høirup and Stjernfelt 1961).
53 (Olrik 1912).
54 (Damsholt 2001; Jakobsen 2001).
55 (Riisgaard 1980, pp. 75–77).
56 A basic work on the history of the Premonstratensian Order in medieval Denmark still awaits to be written. For overview introductions, see (Wallin 1989; Nyberg 2000).
57 In addition to Wallin (1989) and Nyberg (2000), see Wallin (1955–2000) (Tommarp).
58 (Nyberg 1986; Kristensen 2013b; Jensen and Jørgensen 2021).
59 (Kockum 2009).
60 (Riemann 1947–1948; Lindholt 2017).
61 The main works on Dominican history in medieval Denmark are (Gallén 1946; Jakobsen 2008).
62 In addition to (Gallén 1946; Jakobsen 2008), see for some of the individual convents Blomqvist (1944); Jakobsen (2011), pp. 9–15 (Lund); Græbe (1978) (Ribe); Jakobsen (2006) (Roskilde); Rathjen and Siegloff (2019) (Schleswig); Høegsberg (2004) (Viborg); Søvsø (2011) (Århus); Jakobsen (2017a) (Haderslev); Becher (1999) (Odense)).
63 (Jakobsen 2014).

64 (Jakobsen 2017b; Jakobsen 2021a).

65 Nilsson (1968), pp. 110–40 (Halmstad); Hansen (1996), pp. 121–33 (Næstved); Græbe (1993) (Holbæk); Bååth (1933), pp. 308–18 et passim (Helsingborg); Jakobsen (2021b) (Vejle).

66 (Hvass 2010).

67 Jexlev (1977) and Hill (1995) (Roskilde); Jensen (1902) (Gavnø)).

68 (Kala 2013).

69 (Jakobsen 2013).

70 (Jakobsen forthcoming-b).

71 (Jakobsen 2019).

72 (Jakobsen 2015).

73 (Jakobsen 2016b).

74 (Jakobsen 2021b).

75 The main works on Franciscan history in medieval Denmark are (Lindbæk 1914; Rasmussen 2002). On the friary architecture, see also (Larsen 2018).

76 In addition to (Lindbæk 1914; Rasmussen 2002), see for some of the individual convents Kieffer-Olsen (1996) (Ribe); Ommen and Lafrenz (2019) (Schleswig); Hjermind (2013); Kristensen (2020b) (Viborg); Kristensen (1994) (Svendborg); Eigenbrod and Madsen (2019) (Tønder); Rasmussen (1992a) (Kalundborg); Hansen (1996), pp. 117–21 (Næstved); Møller (2000) (Ålborg); Kristensen (2016) (Horsens); Rasmussen (1984); Kraack (2019) (Flensburg); Rasmussen (1992b); Ohlsson and Ohlsson (2017) (Ystad); Larsen (2013) (Odense).

77 Skov (1962) (Nykøbing); Magnussen and Siemers (2019) (Husum).

78 (Jexlev 1977; Hill 1995 (Roskilde)).

79 (Jakobsen 2015).

80 (Rasmussen 2002, pp. 324–49; Jakobsen 2008, pp. 158–65).

81 (Rasmussen 2002, pp. 169–88).

82 (Rasmussen 2002, pp. 413–21).

83 (Rasmussen 2002, pp. 115–17).

84 A basic work on the history of the Carmelite Order in Denmark still awaits to be written. Introductions in overview articles are provided by (Mesters 1956; Dahlerup 1963; Jørgensen 1979).

85 In addition to the overview works, see for some of the individual convents Jørgensen (1979); Wandel (2003) (Helsingør); Koch and Lynnerup (2003) (Skælskør).

86 Jørgensen (1978); Gregersen (1982) (Sæby); Forsström (1973) (Varberg); Haugsted (1931); Kristensen (2008) (Århus); Fjellander (1951) (Sölvesborg)).

87 The main works on the history of the Hospitallers of St John in medieval Denmark are (Reitzel-Nielsen 1984–1988; Carlsson 2008).

88 In addition to (Reitzel-Nielsen 1984–1988; Carlsson 2008), see for some of the individual convents Bernholm (1942) (Antvorskov); Hjermind (2013) (Viborg); Michaelsen (2008) (Odense); Dahlsgaard (1932); Vegger (1996) (Dueholm).

89 (Büttner 2007, pp. 245–46).

90 A basic work on the history of the Hospitallers of St Anthony in Denmark still awaits to be written. Introductions in overview articles to each of the monasteries are provided by Neustadt (2019) (Mohrkirch) and Rørdam (1893) (Præstø).

91 The main work on the history of the Hospitallers of the Holy Ghost in Denmark is (Lindbæk and Stemann 1906).

92 In addition to (Lindbæk and Stemann 1906), see for some of the individual convents Kock (1996); Møller (2016) (Ålborg); Christensen and Jensen (1934–1935) (Copenhagen); Bondesen (1994); Kirk (2003) (Randers).

93 There are multiple works on the history of the Bridgettine Order in Scandinavia. The most recent overview of the individual monasteries in Scandinavia and their related literature is provided by (Nyberg 1991; Sander-Olsen et al. 2013).

94 In addition to (Nyberg 1991; Sander-Olsen et al. 2013), see (Haugner 1937; Frederickson 2016).

95 (Carlsen [1983] 2014).

96 (Jørgensen 1991).

97 (Jakobsen 2016c).

98 (Raam and Tamm 2005).

99 The Reformation in Denmark seen from a monastic perspective has recently been covered by (Seesko et al. 2019; Kristensen 2019).

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Something Distinct, or Business as Usual? Interpreting the Plan of the Late Medieval Bridgettine Monastery in Naantali, Finland

Visa Immonen * and Janne Harjula

Department of Archaeology, University of Turku, 20014 Turku, Finland; janhar@utu.fi
* Correspondence: vialim@utu.fi

Abstract: This article analyses modern interpretations of the medieval plan of the Bridgettine Monastery of Naantali, Finland. Instead of seeing the distinct spatial organisation as deviation from the Bridgettine norm, we consider it as an expression of a medieval process, by which monastic principles were re-conceptualised in order to be realised in material form. This perspective builds on the shift in thinking that has taken place in the study of medieval urban planning. Instead of being 'organic', meaning disorganised, medieval urban development has come to be considered as intentional, guided by general principles, although not in a manner that is always obvious to the modern mind. We concur that models such as St Bridget's visions and the plan of Vadstena Abbey are important tools for reconstructing medieval monastic plans. Meanwhile, we propose that such models can also add latent and counterproductive baggage to this field of study by encouraging modern expectations of regularity within monastic architecture. If the designs of monasteries do not follow such models perfectly, discrepancies are often erroneously misconceived as indications of the builders' insufficient skills and knowledge.

Keywords: architecture; bridgettine order; Finland; monastic archaeology; Naantali; plan; spatial organisation

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1. Introduction

As a degree of uniformity in attitudes and practices existed in monastic orders across medieval Europe, it is common for scholars interpreting the archaeological remains of monastic sites to assume that these followed a uniform scheme. Such assumed commonalities have influenced reconstructions of individual monastic sites and local practices, especially in countries such as Finland, where the written and archaeological record of monastic institutions is fragmented and scarce. Although such presumptions are an important aid to archaeological interpretation, they can also lead it astray, leading to local features being overlooked or cast as particularities, explained by marginality and thus by lower levels of knowledge and skill. In this study, we will lay the foundations for an alternative approach, in which differences in monastic architecture are considered as intentional, even as conforming to the medieval tradition of accommodating principles within actual practices. Material evidence of this (e.g., archaeological remains) would therefore provide evidence of a premodern rationale. This approach follows a shift that has taken place in the study of medieval urban planning in the last two decades. Instead of being 'organic' or disorganised, this considers urban development as an intentional process, guided by general principles, although not in a sense that is always obvious to the modern mind.

The present case study explores this hypothesis by analysing modern interpretations of the plan of the Bridgettine Monastery of Naantali (Nådendal in Swedish, Vallis Gratiae in Latin). It considers whether this plan should be considered as a significant deviation from the Bridgettine norm, or as just another expression of the medieval relationship between

monastic principles and their realisations in material form. This norm is understood as being defined not only by St Bridget's rather ambiguous architectural visions, but also, to some extent, by the actual plan of the motherhouse of the Bridgettine Order, Vadstena Abbey in Sweden, which scholars consider to be an architectural paragon for other Bridgettine monasteries.

Naantali Monastery is the only actual monastery—a building in which monks and/or nuns live and worship in an enclosed community without leaving the premises—in Finland (Figure 1). During the Middle Ages, the Diocese of Turku covered the land area of the present country of Finland, then constituting the eastern province of the Kingdom of Sweden. Within this diocese, one Bridgettine monastery and five mendicant convents were founded in the 13th to 15th centuries (Immonen 2019). Archaeological fieldwork has been conducted at the sites of these since the mid-19th century, but none have been fully excavated, and the available documentation remains problematic. This situation emphasises the importance of the hypotheses upon which the interpretations of such sites are based. A particularly pertinent example of this is provided by the Bridgettine monastery at Naantali. Historian and archivist Reinhold Hausen (1850–1942) conducted excavations there in 1872–1873 and produced a reconstruction of the monastery's plan, which has since remained largely unchallenged.

Figure 1. Naantali Church on the right, and the hill with the ruins of the monastic buildings on the left. The town of Naantali in front. Photo by J. Reinberg, 1880–1889/Finnish Heritage Agency.

In this article, we will first present the existing research into the Bridgettine Monastery in Naantali, starting from Hausen's predecessor Sven Gabriel Elmgren, continuing with Hausen's reconstruction and its later revisions, and then proceeding to note the insights provided by more recent excavations. After this analysis, we consider the study of medieval town planning in general, and how a shift has taken place from a view that urban settlements developed naturally to one that considers their development to have been intentionally planned and controlled. This paradigm change makes it possible to re-evaluate the plan of Naantali Monastery. By assessing how justified the assumptions of homogeneity are within the study of monasticism in Finland, we argue that such assumptions can be fruitful when the dynamics between monastic principles and their architectural realisation are not defined by a mindset that is exclusively modern.

2. Hausen's Work on Naantali Monastery

Unlike the Dominican and Franciscan convents in Finland, the founding of the Naantali Monastery is rather well documented in written sources. The decision to establish the monastery was made in 1438, and the first location selected for the complex was at Stenberga in Masku, where construction works began in 1439–1440/1441 (Leinberg 1890, pp. 191–95). The soil at the site, however, was deemed unsuitable to sup-

port permanent occupation. The Council of the Realm decided to move the monastery to another place, eventually settling on its location at Naantali (Leinberg 1890, pp. 191–96; Hiekkanen 1993, pp. 143–46). The King of Sweden confirmed the transfer in 1442, and the monastery was inaugurated in 1462 (Salomies 1944; Hiekkanen 2007, pp. 106–7). The adjacent town of Naantali was founded in parallel with the monastery, with the earliest known land purchases taking place in the 1450s (Hiekkanen 1988). The monastery became a wealthy landowner and an important monastic institution in Finland, yet it met its downfall at the time of the Reformation. As a consequence of the Västerås Recess in 1527, by which the Church and its possessions were subjugated to secular authorities, Naantali monastery was taken over, first, by the local nobility, and then, in 1556, by the Royal Bailiff (Suvanto 1976; Klockars 1979; Knuutila 2009). The last Abbess died in 1577, after which the King decided to have the monastery's church remodelled into a parish church.

Except for the church, which is still standing, the history of the monastic buildings at Naantali is poorly understood since their remains mostly remain buried in the hill surrounding the church. The first written description of the ruins is a brief record from the 1650s, which remarks that several walls and other features were still visible (Gyllenius 1962; see also Ahl-Waris 2010, p. 61). Over the following centuries, the visibility of the ruins was reduced as they became covered with soil and vegetation (Scarin 1744–1745; Elmgren 1863, pp. 4–5). Eventually the remains of the monastery buildings were recognisable only as a series of protrusions and pits on the hill around the church. In 1863, librarian Sven Gabriel Elmgren (1817–1897) published the first map of the ruins (Hiekkanen 1988, pp. 50–51). He did not carry out any excavations, but tried to reconstruct the location, size and function of the buildings and their division of space based on topographical features (Elmgren 1863; see also Koskinen 1864). Despite these restrictions, Elmgren managed to identify a circuit wall on the north and west side of the monastic complex. As in Vadstena, the monk's choir and altar were located at the western end of the building. The monastery was divided into two separate groups of buildings, which comprised of the monks' quarters to the west and the nuns' quarters to the east, both with their own yards or garths (Elmgren 1863, pp. 37–61; see also the 1871 plan of the area; Ahl-Waris 2010, pp. 114–17).

While Elmgren made some relevant observations, it was with Hausen that a study of the ruins began in earnest. He was the first to conduct archaeological excavations at the site, providing a material basis for its reconstruction (e.g., Nordman and Cleve 1972, pp. 11–12; Hiekkanen 1993, p. 146). The fieldwork in 1872–1873 was hampered by limited funding and the restrictions imposed by the local administration, which was concerned about potential damage to trees and plants on the hill (Hausen 1922, p. 6; Lilius 2000, pp. 58–59). Moreover, there were no means to consolidate and preserve the remains of any structures exposed by the works. Consequently, Hausen's efforts were confined to tracing the outlines of walled structures, excavating around these, documenting what he saw and then filling in the pits (Hausen 1922, pp. 5–7). Later excavations have revealed that Hausen's excavations probably extended only as far as the upper parts of the walls, leaving layers below undisturbed, at least in some places (Uotila 2011c, p. 22).

Hausen wrote and filed a report of his excavations, but this was subsequently lost and only an excavation plan from 1872 remains (Lilius 2000, p. 56). However, Hausen published a slim volume on the monastery and its church in 1922, where he describes the findings, or rather the reconstruction of the plan he made based on his fieldwork (Figure 2). According to Hausen, the monastery's walls were made of masoned granite blocks, but bricks were used in places, especially in doorways. The walls had mostly been plastered both inside and outside. No roof tiles were found at the site, and Hausen assumes that while the church roof was covered with shingles, other buildings were roofed with birch bark and staves (Hausen 1922, pp. 49–50).

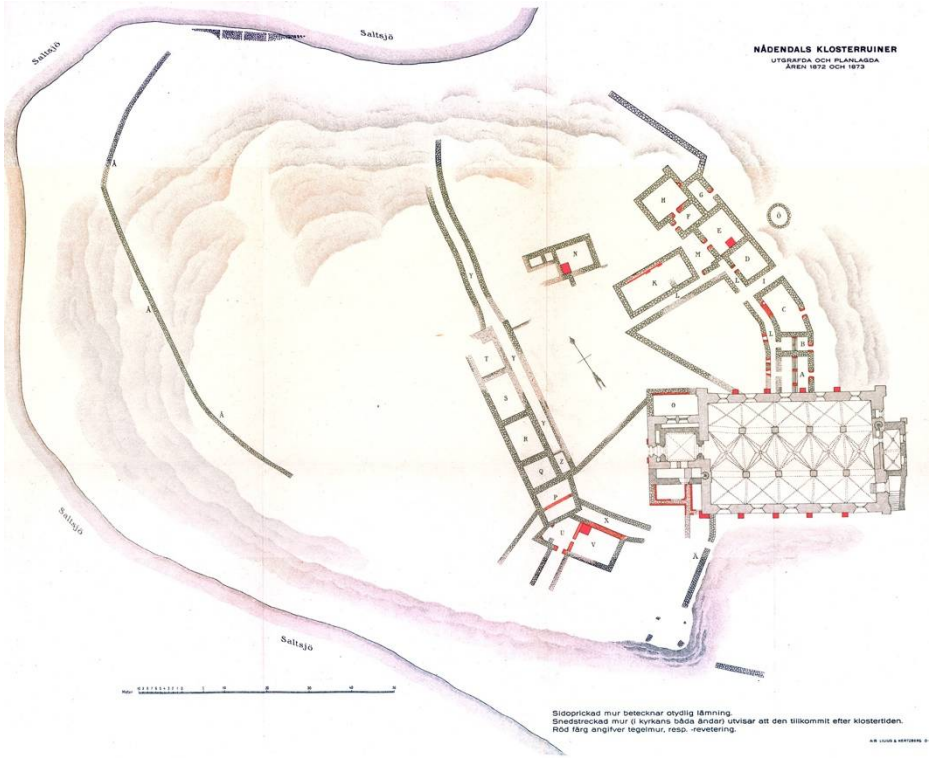

Figure 2. Plan of Naantali Monastery by Hausen (1922).

In his interpretation of the church's medieval history, Hausen refers to St Bridget's visions, or *Revelationes coelestes*, and archaeologist Hans Hildebrand's analysis of their architectural significance in *Sveriges medeltid III* (1898–1903) (Hausen 1922, pp. 21, 29 note 2; Lilius 2000, p. 59). Importantly, Hausen's reconstruction of the monastery's plan also draws on Bailiff Christoffer Blom's inventory of 1577–1581. Blom gives an account of recent renovations and itemises a number of buildings, including the church, as well as the living quarters of the monks and nuns (Rinne 1921; Hausen 1922, pp. 46–48). His list of buildings includes only those that were still in active use and had been repaired with masonry or covered with new roofs made of birch bark and staves. The account seems to describe a circular tour starting at the south end of the church, turning west, and then turning to continue north through the monks' quarters (buildings P–Z on Figure 2). The route then shifts to the nuns' quarters (buildings A–N on Figure 2) and continues along a row of buildings to the north of the church. Hausen's reconstruction, based on Blom's account and his own excavations, remains influential, since more recent archaeological excavations have focused on the church, or the areas outside the monastery.

3. Research after Hausen

In his publications on the Bridgettine monasteries at Naantali and elsewhere, art historian Bertil Berthelson (1901–1985) explicitly compares Naantali with Vadstena Abbey (Berthelson 1940, 1947). He mostly confirms Hausen's observations, but also comments that Hausen was unable to establish a direct architectural connection between Naantali Monastery and the motherhouse of the Bridgettine Order. It should be noted that the latter had not been excavated when Hausen published his work, making any direct comparison difficult. Berthelson also makes some minor revisions to Hausen's plan, based on the results of new fieldwork that he had undertaken.

In 1963–1964, architectural historian Henrik Lilius made extensive archaeological excavations and architectural investigations in Naantali Church, publishing the results in 1969. Although the fieldwork was highly deficient in terms of its processing of finds (Alén 2001), the most important outcome was the discovery of the foundations of a wooden

church inside the present stone church (Lilius 1969, pp. 15, 18–28). Lilius dates the wooden church to the period before the stone church was consecrated, which was believed to have taken place in 1462. Discussing the monastery's living quarters, its buildings and their functions, Lilius mostly refers to Hausen's and Berthelson's studies and agrees with their interpretations (Lilius 1969, pp. 15–18; 1990, pp. 154–57).

In his doctoral dissertation, art historian and archaeologist Markus Hiekkanen revises the dating of stone churches in Finland (Hiekkanen 1994, pp. 222–23). Based on Hiekkanen's conclusions, the dating of churches in Naantali should also be revised. Hiekkanen (2019, 2020, pp. 150–51) later suggested that Naantali's wooden church was actually built in 1444 and was only replaced by the present stone church in around 1490.

In 1996–1999, archaeologist Uotila (2003a, 2003b) carried out archaeological excavations inside the church and within its immediate surroundings, in which parts of the medieval monks' sacristy, and the dividing wall between the sacristy and monks' corridor had been unearthed. He discovered a large niche in the eastern wall of the monks' corridor and two similar niches in the northern wall of the sacristy. At Vadstena, such niches have been interpreted as book cabinets. If at Naantali, as at Vadstena, this row of cabinets extended from the sacristy to the corridor, this would suggest the presence of a large book collection (Uotila 2003b, pp. 17–18; Harjula 2011, p. 241). The area therefore served as the monastery's library. Furthermore, based on his discovery of the upper part of a doorway between the north wall of the church and an adjacent room, Uotila points out the remains of what may have been a confessional room, suggesting that the confessional niches themselves were located much deeper under layers of landfill (Uotila 2003b, p. 20). He also conducted excavations outside the church's south wall, in front of a bricked-up medieval door that may have served as an entrance for priests celebrating mass (Hiekkanen 2020, p. 152). There, Uotila (2003b, pp. 18–20) found remains of a vaulted medieval building, suggesting that it might have served as the main gate to the monks' quarters. He also discovered a number of unidentified medieval buildings to the south of the church.

In 2005–2007, Uotila conducted archaeological excavations around the north-eastern perimeter of the nuns' quarters (A–H) (Uotila 2011a, p. 183). He discovered remains of several medieval wooden structures of which the most important was a portion of a building containing a latrine or midden. The building was located on the seashore near the monastery's circuit wall. The building was constructed using stones and bricks in the mid-15th century and might thus be one of the oldest buildings at the site (Uotila 2011a, pp. 188–90, Figure 75). Among the finds from these excavations were abundant quantities of animal bones (Mannermaa 2011; Tourunen 2011) and coins (Kivistö 2011). Besides, objects related to textile crafts, such as spindle whorls, needles, thimbles, crochet hooks, and other artefacts connected with clothing were discovered (Väisänen 2011; Väisänen and Uotila 2011). Moreover, while the writing implements and book components found during the excavations are indications of a literary culture (Harjula 2011), fragments of rare glass vessels are indicators of the monastery's significant wealth (Haggrén 2011).

4. The Reconstruction of the Monks' Quarters

Hausen's plan and his identification of different spaces within Naantali Monastery have formed the basis for all subsequent reconstructions. Scholars after Hausen have made only minor revisions to his interpretations, although they also point out problems resulting from his primary reliance on major wall lines, identified using shallow survey pits, rather than on a more complete excavation of the site. Since Hausen documented only the upper parts of the brick and stone walls that he could detect above ground, it is likely that he missed all of the traces of less prominent wooden structures. Moreover, Hausen's plan has been criticised for not taking into account any estimations of the age of the different structures at the site, and thus ultimately reflects the monastery's final, 16th-century construction phase before it fell into ruins (Uotila et al. 2011, p. 302). Nevertheless, Uotila (2003a, 2003b) excavations have revealed that the site's structures are positioned with a high degree of accuracy in Hausen's plan.

Similar to Elmgren, Hausen places the nuns' quarters on the north side of the church and the monks' quarters on its western side (Figure 3). In identifying the site of the monks' quarters, Hausen relies on Blom's inventory (Rinne 1921). Moving west from the area south of the church (Ä), and then turning north (P–T), he lists a sacristy (*sacker stiigett*), monk's choir (*muncke choren*), chapel (*cappellett*), church porch (*kyrckie wåkenhusett*), library (*liberij hwset*), chapterhouse (*cappitels huset*), stone shed or food store (*een steenbodh*), long corridor to the refectory (*långe gången till conuentz stugun*), refectory (*conuentz stugan*), and other rooms (*några kambrar*). According to Hausen (1922, pp. 29–30), the monk's choir was situated at the western end of the church (its outline is still visible in the brickwork of the church's wall, supplemented by later stone additions), and was connected to the sacristy and church porch. In his excavations, Hausen also exposed parts of the sacristy's walls and a corridor (area Ä) leading to the monks' quarters on the south side of the monk's choir. Berthelson (1940, p. 193) points out that the sacristy and the corridor bear similarity to the spatial organisation in Vadstena, where such a corridor linked the nave of the church to another corridor, which extended along the southwestern row of buildings (corresponding to Naantali's corridor X). In contrast to these structures, identified in or near the church, Hausen argues that the identification of the 'chapel' mentioned in Blom's inventory is difficult, because it is not apparent what kind of space is actually described.

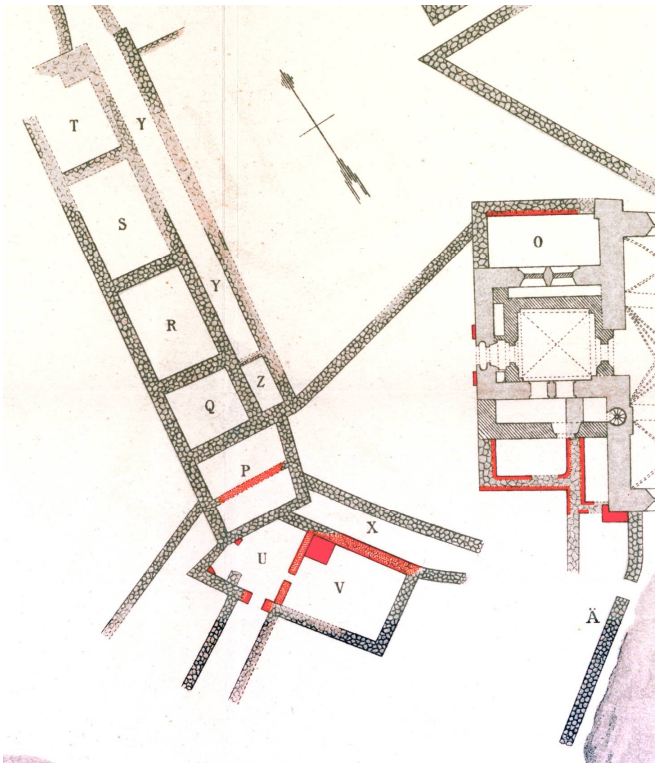

Figure 3. Plan of the monks' quarters in Naantali Monastery by Hausen (1922).

In Blom's list, the church porch is mentioned directly before the library. Hausen (1922, p. 48) did not identify its location, but the structures on the south side of the church remained somewhat unclear to him. Uotila, however, discovered the library later. Next on Blom's list are the chapterhouse and stone shed, both of which remain unidentified. The chapterhouse was probably one of the larger spaces in the monks' quarters, but there are no distinct features that would facilitate its identification. Berthelson argues that since space P was divided by a brick wall, it might have functioned as the main gate to the monks' quarters, but Uotila (2003b, pp. 18–20) suggests that this main gate was in fact located south of the western end of the church. Therefore, we suggest that space P originally served as the chapterhouse and was only divided into two spaces with a brick wall later, in the

16th-century. In addition to the chapterhouse, the stone shed remains a mysterious feature of the site, but the manner in which Blom described it ('a stone shed') suggests that it was a freestanding structure, perhaps undiscovered by Hausen.

In the area adjacent to the south-west corner of the church (area Ä), Hausen found a corridor (X) and a building divided into two parts (U and V). Space V contained the remains of a fireplace, leading Hausen to suggest that it had served as a kitchen. Berthelson (1940, pp. 191–94; 1947, pp. 359–61), moreover, argues that, since the two spaces are connected to the outside world through a doorway in space U, spaces U and V might have served as guest houses for pilgrims.

To the north of space P and the western end of the church is located a uniform block, composed of multiple structures and oriented north–south (Q–Y). Along its western edge, this includes a series of rooms (Q–T), to the east of which runs a parallel corridor (Z–Y–Y), which continues as a passage leading down towards the bay of Nunnalahti. A wall connected the south-eastern corner of this block to the north-west corner of the church. Moreover, Berthelson identifies corridor Y–Y–Y as the long corridor to the monks' refectory recorded in Blom's inventory, but the location of the refectory itself remains elusive. Space T has a large fireplace in its north-east corner, possibly indicating a kitchen, and therefore space S next to it might have functioned as a refectory. Hausen argues that the monks' quarters had two storeys, although he provides no concrete evidence to support this. If this was the case, the monks' cells were probably located on the upper floor.

Except for wall Ä running south-west from the south-west corner of the church, Hausen found no structures south of the church. He was uncertain whether wall Ä was medieval and what its function was, although according to oral tradition, a medieval belfry had stood on the site of the present belfry, which dates from 1794–1797 (cf. Hiekkanen 1988, p. 46). Apart from digging a few trial pits, which did not result in any significant observations, Hausen did not undertake excavations on the south side of the church. Uotila excavated this area and uncovered the possible remains of the main gate leading to the monks' quarters (Uotila 2003b, pp. 18–20), an identification supported by records from the mid-18th century, which indicate that the remains of a possible forecourt were still visible in this area at that time (Scarin 1744–1745).

The large area to the west and north-west of the monks' quarters was surrounded by the monastery's circuit wall (Å–Å–Å), which ran down to the same bay as corridor Y–Y–Y. At the bay, Hausen noticed a group of wooden poles, which in 2006 were dated using dendrochronology to the winter of 1783–1784 and are therefore post-medieval (Zetterberg 2006; Uotila 2011b, Figure 30).

5. The Reconstruction of the Nuns' Quarters

According to Hausen, the nuns' quarters were also comprised of a succession of buildings. With an assumed order of north to south, the first of these listed on Blom's inventory is a refectory (*conuentz stuffun*) (Figure 4). Blom exceptionally specifies that it is eight *fampnar*, or 14.24 m, in length, perhaps indicating that it was a particularly large building. After the refectory, the list continues with a brewery (*bryggehwsett*), kitchen (*kiökett*), nuns' sacristy (*nunnornas sakerstij*), and a room for communion and confession (*theres schriffre och berättewss*). The largest individual building, K, which was divided into two by an interior wall, is identified in Hausen's reconstruction as the refectory, with building N, which contained a fireplace, serving as the brewery.

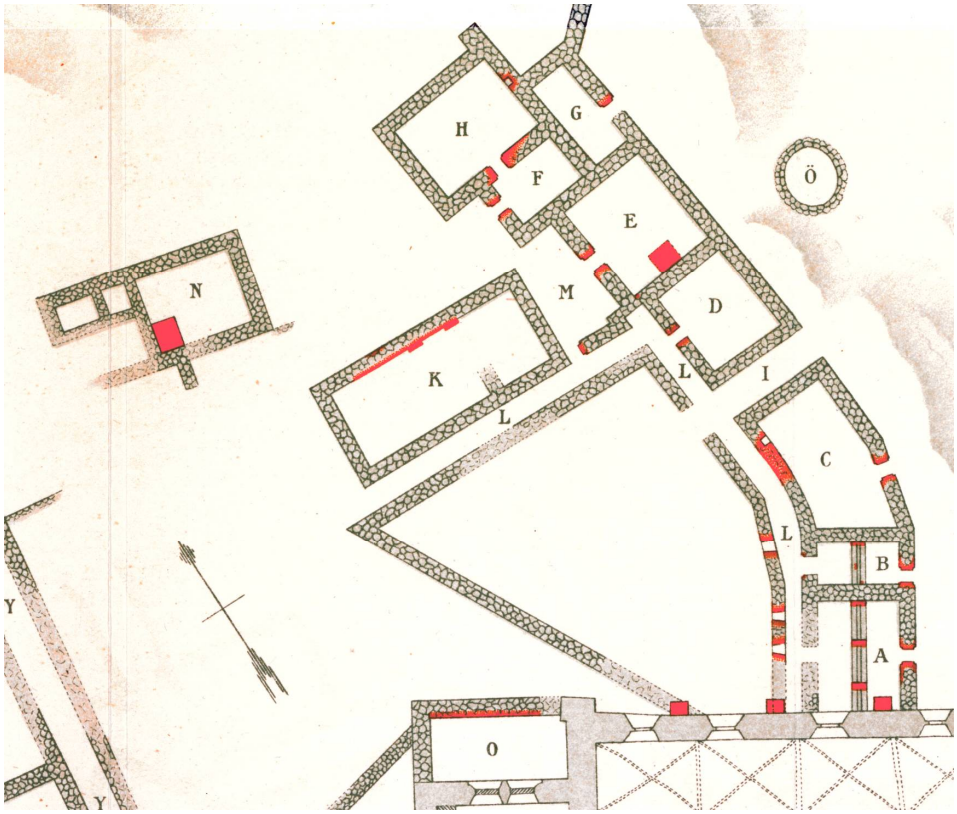

Figure 4. Plan of the nuns' quarters in Naantali Monastery by Hausen (1922).

The Abbess's House is not mentioned in Blom's inventory, and neither Hausen nor Berthelson have identified it in their reconstructed plans of the monastery. Nonetheless, the monastery must have had one (Uotila 2011b, p. 66). At the Bridgettine Monastery of Pirita in Tallinn, the Abbess's House is located in the middle of the nuns' garth, at a slightly different angle to the other buildings (Raam and Tamm 2006, pp. 26–27). The building was part of that monastery's earlier construction phase but was left untouched by the subsequent building phases (Tamm 2010). In Naantali Monastery, building N also occupies a distinct position, and its fireplace might have been used to heat a high-status residence such as the Abbess's House.

The main part of the nuns' quarters consisted of a series of built spaces (A–H). This reached two storeys in height (except maybe at its northern end) and extended to meet the church at the centre of its north wall. This part of the nuns' quarters had two main sections, connected by space C: the first with a north–south orientation (D–H) and the second with a north-east–south-west orientation (A–B). The change in orientation follows the local topography (i.e., the steep slopes of the monastery's eastern perimeter). To the east of rooms A–D, a wall separated this row of buildings from the monastery's garth, to create a passage (L–L–L). In this wall were found the remains of three vaulted window openings, indicating that this passage was in fact a cloistered ambulatory (Hausen 1922, p. 43).

Spaces D, E (including a fireplace), F, G, and H probably served household functions (Berthelson 1940, pp. 189–91; 1947, pp. 356–58). The monastery's brewery could have been located among these. Such an interpretation would make the order of Blom's inventory more spatially consistent, since its mention of the refectory (K) would then be followed by that of the brewery and kitchen (E, F, G), and then by descriptions of the buildings next to the church. Berthelson points out that space D had a doorway leading to the cloister walk, and thus it probably served as the chapterhouse or 'working space'.

This series of household spaces was interrupted by a gate (I), probably vaulted, leading to the nuns' garth. Hausen interpreted space C as a foyer, as its only doorway faced away from the monastery (Hausen 1922, pp. 43–46). Hausen discovered remains of a wood

and brick structure between spaces A and B, and together they could be the remains of a parlatory, providing the nuns with a connection to the outside world.

Berthelson points out that Hausen had been uncertain and only faintly sketched out the extremities of the southern wall enclosing the nuns' courtyard, where this met the north wall of the church. Berthelson argued, contrary to Hausen's plan, but in accordance with that of Vadstena Abbey, that a wall may have existed at this location, running parallel to the north wall of the church. This would have provided a connection between the western end of the church's north aisle, where the nuns were traditionally consecrated and received communion, to the main section of the nuns' quarters (Berthelson 1947, pp. 310, 356). Although Berthelson's argument appears plausible, Hausen's plan of the south side of the church has been found to be highly accurate, and therefore, there is no reason to think that his plan of the church's north side would be incorrect.

According to Hausen (1922, p. 46), space O was probably the confessional room. He locates the medieval nuns' sacristy within the present sacristy at the east end of the church. However, Berthelson (1940, pp. 191, 193; 1947, p. 359) suggests that instead of serving as a confessional room, space O might also have functioned as a parlatory for the monks and nuns. The space was accessed from the choir and possibly also from outside, next to the wall connecting the church's north-west corner and the main section of buildings in the monks' quarters.

The circular stone well (Ö), which still survives today, would have been located to the east of the nuns' quarters. Uotila (2011b, p. 66) suggests that instead of a source of freshwater, it was used as a cesspool. Moreover, the medieval cemetery was located on the east side of the church, approximately in the same place as the present parish cemetery. In 2005–2007, Uotila (2011b) found remains of several medieval wooden buildings in the area adjacent to the seashore, which he argued may have served for the production of textiles and literary texts. Lastly, it is known that the monastery had one or two gardens, but their location remains unidentified (Alanko and Uotila 2020).

6. Explaining the Distinct Layout

Since the plan of Naantali Monastery differs markedly from that of Vadstena Abbey, some scholars have sought to explain its distinct character. Hausen was concise in his descriptions, but Berthelson (1940, pp. 188–89) explicitly compares the two monasteries. He points out that according to the double monastery principle of the Bridgettine Order, nuns and monks had to be kept separate from one another, while still being able to communicate. This set certain criteria for the location and appearance of monastic buildings. According to St Bridget, the nuns' quarters were to be situated on the northern, and the monks' quarters on the southern side of the church, as in Vadstena (Berthelson 1928). Furthermore, the church's chancel also had to face the water—sea or lake—to the west.

In Naantali, in contrast to St Bridget's visions and to Vadstena Abbey, the plan does not consist of two enclosed quadrangles with a church between them. Berthelson (1947, p. 361) admits, however, that although the plans are not geometrically alike, the spatial organisation has clear similarities in how it separates the nuns' quarters from those of the monks on opposite sides of the church, and in the sequence of monastic spaces. The two main reasons for these similarities and dissimilarities are, according to Berthelson, firstly, the smaller size of Naantali's community of monks and nuns compared to that of Vadstena, and secondly, the site's difficult topography. As a result of the latter, there was space only for one row of buildings in the nuns' quarters on the eastern side of the triangular garth, and no space for the monks' quarters to be placed directly to the south of the church. In addition, Berthelson concludes that, 'a certain architectural primitiveness has become noticeable in the practical realisation of the plan, whereby the result has been more irregular in character than the first two reasons together could have caused'.

While focusing on the church, Lilius (1969, pp. 15–18; 1990, pp. 154–57) also touches upon Naantali's other monastic buildings. He argues that the Bridgettine principle of placing the church's west end to face the sea posed challenges for the architecture, and the

main reason for Naantali Monastery's departure from this principle was the sloping topography of its site. Significant differences in elevation are indeed visible in the monastery's church. The difference in elevation between the west and east ends of the church is 4–5 m, while in the nuns' quarters the difference was as much as 3 m. In the monks' quarters, the differences in elevation were smaller, while to the south of the church, the ground slopes so steeply that building the monks' quarters there was impossible.

The design of Naantali Monastery with its triangular garth is not unique: located only 15 km to the east, the Dominican Convent of St Olaf in Turku provides a parallel to this within the nearby area. The convent was located on the southern edge of the medieval town between a steep-sloped hill and a major river. The monastic complex was built in brick during the latter part of the 14th century or in around 1400 (Immonen et al. 2021), and its layout does not conform to a typical Dominican design. Similar to the nuns' quarters at Naantali Monastery, the Dominican Convent has an almost triangular garth and cloister walks, and the overall design appears elongated (Immonen et al. 2014). The church was positioned in the northeast corner of the complex, with a vaulted chapterhouse standing between the cloister and the church. Here also, scholars have explained the unusual plan as a necessity dictated by the difficult terrain.

A slightly different example of a monastic site with an unusual architecture is the Franciscan Convent on the Island of Kökar, within the Åland archipelago. The earliest indications of the presence of friars at the site date from the 14th century, but the Convent itself was not established until the mid-15th century (Gustavsson 1993). The location is unusual for Franciscans, who operated in urban areas, and the monastic community on Kökar remained very small. In addition to a church, only a kitchen, refectory, and cellar have been identified archaeologically at the site, along with the foundations of a few medieval houses. Archaeologist Gustavsson (1993) argues that the Franciscans chose this place because of the intensive seasonal fishing practiced in the archipelago. This brought in a lot of people and gave opportunities for preaching and collecting income.

The final example of architectural features deviating from the medieval norm are wooden high altars. According to the Canon Law, the top (*mensa*) of any altar was to be made of stone, and high altars were structures built of stone and brick. Although high altars in Finnish churches were mainly made of stone during the Middle Ages, in some cases they were constructed out of wood (Hiekkanen 2003a, p. 89). Hiekkanen (2003c) suggests that these are found in the churches where construction was halted by the Reformation, with temporary altars of wood becoming permanent thereafter. Both the wooden altars and Kökar Convent seem to break with established norms due to exceptional circumstances, although this is not due to topography.

A pattern thus emerges for explaining unusual monastic layouts in Finland: it is considered that builders attempted to follow the established principles but had to resort to amending layouts due to difficult topographical or other circumstances. Although other scholars do not explore this further, Berthelson goes on to explicitly argue that the execution of such plans bear signs of backwardness, perhaps stemming from Finland's marginal position in terms of European geography and low population density. However, the problems within this argument become apparent when the recent developments in scholarship on medieval urban planning are considered. Although topography has undoubtedly represented a significant factor in the architectural design both in Turku and Naantali, it does not necessarily imply a departure from medieval design principles or lower planning standards.

7. From Urban Planning to Monastic Architecture

Over the past two decades, a major shift in thinking concerning the planning of medieval towns in northern Europe has taken place. In 2001, Klaus Humpert and Martin Schenk (Humpert and Schenk 2001) argued that town centres in Germany were intentionally planned during the 11th- to 14th-century and did not develop by themselves organically over time (see also Lilley 2001; Boerefijn 2010). In other words, the position-

ing of squares, the curving of streets, the arrangement of gates, and the construction of structures related to water management were not haphazard, although their organisation may seem irregular compared to the layouts of post-medieval urban centres. Instead, these features were all part of an original urban plan that was created for the town's foundation. A similar change has also taken place in the interpretation of Nordic towns, as evident from analyses of the foundations of Linköping (Tagesson 2002) and Turku (Hiekkanen 2002, 2003b).

The new conceptualisation of Turku's foundation also explains why the Dominican Convent was erected in such a difficult location. According to Hiekkanen, Turku was designed and founded around 1300, and followed a tripartite layout. In the northern part of the urban area lay Turku Cathedral. The Market Square was placed in the middle of the town, while the Dominican Convent at the town's southern edge formed a kind of counterpoint to the cathedral. Later archaeological excavations in Turku have supported Hiekkanen's proposed scheme, revealing that just before 1300, the area consisted only of agrarian fields and a farmhouse (e.g., Saloranta 2019).

Modern advances in the study of medieval urban layouts have demonstrated that an apparently organic design does not necessarily indicate historically cumulative or random planning. Instead, these may express different conceptions of regularity to that guiding post-medieval, grid-based layouts, even though both adopt principles of urban design that had been defined in Antiquity (Andrén 1998). In fact, Mumford (1961, p. 302) argues that 'those who dismiss organic plans as unworthy of the name plan confuse mere formalism and regularity with purposefulness, and irregularity with intellectual confusion or technical incompetence'. This shift in conceptualising medieval urban layouts is a reminder that seemingly irregular designs did not necessarily deviate from the basic design principles as understood in the Middle Ages. This concept is also pivotal to the understanding of medieval monastic architecture. While St Bridget instituted the framework for her monasteries, following these principles did not necessarily require their design to replicate this formally. Instead, an ideal or functional similarity, as at Naantali Monastery, was sufficient. As a result, geometric divergences from an ideal plan or prototype cannot be taken as definite indicators of inferior architecture or a reflection of a site's distance from major European centres.

8. The Plan of Naantali Monastery as an Interpretative Challenge

The research on the architectural remains of Naantali Monastery exemplifies the development of Finnish medieval archaeology on a number of levels. Firstly, the site's research history is extensive, with the most important fieldwork undertaken in 1872–1872, when Hausen excavated at the site. Secondly, this early interest in Naantali Monastery left behind a problematic legacy of terse and inadequate documentation, with which subsequent scholars have been struggling ever since. Hausen focused his excavations on unearthing architectural features, therefore resulting in only a few finds of other materials. Meanwhile, Uotila's more recent excavations have shown how much additional information concerning the uses and functions of monastic spaces can be obtained from artefacts and ecofacts. Thirdly, the site's challenging research history has led scholars to overemphasise, perhaps inadvertently, the significance of generalisations and ideals, in order to make up for the difficulties posed by the original fieldwork data.

The main problem with the spatial reconstruction of Naantali Monastery is the scant available evidence (Lilius 1990, p. 151). It is not known how many alterations were made to the buildings during the monastic period, nor how many wooden structures stood on the site. In fact, before the stone buildings were erected, the whole monastery was probably constructed of wood, similar to the first monastic church. Another important issue is the absence of systematic comparisons between Naantali, Vadstena, and other Bridgettine monasteries in North Europe. Hausen referred to such comparisons, yet without setting anything out in writing. Later, Berthelson made more explicit comparisons between

Naantali and Vadstena, but his conclusions did not differ markedly from those of Hausen. As a result, a systematic comparison with other Bridgettine monasteries is still lacking.

In revisiting the plan of Naantali Monastery, we have mostly followed the observations of Hausen and other scholars but have taken a different approach in our reading of Christoffer Blom's inventory. We consider it not as a random list of selected spaces, but as possessing a spatial logic of its own. Reading Blom's inventory in this manner has made it possible to provisionally argue that building N might have been the Abbess's House, and that the brewery was located among other economic buildings within the nuns' quarters. We have also suggested that building P in the monks' quarters might have been the chapterhouse.

Scholars have referred to several factors to explain the distinctiveness of Naantali Monastery's plan. One of them has been the small number of inhabitants in Naantali in comparison to other Bridgettine monasteries. However, such reasoning assumes that only a small number of monks and nuns were anticipated, or already settled, when the construction of the monastery began. However, it is known from written sources that Naantali Monastery housed 54 nuns, 8 monks, 2 lay brothers, and 8 priest monks in 1487 (Klockars 1979). This would challenge the idea that Naantali Monastery represented merely a modest community of monks and nuns.

Another major factor pointed out by scholars as affecting the monastic plan is the challenging topography of the site. Some of the decisions made in planning Naantali Monastery seem indeed to stem from the conditions defined by the landscape. Nevertheless, the terrain does not explain why the builders did not use the considerably-sized and rather even space west of the church, but instead positioned the main block of the monks' quarters along a north–south orientation. The site's topography, along with any assumed backwardness of its architecture, does not therefore fully explain the plan of Naantali Monastery. As a result, the actual factors affecting its design deserve further analysis in future.

We concur that the existing models, which in the case of Naantali Monastery are St Bridget's visions and the plan of Vadstena Abbey, are important tools for reconstructing medieval monastic plans. Meanwhile, we propose that these can bring in latent and counterproductive baggage stemming from modern concepts of regularity. If local findings do not match these models, the discrepancy can easily be misconceived as evidence that the principles guiding monastic foundations have not been sufficiently understood or applied. However, one must acknowledge that medieval conceptions of ideals and their material articulations differed from those of the modern era, and do not support broader conclusions based on the perceived quality of their design. In fact, following from this argument, might it be possible instead to consider the use of triangular garths in Naantali and Turku as evidence of a regional style, rather than as mere anomalies? In terms of its function, if not its geometry, the plan of Naantali Monastery appears to conform well with the principles of the Bridgettine Order.

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Cistercian Monasteries in Medieval Sweden—Foundations and Recruitments, 1143–1420

Catharina Andersson

Department of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies, Umeå University, 90187 Umeå, Sweden; catharina.andersson@umu.se

Abstract: This article presents an overview of the Cistercian monasteries that were founded in Sweden in the 12th and 13th centuries. The first were Alvastra and Nydala, founded in 1143, both male monasteries. However, eventually the nunneries came to outnumber the male monasteries (7/5). The purpose of the article is also to discuss the social background of the monks and nuns who inhabited these monasteries. As for the nuns, previous studies have shown that they initially came from the society's elite, the royal families, but also other magnates. Gradually, social recruitment broadened, and an increasing number of women from the aristocratic lower levels came to dominate the recruitment. It is also suggested that from the end of the 14th century, the women increasingly came from the burghers. The male monasteries, on the other hand, were not even from the beginning populated by men from the nobles. Their family backgrounds seem rather to be linked to the aristocratic lower layers. This difference between the sexes can most probably be explained by the fact that ideals of monastic life—obedience, equality, poverty and ban on weapons—in a decisive way broke with what in secular life was constructed as an aristocratic masculinity.

Keywords: monasticism; aristocracy; medieval Sweden; monasteries; nunneries; nuns; monks; Cistercians; donations; gifts; diplomas; charters; gender; masculinity

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1. Introduction

In the 1160s, Ingegerd, sister of King Karl Sverkersson, is believed to have entered the prestigious Vreta monastery in the province of Östergötland. Before she entered, her brother, King Karl, had donated extensive and generous gifts to the convent. Because Ingegerd became the monastery's prioress, she ultimately found herself in control of the donated property. About 150 years later, another woman would be admitted to another of Sweden's oldest nunneries. Presumably at a young age, Cristina entered the Vårfruberga monastery in the province of Södermanland to take the veil. She was placed in the convent by her father, Botvid, who in connection with the entry also donated property to the convent. Botvid's gift of land was, however, far more modest than the king's donations almost 200 years earlier. Beyond this, we do not know much about either Cristina or her father. However, in contrast to Ingegerd's royal background, it is obvious that Cristina and Botvid did not belong to the elite of society (Johansson 1964, p. 75; SDHK n.d., Svenskt Diplomatariums huvudkartotek (The Main Catalog of Diplomatarium Suecanum), 5783). In other words, it was not always the case that the convents were primarily inhabited by the daughters of the most noble elite. Rather, a certain social diversification can be noted within its walls.

This article discusses who populated the oldest monasteries and nunneries in Sweden. Based on recent studies as well as existing sources, this study examines the social background of the nuns and monks who lived in the monasteries and how these social patterns changed over time during the Late Middle Ages through the beginning of the 15th century. In addition, the article investigates whether one can see a difference in this respect between the male and female monastic houses.

As the focus is on the Cistercian order, the article also presents an overview of the main founding period—from the time of the first monks' arrival in the 1140s through the 13th century. As for the nunneries, the convents commonly considered to belong to the order will be included. (In some cases, however, there is some uncertainty as to which order the nunneries in question were initially affiliated). This article suggests that the burgher families came to play an increasing important role as a recruitment base for the nunneries during the Late Middle Ages. The monasteries' social recruitment base is also discussed from a gender perspective. In recent decades, research has clearly shown that gender is a fundamental factor in how societies are organised as it is evident that gender also reflects a power relationship between the sexes. In her classic article, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis" (1986), Joan W Scott emphasises that gender is one of the main fields through which power is expressed. There are also other fields, but gender "seems to have been a persistent and recurrent way of enabling the signification of power in the West" (Scott 1986, pp. 1067–70, quotation p. 1069). The Swedish historian Yvonne Hirdman further suggests that the relations between the sexes follow two basic logics: the separation of the sexes (i.e., different spheres) and the norm that the male is superior. The stronger the distinction between the sexes (i.e., what is generally considered "female" and "male"), including their tasks and spheres, the stronger the primacy of the male norm (Hirdman 1988).

In medieval Sweden, social organisation as well as power relations were clearly linked to gender. This is, not the least, evinced by the legal male supremacy—all women, except for widows, were formally under male guardianship. In addition, women did not have access to public offices. As for the ecclesiastical and monastic world, the separation of the sexes and the hierarchies of power based on gender were also evident as men were the exclusive holders of ecclesiastical offices. This was not called in question by the monastic organisation, despite the seemingly more egalitarian world that monastic life offered. In addition, monasteries kept women and men strictly limited by the formal *enclosure*, physically separated from the outside world, including the opposite sex. Although an abbess supervised her convent and probably had some influence in the secular world, she too was subordinated to various male authorities such as a bishop or abbot from a nearby male monastery. In addition, unlike an abbot, an abbess did not have the authority to inaugurate new nuns or to perform the sacraments in her convent such as lead the service or receive confession.

It can also be assumed that the work the nuns performed in the monastery, at least in part, reflected the chores performed by women outside the monastery. For example, the nuns in Vadstena abbey, the mother house of the Bridgettine order, largely devoted themselves to sewing and textile care (although this was not their only occupation) (Rajamaa 1992, pp. 148–59). However, the traditional division of labour, or the subordination of the abbess vis-à-vis other ecclesiastical offices, was not the only way in which the monasteries maintained traditional gender structures. Later in the article, it will be argued that the gender structures of the surrounding secular society (i.e., the expected way of life for women and men) were also reflected in the aristocratic group's motives and reasons for placing—or not placing—a child or other relative in a convent.

2. Monasteries and Kings during Social Transformation

In the 12th century, the Cistercian order was established in Sweden. Only one monastery, Vreta Abbey, initially Benedictine, is known before the arrival of the Cistercians. During the 12th century and the first half of the 13th century, twelve Cistercian monasteries were founded. In 1143, the two oldest male monasteries, Alvastra and Nydala, were established. A third male monastery, Varnhem, was established around 1150 (perhaps earlier), and by the 1160s, two more monasteries for men had been established, Julita (later Säby) and Roma, the latter on the island of Gotland. Nunneries were also established at a rapid rate. As will be seen below, the early history of Vreta Abbey is unclear. From the 1160s, however, it is usually considered to be Cistercian, and was at the time one of the

country's most prestigious nunneries. Several nunneries followed. In most cases, the exact year each nunnery was established cannot be determined, but the majority were founded in the second half of the 12th century (although some would move to other areas in the 13th century). Nunneries were established in Askeby, Gudhem, Byarym (later Sko), Fogdö (later Vårfruberga), and Riseberga. No later than 1248, the last of the Cistercian nunneries, Solberga monastery, was founded, similarly to Roma, on the island of Gotland.

The 12th century, when the first monasteries were founded in Sweden, can also be described as a time of missions. Although the first known missionary, Ansgar, visited Birka, a Viking-era village, in the early 9th century and Viking seafarers temporarily professed the new faith in the 10th century, it was not until the 11th and 12th centuries that ecclesiastical organisations established themselves in what was to become Sweden. The first churches were founded in the 1000s and 1100s; however, in Varnhem, not far from the monastery, excavations have recently shown that a wooden church existed at the end of the 10th century (Vretemark et al. 2020). These churches were often built by private individuals, but the initiatives also came from the monarchy as well as church authorities or through collective peasant initiatives. These churches formed the basis for the first parishes during the 12th century (Brink 1996, pp. 269–90; see also Bonnier 1996), but the first dioceses were established in the 11th century. The oldest, Skara diocese, was established in Västergötland, west of Lake Vättern, as early as the middle of the 11th century. In the province of Småland, the Linköping diocese was established no later than 1139 when the Skara diocese was divided into two dioceses. Both Skara and Linköping were dioceses that would exist throughout the Middle Ages (Nilsson 1998, pp. 81–82). Although the details are not clear, Linköping had an ecclesiastical tradition before 1139. Possibly, the diocese existed shortly after 1104, when a Scandinavian church province was established and Lund became the archdiocese (Nyberg 2000, p. 79). A little over half a century later, in 1164, Sweden became its own church province with the archdiocese in Uppsala, which is in the region Svealand, north of the region Götaland.

During this time, as this ecclesiastical establishment was in progress, the kings increasingly sought to centralise power. Viking society, where power was based on looting and personal loyalties, was gradually replaced by a society based on the political and economic power associated with royal administration, including the collection of taxes and the establishment of laws (Lindkvist 1988). The kings relied on the church to help transform society to their liking. The administrative skills needed to run the royal administration were provided by literate men, i.e., clerics. In addition, Christianity offered the kings divine legitimacy for their claims and exercise of power. During the 11th century, most of the Swedish kings proclaimed themselves to be Christian. King Olov Eriksson Skötkonung, according to tradition, was baptised in Husaby (Västergötland) around 1000, and, unlike his father, Erik Segersäll, he did not seem to return to paganism after his Christian baptism. King Olov's activities probably strengthened the church. For example, he is associated with the founding of the diocese of Skara (Nilsson 1998, p. 66).

The kings also supported the ecclesiastical organisation with land and protection, so one can argue that the monarchy and the church benefited one another. This cooperation is, for example, evident by the fact that the kings invited and welcomed the monasteries, which, through prayer and prestige, supported them.

In this respect, it is also of interest to draw attention to the relatively high number of nunneries during the period. As we will see, the founding and origin of nunneries, similarly to the male monasteries, can be understood from a political context. The first Cistercian monasteries founded in Sweden were male, but before the end of the century, the female monasteries outnumbered male monasteries. The fact that many nunneries were founded in a recently Christianised kingdom is not unique to Sweden as this was also the case in the Frankish Kingdom and Anglo-Saxon England during the 6th century and Saxony during the 10th century (Tibbets Schulenburg 1989, p. 213; Leyser 1979, pp. 63–64; Southern [1970] 1977, pp. 309–10). These early nunneries were often founded by aristocratic families who presumably needed a place to send widows or unmarried daughters, and

they often controlled some of the nunnery's land holdings. As the nunneries increasingly came to control this property themselves, these aristocratic families lost their interest (Southern [1970] 1977, pp. 309–10; Leyser 1979, pp. 64–71). However, it has also been suggested that the Church's openness towards female participation was particularly high in its initial periods. Max Weber, for example, notes that women in different religious contexts during the "first stage of a religious community's formation" were welcomed, but women's participation declined as "routinization and regimentation of community relationships set in" (Weber [1922] 1965, p. 104). Similarly, Susan Fonay Wemple notes that Frankish women's opportunities to perform different tasks and services within the church were increasingly limited, especially during the Merovingian period (Wemple 1981, pp. 127–48). Similarly, R. W. Southern notes that for the Merovingians and the Anglo-Saxons "[a]s society became better organized and ecclesiastically more right-minded, the necessity for male dominance began to assert itself" (Southern [1970] 1977, p. 310).

A similar argument can be made for Scandinavia. The Cistercians arrived in Denmark about the same time they arrived in Sweden. In Denmark, three Cistercian nunneries and ten male monasteries were founded. However, in contrast to Sweden, the Cistercians in Denmark were not the first order to broadly establish monasteries during the 12th century. The first monastery in Denmark was founded 1096 in Odense, a Benedictine monastery for men. However, during the next century at least five, perhaps even six, Benedictine nunneries were founded as well as two double monasteries (i.e., monasteries for both men and women). Before 1275, 13 Benedictine nunneries and 11 male monasteries had been established in Denmark (Smith 1973, p. 43, passim; Gallén 1956), a ratio that is line with the number of female Cistercian monasteries established in Sweden. For the same reasons, the fact that monasteries founded in Sweden during and since the 13th century in most cases were intended for men seems not particularly remarkable in this context (for an overview of the Swedish medieval monasteries and nunneries, see Lovén 2001).

Thus, the Cistercian monasteries did not function as autonomous institutions, isolated from society. The political context in which the Cistercians' oldest monastery operated as well as who actively worked to establish the Cistercian order in Sweden has also been the subject of much debate in earlier research. The following discussion, however, provides an overview of the conditions related to the establishment of monasteries. Some political actors will be presented as well as some theories about their monastic involvement, but otherwise, the political conditions will not be discussed in detail (detailed accounts of the political context are given in France 1992; Nyberg 2000).

3. Monasteries

3.1. Alvastra, Nydala, Varnhem

The Cistercian chronicle *Exordium magnum cisterciense* reports that Bernhard of Clairvaux, on the request of Queen Ulfhild, sent the first monks to Sweden. According to tradition, on their way through the new land, the group split, settling in two locations: Alvastra monastery in the province of Östergötland, east of Lake Vättern, and Nydala monastery in Småland, south of the same lake. Both monasteries were established in 1143. Thus, both monasteries were affiliated with Clairvaux and were founded within the diocese of Linköping in Östergötland (Nilsson 1998, p. 120). In Alvastra, the monastery is said to be founded on the estate of Queen Ulvhild, who had received it as a "morning gift" (a gift the husband gives his bride after the wedding night) from her husband, King Sverker the Elder. The location and the monastery became important to the royal family, as is evident by the fact that King Sverker as well as the future kings of the family were buried in the monastery church. However, Alvastra was not only important to the royal family; it was as the order's foremost monastery in the kingdom, its *primas* (Johansson 1964, p. 64). Nydala is closely associated with Bishop Gisle in Linköping. Gisle, the first known bishop of the diocese of Linköping, was obviously very engaged in the establishment as he donated an estate to the monks. Traditionally, it has been claimed that the donation was taken from the bishopric, but it has also been suggested that it, at least in part, may have been

part of Gisle's private property (SBL n.d., *Svenskt Biografiskt Lexikon*, "Gisle"). Initially, the monastery was plagued with financial problems, perhaps because it served as a shelter for travellers; however, eventually, Nydala would become very rich and a large landowner (Johansson 1964, p. 66).

A third monastery is usually mentioned when the Cistercians' arrival in Sweden is discussed—the Varnhem monastery in the province of Västergötland, west of Lake Vättern. Around 1150, monks started a monastic community at Varnhem, a daughter house of Alvastra. The church is still used today and there are traces of several other buildings of the original monastery complex. However, Varnhem was most likely not the monks' first location, as the monks might have arrived in the 1140s. Supposedly, they lived and worked on the island of Lurö in Lake Vänern for a short period according to a Danish source from the 17th century (according to Tore Nyberg, probably based on a text from the 13th century), which claims that King Sverker was involved not only in the creation of Alvastra but also in the establishment of a second monastery. However, the monks did not stay long on the island. They are assumed to have moved to Lugnås on the mainland before moving to their permanent location, Varnhem. According to the same Danish document, the estate in Varnhem was given to the monks by a noble woman named Sigrid, who was a relative of Queen Christina, the spouse of (the future) King Erik Jedvardsson (Nyberg 2000, pp. 131–33).

The circumstances surrounding the early years in Varnhem are unclear. It has, for example, been assumed that Erik Jedvardsson opposed the founding of the monastery and sought to persuade Sigrid to stop supporting the Varnhem monks, which explains why the monks temporarily stayed in Denmark. Erik's opposition to the monastery might have been related to the competition for power that existed between the King Erik Jedvardsson and King Sverker (Nyberg 2000, pp. 137–39). Later, however, Erik's family, who in the next century periodically held the royal title King, would create strong ties to Varnhem monastery.

3.2. Julita/Saba, Roma

These oldest monasteries were established, as has been seen, in the three provinces: Västergötland, west of Lake Vättern, Östergötland, east of the same lake, and present-day Småland, south of Lake Vättern. These provinces are also part of the larger region of Götaland in today's southern Sweden. These areas are also the locations of the two oldest dioceses that existed throughout the Middle Ages—the Skara diocese in the west and the Linköping diocese in the east (the latter also included Småland). In 1164, when Sweden became its own church province, Stefan, a Cistercian monk from Alvastra, was appointed the first archbishop of the diocese. The archdiocese was in Uppsala, in the region Svealand, north of Götaland. The geographical expansion of the ecclesiastical organisation had its equivalent in terms of monastic establishment. In the 1160s, the first male monastery outside the dioceses of Skara and Linköping was established in Viby, close to Sigtuna, in the province of Uppland. The first monks came from Alvastra. The estate they settled on had been given to them by a woman named Doter, another woman engaged in the establishment of a new monastery. We know her from a charter that was drawn up in 1164 (which is also the oldest preserved letter issued in Sweden) in which Archbishop Stefan judges in a dispute between the monastery and Doter's son, Gere, who claimed the land his mother gave to the monks belonged to him. Unsurprisingly, the archbishop judged the dispute in favour of the monks (SDHK 200). However, the monks' presence in Viby did not last long. By the 1180s, they had moved to Julita, also often referred to as Saba, in the province of Södermanland, about 160 km southwest of the original location. This time, however, the move was the result of royal influence. King Knut Eriksson, son of Erik Jedvardsson, donated the property in Julita, so the monastery moved from Viby to their new location. Knut's influence is also evident in the preserved sources where he is mentioned as a devoted patron of the monks. He was also included in the monastery's fraternity (SDHK 214). In addition to any religious beliefs, his commitment to the monks

can also be interpreted from a more political perspective. Similar to his father, Knut can be connected to Västergötland. However, during his long reign, the kingdom became politically more stable, and Knut was the first king from the Götaland region to control the region farther north, Svealand. To consolidate his influence in this region, it seems logical to emphasise his presence by also creating strong ties with the Cistercian monastery (and perhaps, indirectly, the archdiocese).

Finally, among the oldest Cistercian monasteries intended for men, is Gutnalia, later referred to as Roma, on the island of Gotland in the Baltic Sea. The monastery was founded in 1164 as a daughter house of Nydala monastery. Beyond this, the facts about its establishment are sparse. It has been suggested that Bishop Gisle, who was earlier engaged in the establishment of Nydala, helped establish Roma (Nyberg 2000, p. 206). However, no documents have been preserved from the monastery that could shed further light on its founding, including royal involvement in the founding of the monastery. The absence of royal engagement, however, does not seem particularly remarkable as Gotland at the time stood outside the Swedish king's geographical sphere of power. Other sources point to cooperation with and support from Estonia, which was geographically as close to Gotland as mainland Sweden. The monks conducted missions in Estonia and had relationships with the German Orders of Knights. Over time, the monastery became very rich, eventually owning property in Estonia (Nyberg 2000, p. 206; Nilsson 1998, p. 126; Johansson 1964, p. 71).

Clearly, the royals were involved in these oldest male monasteries except for Roma, and the interests of the kings coincided with the interests of the monks. In addition, women were involved in the creation of these early monasteries and were very much a part of the monastic life. What, then, were the circumstances surrounding the founding of the nunneries?

4. Nunneries

The oldest nunneries in Sweden are usually presented as Cistercian. However, their initial affiliation is not entirely clear, and it has been argued that during the founding period in the 12th century, the nunneries should be described as Benedictine, as the Cistercians initially did not include female nunneries in their order (Lovén 2001, p. 247). Overall, throughout the 12th century, women are rarely mentioned in Cistercian documents. When women are mentioned, they are presented in a dismissive manner or referred to as problems. Monks who accepted and received visits from women were severely punished. Moreover, monks performed traditional female chores on the *grangies,* the agricultural branches characteristic of the Cistercians, rather than permitting women on the premises (i.e., by the *conversi*—see below). However, at the beginning of the 13th century, an increasingly permissive attitude towards women began to gain ground, and women were increasingly perceived as spiritual support for the monks. Finally, in 1213, the Cistercian order formally allowed nunneries within the order (McGuire 2010, pp. 245–48). However, the fact that the nunneries were not formally admitted to the Cistercian order did not necessarily prevent them from being viewed as Cistercians by their contemporaries. Within the order, abbots often took an informal responsibility for nearby nunneries and assisted the nuns with masses, blessings, and similar tasks linked to the duties of a priest. After the nunneries had formally been accepted within the order, the formal responsibility of the abbots for the nunnery continued as *cura monialium* (care for nuns) (McGuire 2010, pp. 247–49).

As noted above, a relatively permissive attitude on the part of the ecclesiastical organisation when missions were active is also conceivable. Since there was no established network of monasteries by the time the Cistercians arrived in Sweden, these monks and their monasteries became essential actors in spreading and establishing monasticism in this northern part of the ecclesiastical sphere. Thus, perhaps one can assume a greater tolerance vis-à-vis the nunneries and female participation in this mission also from the Cistercians.

Therefore, one could also hypothetically assume that contemporary population, at least to a certain degree, also initially perceived the nunneries as Cistercian. However, the

sources are ambiguous. The leader of the nunnery is sometimes called the prioress (the Benedictine term for the leader of the house), sometimes the abbess (the Cistercians term for the leader of the house). Furthermore, the term prioress can occur in the same charter where a convent is described as Cistercian. Yet another example shows the ambiguity in the sources: the convent in Riseberga, in the province of Närke, is referred to as Cistercian in a letter dated 1248, but Benedictine in 1284. The affiliation of the order does not always seem to have been completely clear even to members of the order (Lovén 2001, pp. 247–46; SDHK 616; 611; 1264).

In what follows, the convents that are commonly described as Cistercian will be presented, even though their affiliation is unclear. For the Vreta monastery, however, it is beyond doubt that the convent initially was Benedictine, since it was founded before the Cistercians arrived in Sweden.

4.1. Vreta

The Vreta monastery is commonly described as the oldest monasteries in medieval Sweden. It was founded in the beginning the 12th century in Östergötland and ruins of the monastery can still be seen on the west shore of Lake Roxen, about 200 km southwest from Stockholm. Most scholars agree that King Inge (the Elder) Stenkilsson and Queen Helena established the monastery. The exact year is unknown, but there is also an agreement that the king died before 1110. Consequently, the monastery must have been established before 1110. However, it has also been suggested that the monastery was founded even earlier. According to this hypothesis, King Inge might very well have died shortly after 1101 (the queen probably survived him). If that was the case, the monastery should have been founded around the year 1100 or even in the late 1000s (Nyberg 2000, pp. 81–82).

Before we take a closer look at the details of the founding of Vreta, let us for a moment again dwell on the political context in which the monastery was established. Although the kings professed Christianity during the 11th century, throughout the century there were most likely still local leaders and groups, especially in the province of Uppland in Svealand, who opposed the new faith or perhaps opposed the new system of power and centralisation which the new faith brought with it. The introduction of Christianity, with its close cooperation between the monarchy and the church, meant that power was increasingly concentrated in the king's hands at the expense of local leaders (Nyberg 2000, pp. 78–82).

However, there was also a recurring struggle for royal power within Christian political circles, with political actors who tried to strengthen their own legitimacy through Christian actions and symbols. Monarchs established their spiritual and political presence in a region by founding or strongly supporting a monastery, as with Knut Eriksson and the Saba monastery. In the case of Vreta, a similar hypothesis can be made for King Inge. The king was, as well as his father before him, King Stenkil, closely connected with Västergötland on the west side of Lake Vättern. However, his presence in Östergötland shows that his political ambitions were more extensive. Furthermore, according to the Icelandic *Hervarasaga* from the 13th century, Inge had political ambitions also in Svealand and the province of Uppland, although the political resistance seems to have been strong in that area. Founding a monastery in Svealand may therefore have been a rash project. A monastery in Vreta, on the other hand, nevertheless marked his political presence outside Västergötland. A previous study on Iceland has also shown that monasteries were often placed in border areas, between the territories of the various leaders (Udnæs 2002, p. 79). In other words, King Inge's supposed monastic foundation can be understood as a way to strengthen his political position, vis-à-vis pagans (as proposed by Nyberg 2000, pp. 81–82) as well as Christian rivals. Thus, the political context in which the monastery came into existence should not be overlooked. Clearly, the monasteries played an important role in a politically turbulent time.

Vreta was initially Benedictine although it has been debated whether the monastery was originally intended for nuns or for monks. In 1945, the historian Nils Ahnlund

published an article in which he claimed that the monastery from the beginning was established as a Benedictine nunnery and that Queen Helena, King Inge's spouse, entered the nunnery after her husband's death (Ahnlund 1945, p. 325; passim). The notion that the monastery was originally for women has been accepted by researchers for a long time. However, Tore Nyberg questions this assumption in *Monasticism in North-Western Europe, 800–1200* (2000) where he reviews the political circumstances surrounding the oldest Scandinavian monasteries. Nyberg focuses on the presumed close connection between the monastery and the bishopric in Linköping. Among other things, he notes the architectural similarities between Vreta monastery and the bishop's church in Linköping. According to Nyberg, King Inge might have believed that a monastery should be built close to the bishop's church (Vreta is located about 10 km outside Linköping). Nyberg also concludes that this monastery was probably intended for men. Nyberg pays attention to a similar model that can be found in the Norwegian diocese of Bergen, whose cathedral was combined with a monastery and monastic church relatively close by (Nyberg 2000, pp. 83, 153). Bertil Nilsson goes even further by hypothesising that the land where the monastery was built had been the home of an earlier church and even bishopric by the time the monastic order was in place, although only for a short duration. The intention of the royal couple's significant donation may have been to establish a community for diocesan clerics, "a monastery". This would then follow a pattern known also from other early bishoprics in Scandinavia. Dalby, Lund, and Roskilde in Denmark are all early examples of churches to which early communities of priests were attached (Nilsson 2010, pp. 37–42). Lars Hermanson, on the other hand, does not per se go into the specific discussion of whether Vreta was originally a nunnery or monastery but emphasises the important political significance of nunneries. Kings, whose power rested on completely different conditions than had been the case during the Viking Age, needed to legitimise their claims to power by displaying their Christian faith. They needed to claim that they had received their power from God and therefore were holding a sacred office. The queen was an important part of this exercise of power as she represented an earthly version of the Queen of Heaven, the Virgin Mary. To fully act as a Christian queen, according to Hermanson, she needed to have a female monastic institution at her disposal. As for King Inge and Helena, this meant Vreta (Hermanson 2010, pp. 221–24, 235–36).

So, there are several unanswered questions about the monastery's early years, although most historians believe that the monastery was founded by King Inge and his wife, but it cannot with certainty be proven that the monastery continuously existed during the first half of the century. However, when it comes to the second half, there is a relative agreement that King Karl Sverkersson was involved when the monastery was "re-founded", or alternatively, transformed into a Cistercian nunnery, possibly in 1162. The king handed over an extensive donation to the nunnery and, as the introductory example shows, according to tradition, the king's sister, Ingegerd, is said to have entered the nunnery and become its abbess. Therefore, Vreta soon came to be, or perhaps more likely, was already from the very beginning, a particularly prestigious nunnery. Several women from the royal families entered the nunnery as early as the end of the 12th century, which contributed to its high reputation; in addition, the nunnery received extensive donations from families other than the royals (Nilsson 1998, p. 129).

4.2. Riseberga, Askeby, Solberga

Soon after Vreta, a second Cistercian monastery for women was founded, Askeby in Östergötland, about ten kilometres east of the bishopric in Linköping. Askeby is first mentioned in 1280 in a papal letter of protection, but it has been assumed that it was founded as early as the 1160s, similar to Vreta during King Karl Sverkersson's reign. No domestic documents have been preserved from the nunnery's first years, although Askeby is often considered to have had close connections with Karl Sverkersson. Later, the nunnery, similar to Vreta, received extensive donations from the society's most aristocratic families,

although it never competed with Vreta in reputation (Johansson 1964, pp. 79–80; Nilsson 1998, p. 129).

Riseberga, another second daughter house of Vreta, was situated in the province of Närke in the diocese of Strängnäs. Riseberga's founding probably took place a few decades after Askeby was founded, and the sources do not indicate any direct royal involvement. Nevertheless, a person with close ties to the reigning king was responsible for the initial donation, Earl (*jarl*) Birger Brosa. Birger served under King Knut Eriksson, and after the king's death also served under King Sverker (the Younger) Karlsson (SBL n.d., "Birger Brosa"; "Sverker den yngre"). However, Knut Eriksson acted, as we have seen, as a strong defender of the Saba monastery and perhaps was Birger's initiative for a new nunnery, as Nyberg claims, supported by the king's goodwill (Nyberg 2000, p. 211). However, it is not possible to determine the exact date of Birger's donations, and he might have made his donations after King Knut's death in 1195 or 1196. Two donation letters issued by Birger indicate that he transferred property and fishing rights to the nunnery, but the two letters where this information is discussed cannot be dated more precisely than between 1180 and the year of the earl's death, 1202 (SDHK 245; 246). We do know, however, that after his death, his widow, Brigida, entered the nunnery. Brigida was a descendant of royal families—daughter of the Norwegian King Harald Gille. In addition, for a short period she was Queen of Sweden, before she married Birger (SBL n.d., "Brigida").

The last of Vreta's daughter houses was Solberga, situated on Gotland, only a few hundred meters outside Visby's town wall. It was also the last of the Cistercian nunneries to be founded. The circumstances surrounding the foundation are, again, not entirely clear, but the nuns are first mentioned in a charter from 1246, which is also considered the year the nunnery was established. In this letter, the bishop of Linköping, Lars, transfers the sacrificial income from "St. Olof's altar in Åkergarn" to the nuns. According to Bishop Lars, the initiative for the nunnery was taken by the clergy and the population on the island, which led the bishop to send a number of nuns there. The rights to the gifts from the chapel probably strengthened the finances of the newly founded nunnery. However, the nunnery does not seem to have been financially strong after its founding even though the nuns were said to have come to the island on an invitation from the Gotlanders. The right to the income from St. Olov's chapel caused recurring conflicts between the convent and the local population (Johansson 1964, pp. 884–85; Nilsson 1998, p. 131; Berglund 2013, p. 120).

4.3. Gudhem

The highly regarded Gudhem monastery, on the other hand, was one of the richest nunneries in medieval Sweden. Unlike Vreta and her daughter houses, Gudhem was in Västergötland, about 20 km southeast of the diocese of Skara and 20 km southwest of Varnhem monastery. The view from the hillside where the nunnery was situated is impressive, and in beautiful weather the nuns could see as far as the cathedral in Skara. Ruins of both the monastery church and other buildings can still be seen. Similar to Vreta, the convent became very prestigious. One of the reasons for this was the large donation that Queen Katarina bequeathed to the nuns in 1250, and the queen may have entered the convent herself (SDHK 642; 653) as she was buried in the monastery church. A replica of her tombstone can still be seen at the monastery ruins (the original is placed at the Swedish History Museum, Stockholm).

Gudhem is also one of the country's oldest nunneries, dating in the 12th century. It has been suggested that King Karl Sverkersson, as was the case with both Vreta and Askeby, was involved in establishing Gudhem, and that he founded the nunnery when he became king in 1161. Nyberg, however, opens the possibility that the royal manor on which the convent was founded may have been handed over to the nuns by Erik Jedvardsson in 1158—i.e., before Karl Sverkersson became king. It must then have been a Benedictine nunnery. In the sources, however, the nunnery is first mentioned in a papal protection letter issued sometime between 1168 and 1177 (Nyberg 2000, pp. 184–86; Johansson 1964, p. 77; SDHK 222). If Erik Jedvardsson was also involved in the establishment of Gudhem, this

would be in line with the positive attitude he eventually showed the Varnhem monastery. Moreover, as with the monks in Varnhem, in the coming decades the nuns' ties to the Erik family were strong, as is evident by Queen Katarina's engagement to Erik Eriksson, the great-grandson of Erik Jedvardsson.

4.4. Byarum/Sko, Fogdö/Vårfruberga

Two more nunneries belonged to the Cistercian order, although both left their original locations during the 13th century: Byarum, originally located in Småland, eventually moved to Sko in Uppland, and Fogdö monastery (later called Vårfruberga) moved from its original location in Södermanland to a location a few kilometres away.

The Byarum nunnery was founded in the late 12th century. According to Hilding Johansson, the nuns received property from King Knut Eriksson and Linköping's bishop, Kol (Johansson 1964, p. 81). Byarum is located about 35 km north of Nydala, one of the previously mentioned first two Cistercian monasteries. The original location was at the intersection of two roads, one from the west and one main transit road from the north, which continued south towards Nydala and the larger city Växjö (Nyberg 2000, pp. 210–11). The likely intense traffic is sometimes cited as the reason why the nuns moved as the constant traffic and visitors may have been too financially onerous. In the 1230s, the nuns moved to Sko. This move proved to be financially rewarding for the nuns. According to tradition, Knut Långe, recognised as king from no later than 1231, transferred property to a group of nuns around 1225. In the 1230s, the nuns from Byarum are believed to have joined the group. Furthermore, the king's son, Holmger Knutsson, is said to have been even more involved in the "re-founding" of the convent by providing large donations. Holmger was buried in the monastery church (probably, his father was, too) and was later revered as a saint by the nuns (Johansson 1964, pp. 81–82; Sjödén 1942, pp. 1–2; Hall 1909, p. 2).

Finally, a few words about the origin of the last nunnery in this presentation, although not the last one founded. Fogdö monastery is not mentioned in the sources until 1233, but it was most definitely founded before this year. Specifically, there is another source that is relevant in this context—a land register of the convent's estates. In the register, Earl (*jarl*) Siward is mentioned as responsible for the founding. However, this Siward is otherwise unknown, but several researchers suggest that the foundation took place during the second half of the 12th century, perhaps even as early as the middle of the century (see Johansson 1964, p. 83; Nyberg 2000, pp. 153–54). Whether any other persons were involved in its establishment is unknown. However, a papal bull from 1193 reveals that Knut Erikssons's betrothed was put in a nunnery for protection for a limited but politically turbulent period. Knut himself was forced into exile. It has been suggested that the nunnery in question was Fogdö, which would then support the idea of its relatively early establishment, possibly in 1060 or even in the 1150s (Annell 1983, pp. 78–81). What we do know for sure, however, is that the nunnery moved a short distance from its original site around 1290 and that it later came to be called Vårfruberga. Similar to several of the other Cistercian monasteries, this convent would eventually become very rich and own a great deal of land.

5. The Nuns

As with the monk's monasteries, the royal families were intimately involved in the founding of the female monasteries; however, members from these families also entered the nunneries often after their husbands died. Clearly, the royal families had very strong ties to both male and female monasteries during the 12th century. By the 13th century, the networks around the monasteries expanded, however, still representing the society's uppermost layer, often with close ties to the royal families. During this time, royal support often changed—increasingly, the kings' support consisted of providing letters of protection rather than donating property. However, the monasteries continuously received extensive donations, but over time, donations came from other magnates as well as lower-level aristocrats. In terms of entrances, the royal presence in the Cistercian convents also

decreased. After 1250, when Queen Katarina is believed to have entered the convent in Gudhem, we do not know of any royal woman who converted to Cistercian monastic life.

In general, previous historical research on the Swedish Cistercian monasteries has paid little attention to the individuals who entered in monasteries as monks and nuns and which social strata they represented. Although it has been noted that widowed queens and other prominent widows made a life in nunneries, the focus has been on the monasteries' economic conditions, property, or their importance in a political context (for economic conditions, see Sjödén 1942; Ossiannilsson 1945; Tollin 1987; Holström and Tollin 1990). However, in 2006, Catharina Andersson published her dissertation, *Kloster och aristokrati. Nunnor, munkar och gåvor i det svenska samhället till 1300-talets mitt* (*Monasticism and Aristocracy. Nuns, monks, and gifts in Swedish Society until the Middle of the Fourteenth Century*), which identified the women who joined the nunneries, including their social background, up to 1350. In addition, she discussed why families sent their daughters to nunneries. Andersson argued that a daughter in a nunnery should be understood from a gift-theoretical perspective, where a daughter is seen as a gift to God and that the daughter's family expected to receive both spiritual and worldly gifts—i.e., benefits—in return.

The study included the seven Cistercian nunneries as well as the three convents that followed the Mendicant orders—i.e., the convents in Skänninge, Kalmar, and Stockholm. The latter, however, showed great resemblance to the traditional Cistercian nunneries, and unlike their Mendicant brethren, the sisters lived under strict enclosure and accepted material donations.

The source material consisted of "entrance diplomas". Since the woman, or more commonly her father, usually transferred property to the nunnery in connection with her entry, a diploma or charter was prepared to confirm the transfer. The charter described the transferred property, and moreover, it also confirmed the nunnery's right of disposal of the property even though a nun occasionally could be guaranteed some of its profit. The donation constituted the woman's allowance, but the donations were in several cases very extensive and fulfilled other functions, including strengthening the relationship between the convent and the family providing the donation. Andersson argues that personal ties to a prestigious monastery also meant that other family member's, primarily the father's, social position and symbolic capital were strengthened (for more on donation's social context and consequences, see Rosenwein 1989; White 1988).

In the study, at least 81 entering women (or young girls) were identified. Some diplomas did not specify the exact number of the women entering the convent, for example, sometimes the vague wording "my daughters" was used. As most women were under formal male guardianship, most of the entry diplomas were issued by a male relative, usually a woman's father, although a woman's brothers or even son could issue an entry diploma. However, 15 of the women identified issued their own the diplomas. Most probably, these women were widows since they obviously had the legal right to dispose of their own property by transferring it to the nunnery. One can also assume that in some of these cases the nunnery served as a place for retirement, a sort of pension. This is, for example, a reasonable interpretation of the circumstances surrounding Ulfhild Rangvaldsdotter's entry into Riseberga convent in 1325. In addition to the extensive donation Ulfhild brought with her to the convent, she also brought at least one, possibly three, servants and stipulated what would be included in her allowance (Andersson 2006, Tables 1–5; SDHK 3327).

In some of these diplomas, a title is stated in connection with the issuer's name, for example, *dominus* (knight), or for a widow, the title of her deceased husband. In other cases, it was possible to determine the donor's social status with the help of supplementary charters or with the help of results from previous research. In this way, it could be determined whether, for example, the issuer was politically associated with the king—i.e., a member of the Council of the Realm (*riksråd*). About 40% of the identified women could be linked to the society's uppermost class (Andersson 2006, pp. 401, 411, passim).

However, most of the others also belonged to the aristocracy, but most likely without personal ties or very distant ties to the national elite. Rather, they supposedly acted in their local environment. In some cases, the woman's family possibly even belonged to the group of better-off farmers.

In support of ascertaining the woman's social affiliation, the size of the entry donation was also studied. The issuers who could not be linked to the upper strata of the elite generally made less extensive donations to the convent than did the elite. Donations from the latter usually consisted of at least one *markland* or more, whereas donations from the former other, the local aristocracy, on average, donated a half *markland* when the woman entered the convent (Andersson 2006, pp. 178–83). Previous research has estimated that 1 *markland* approximately corresponds to 12 hectares (i.e., almost 30 acres) and that a common peasant usually cultivated about a half *markland*. However, assumptions like this must be used with great caution (see Myrdal 1985, p. 36; 1999, p. 38).

In other words, we can conclude that there was some social diversification among the nuns. Indeed, most nuns came from families who could spare a significant amount of property to place their daughters in a convent. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the families' assets, social position, and probably status differed. Furthermore, women from the lower strata of society could, under certain circumstances, enter a nunnery. There are, for example, several cases where former female servants and daughters of a servant's family are offered a place in a nunnery, seemingly as a thank you for long and faithful service. In 1302, Ramfrid, widow of the Law-Speaker (*lagman,* i.e., the highest legal office in the province) in the province of Uppland, bequeathed a sum of money to the daughter of her servant. The daughter's name is not mentioned, but the will states that the money was for the daughter, who had a minor disability, to be received in Gudhem nunnery. Perhaps the girl in question was unable to work, so she was sent to the nunery—a gesture of social care from Ramfrid, the housewife (SDHK 1985).

Whereas the first monastic period was characterised by a royal interest in monasticism as well as royals actively entering nunneries, the second period (i.e., from the middle of the 13th century) was characterised by a social broadening, both in terms of who materially supported monasteries and who chose to place their female family members in the nunneries. Presumably, one can also speak of a third period, the late medieval, which started in the second half of the 14th century. However, regarding the monasteries' social recruitment base during the Late Middle Ages, only Vadstena Abbey has been the subject of a more extensive study. The mother house of the Bridgettine Order, established in 1384, has been thoroughly investigated by Lars Arne Norborg in his classic study *Storföretaget Vadstena kloster* (1958). In this study, Norborg shows that most of the women who were received and brought property to the monastery did not belong to the upper aristocracy, even during the abbey's founding period. On the other hand, the proportion of the burghers' daughters clearly increased during the 15th century (Norborg 1958, pp. 37–38).

No studies have investigated the social backgrounds of the Cistercian nuns after 1350. However, it is a reasonable hypothesis that the Cistercian nunneries eventually received an increasing number of daughters from the burghers. In the previous study by Andersson, which covered the period up to 1350, only a few of the identified women were from burgher families, and those who were identified as such entered one of the Mendicant convents. No woman from a burgher family was identified in a Cistercian nunnery. However, a primary search in the database *The Main Catalog of Diplomatarium Suecanum* (SDHK) has been carried out: a search was made in the detailed "summary of contents", which is attached to each diploma's data record (most of the diplomas are also shown in their entirety with its original text, in Latin or Old Swedish). These summaries provide information on the date and often the place where the diploma was prepared and included the name and title of the issuer, the main content of the diploma text, and the role of the issuer in this specific context. The search was carried out on all Cistercian nunneries existing between 1351 and 1420. Some additional data were retrieved from an older edition of diploma summaries from the National Archives—*Svenska riksarchivets pergamentsbref I-III*

(RPB 1866–1872). These searches identified 45 women, most of them through the diplomas prepared for their entrance to the convent, but in some cases also through wills where one specific nun was one of the beneficiaries. The review reveals only a first identification of these women, and to analyse their social background in more detail, a more comprehensive analysis of the entire original diplomas is needed. Nevertheless, this first review clearly indicates that a change in the nunnery's recruitment base, compared to the previous period. The most striking change is the social status of the issuer. In only one of these cases does a knight act as an issuer. On 13 July 1400, the knight (*riddare*) Karl Ulfsson provides for Bengta Staffansdotter's entrance into the Vårfruberga convent—however, obviously, she was not his daughter (SDHK 15435). On two occasions a squire (*väpnare*) puts a woman in a convent (SDHK 17343; 19380). No further example is given of a nun who, through the issuer's title, can be linked to the elite. In most cases, there was no title at all among the issuers, and specified titles would in most cases have been expected if the issuer belonged to the national elite. On the other hand, nine of the identified women can certainly be linked to the burghers. Some of these women lived in the Riseberga monastery, and some even had family living outside Sweden. Jacobus Plescowe had his will prepared in March 1361. Jacobus was a member of the town hall in Lübeck (*rådman*), and among the beneficiaries of the will, two female relatives (*fränkor*) in Riseberga monastery appear (SDHK 7929). Nuns who can be linked to the burghers are also found in other diplomas (SDHK 8527; 9143; 39745).

A thoroughgoing study of all these 45 women's social origins is highly desirable. An initial review of the diplomas nevertheless gives an indication of the late medieval conditions. In contrast to the period before 1350, the supreme elite rarely appeared. There is a faint hint that it was instead the burghers' daughters who entered the nunneries. To get more detailed information about the rest of these women, the majority of who were placed in the nunnery by a close male relative without a title or issued their own diploma, more detailed studies are needed. Further investigations need to be made into the size of the donated property and to what extent donations of property were replaced by other entrance gifts, for example, money. It is not unreasonable that it would turn out that the proportion of women linked to the burghers would have increased even more.

6. The Monks

As we have seen, the first nuns in the Cistercian monasteries originated from the elite, including the royal families, and then families who could donate very large estates to the monasteries. This pattern differs in a striking way from what we find in the male monasteries. The earliest monks arrived from other monasteries in Europe, not from the native royal families. Not even later, it seems, were sons of the elite the ones who primarily populated the monasteries. Who, then, were these monks?

It is a greater challenge to investigate the monks' family backgrounds than the nuns' family backgrounds. We have a comparatively large number of preserved diplomas when it comes to women's entrances into the convents. When, however, it comes to men's entries, these documents are extremely rare because men, in contrast to women, had the opportunity to bring other gifts other than property, mainly their labour. In contrast to the nuns, whose properties to a large extent probably were cultivated by tenants (*landbor*), some of the monks cultivated the land themselves—the group within the monastery known as *conversi*. These men made a less extensive vow, and their main task was to perform a large part of the manual labour within the monastery. They were not ordained priests, nor did they learn Latin, but they could provide manual labour. Priests, however, brought with them other gifts the monastery needed—their education and their ordination. One could not approach the monastery empty-handed. However, for men, there were more options than land or estates, alternatives that did not require a charter as property was not being transferred.

However, with the help of a thorough and systematic review of other types of charters, some personal information can, occasionally, be gained also in the case of the Cistercian

monks. Although social stratifications are not possible, the limited information that exists may still be a point of departure for a discussion about the social structures within the male monasteries. For example, the article "Male Monastic Recruitment among the Cistercians in Medieval Sweden" (Andersson 2014) analyses the family backgrounds of 15 monks or children placed in a monastery during the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries. Two groups of entrants were given special attention in the study: children (i.e., child oblates) and adults (i.e., choir monks). However, the *conversi*, as well as elderly men who sought entrance into a monastery as a sort of retirement home, were not considered in the study.

When it comes to children in the 1130s, the decade before the Cistercians were established in Sweden, the order formally forbade boys under 16 years old from entering. In the Swedish material, entering boys are also rare. Only five boys (or young men) who were placed in the monastery by their parents could be identified in the survey. Three of these left the monastery as adults. Although the preserved sources are very limited, boys who were placed in monasteries with the intention that they would live their whole lives there seem to have been unusual. On the other hand, it is not implausible that children were put in a monastery for a shorter period to receive an education or as a way for the family to formally create social bonds with the monks. Placing a son in a monastery was probably a way for families, similar to daughters in a nunnery, to create personal ties with a prestigious institution. Placing a son in a monastery for only a limited period can also be understood in relation to the medieval tradition of fostering. This practice, placing a child in another kin-group or related family, was a way of creating and maintaining social bonds and contacts with relatives and other kin-groups. This practice was a well-established when monasticism was established in Sweden, so it may have been transferred and incorporated into the monastic culture (Andersson 2014, pp. 151–58, 169).

Of the ten adult men who lived in the monastery as monks, six were certainly ordained priests. This was probably also the case for one or more of the remaining four monks. However, what applied to all of them, including the children identified, was that none of them had direct ties to society's uppermost layer—i.e., the aristocratic elite. In a few cases, a person from the elite was found in the monk's external family circle or network or a few generations earlier. Sune, who went to the monastery as a child or at a relatively young age, was probably a great-grandson of a brother of the influential Birger jarl (earl), the father of two future kings (SDHK 887; 7615; 8309). Nonetheless, the other cases are linked to the lower aristocracy. In some cases, the monks had obviously served as local priests before taking the monastic vow or had local priests in their families (Andersson 2014, pp. 160–65). However, many diplomas have been lost, and it is possible that several monks also had ties to the elite.

However, it is not unreasonable, based on the total convergence of the sources we have, to formulate the hypothesis that the Cistercian monks were primarily recruited from a lower aristocracy. This is also in line with European conditions. Admittedly, Constance Brittain Bouchard notes that Burgundian Cistercian monks often came from families of knights. In a Burgundian context, however, the title *knight* refers to a group of men who operated on a local level. They did not necessarily represent the most noble families, as was the case in the less populous Sweden. Instead, Bouchard notes that the monastic leaders "tended to be noble but of the middle or lower nobility. They were not burghers' or peasants' sons, but neither were they sons of great dukes and counts. At Cluny, for example, the abbots were routinely the sons of castellans and knights" (Bouchard 1987, p. 77). In Sweden, on the other hand, the title of knight meant that the man in question belonged to the elite—i.e., a man often closely connected with the kings' family circles. The sources, albeit sparse, give no strong indication whether the Cistercian monks were recruited from this elite. In other words, what first appears to be a difference between Sweden and other parts of Europe can be understood as a similarity.

7. Why Daughters—And Not Sons?

So, it seems obvious that the nunneries during the 12th, 13th, and the beginning of the 14th century attracted the uppermost layers of society, the aristocratic elite, to a much greater extent than the monasteries for men. Hypothetically, it can further be assumed that this difference became less apparent during the Late Middle Ages. For the latter period, there are indications that it was rather the lower aristocratic layers who showed interest in the nunneries, a situation that probably had long been the case for the monasteries. However, how can the previous difference be explained? Why is there such an inconsistency when it comes to the actions of the royal families as well as other magnates vis-à-vis the nunneries and male monasteries? Why did they place their daughters there, but not their sons?

It is sometimes argued that the decision to place a daughter in a nunnery most probably was an economically cheaper alternative to the aristocracy than to arrange a secular marriage (see Cooke 1990). However, this assumption has also been questioned. Bouchard, again with references to Burgundy, argues that the initial donation was rather extensive, comparable to both the sons' inheritance shares and the daughters' dowries (Bouchard 1987, pp. 59–67). In addition, the Swedish sources give no indication that the entry into a nunnery was primarily motivated by economic reasons. Without exception, the diplomas state that the right of disposal of the donated property belonged to the nunnery. In other words, in contrast to the dowry, the entry donation went out of the family's control forever (Andersson 2006, pp. 233–43, passim).

In addition, the donation cannot be assumed to have been less extensive than an expected dowry. A more reasonable interpretation is that both the dowry as well as the entry donation generally corresponded to the daughter's inheritance share, the latter stipulated and guaranteed by the laws.

In my opinion, to better understand the underlying reasons why daughters were placed in a nunnery (in addition to the obvious religious motives), it is more profitable to investigate the social benefits expected after the daughter was placed in a nunnery, such as strengthening the family's social position in society. Furthermore, giving a daughter as a gift to a nunnery could also be part of how conflicts were resolved. This is a reasonable interpretation for the understanding of the motives behind Algot Bengtsson's, Law-Speaker (*lagman*) in Västergötland during the 14th century, decision to put his firstborn (as far as we know) daughter in Vreta nunnery in Östergötland. He could just as easily have chosen the nearby Gudhem nunnery for his daughter, as we have seen also a very prestigious nunnery. However, Algot chose Vreta. Why? The answer may be sought further back in time. At the time for the entrance, Vreta was led by the abbess Ingrid, daughter of Svantepolk Knutsson. Svantepolk, who lived from the 13th to beginning of the 14th century, belonged to the nobility and had close connections to the king. During his lifetime, a serious conflict flared up between Svantepolk and the ancestors of Algot. The consequences were severe for the Algot family and led to their loss of both political influence and positions. Algot's grandfather was, for example, deprived of his position as Law-Speaker in Västergötland. For Algot, who managed to regain some of the family's influence and social position, the decision to place his daughter in Vreta nunnery, a nunnery strongly connected with Svantepolk's family, can therefore be interpreted to improve the relations between the families. The daughter became a gift of reconciliation—a way to recreate formal bonds of friendships between the families. (SDHK 4332; Koit 1957, pp. 1–6; SBL n.d. "Algot Brynolfsson"; see Andersson 2006, 2013; on formalised friendship in a political context, see Hermanson 2009).

Still, the question remains—why daughters? Why not sons? In my opinion, part of the explanation for this should be sought in contemporary gender ideals of the medieval aristocracy. Placing a daughter in a nunnery rather than letting her enter a worldly marriage did not necessarily make such a big difference when it came to what a woman was expected to do or her formal rights and obligations. Both inside and outside the nunnery, the woman was under guardianship and supervision, so her legal capacity was severely limited both

as a nun and as a married woman. However, in contrast to secular women, nuns were forbidden to own any property. On the other hand, since secular women in most cases were under male guardianship, they did not have a formal opportunity to dispose of their land, or, as Maria Sjöberg puts it, activate their property as a power resource (Sjöberg 1997). None of the alternatives, life as a married woman or a life as a nun, questioned the basic order—i.e., a woman's limited legal capacity or real control of land (see Andersson 2010).

Placing a son in a monastery, on the other hand, stood in direct conflict with secular aristocratic ideals of manliness—i.e., how aristocratic masculinity and identity should be constructed. The monk was expected to live by the norms and regulations that were practiced within the walls of the monastery—personal poverty, obedience, equality, celibacy, and an apostolic life. These were ideals clearly contrasted with the fundamental values of a secular aristocratic male identity. The aristocratic man possessed self-determination as well as guardianship over himself and others. He owned and, in contrast to most women, had the right to dispose this property. This was not only a matter of ownership of tangible assets—it was fundamental in terms of power and influence (Sjöberg 1997). Equally important was the right to bear arms and fight, essential in the construction of masculinity. Monasteries, for example, banned weapons. Furthermore, for the monk, there was only one alternative when it came to sexuality—celibacy. This can also easily be contrasted to sexual activity, an obvious part of secular masculinity (Karras 2008, p. 54; Damsholt 2004, p. 130). Subsequently, the monks were "handicapped in relation to the understanding of masculinity of the time", as Nanna Damsholt puts it in her article with the rhetorical title "Is a monk a man?" (Damsholt 2004, p. 130, my translations).

The conflict between secular and clerical masculinities has also been considered by many researchers, and clerics has even been given the title "emasculine" (Swanson 1999). Ruth Mazo Karras, on the other hand, stresses that clerical identity should be understood as a variant of the masculine gender. According to Karras, a metaphorical fight is cherished by the clergy—i.e., the fight against the physical desire the celibacy provoked. Mastering this desire meant that the clerics considered themselves to possess a higher morality than secular men. Accordingly, one can also speak of a competition between different masculinity ideals (Karras 2008, pp. 52–61; for more on competing masculinities, see Connell 1995).

Thus, placing a son in a monastery implicated a greater conflict with secular ideals of gender than it would be if a daughter was placed a nunnery. Or, as Swanson puts it: "Religious women still fitted in the traditional trinity of female life-styles (virgins, married, widows), but religious men became extraneous to contemporary gender constructions" (Swanson 1999, p. 167). This, I think, is an important factor that must be considered when interpreting the sources, and its seemingly lack of nobilities or men from the uppermost aristocracy inside the monasteries. These groups certainly showed a great interest in the monasteries, male as well as female. However, this interest seemingly and significantly decreased when it came to the question of whether any of its male family members themselves would enter these monasteries and be incorporated in the monastic community.

8. Conclusions

In this article, attention has been drawn to the different social groups that were represented in the Cistercian monasteries in medieval Sweden and the patterns that emerge when one compares nunneries and the monasteries intended for men. It can be ascertained that the monasteries and the nunneries were actively supported by the kings during the monastic establishment phase. The monasteries were important tools in the kings' ambitions to centralise power. It is reasonable to think that the relatively high number of nunneries and the openness towards them are expressions of the fact that the church was in an establishment phase and that the nunneries strengthened the church's institutional presence in the kingdom.

Among the people who came to live their lives within nunneries, although not within the monasteries for men, we find people from the royal family circles as well. Furthermore,

the nunneries were overall more frequently populated by people from the uppermost aristocracy than were the monasteries for men. In the beginning, the monks seem to have been recruited from the lower, more locally active aristocracy. During the Late Middle Ages, however, these social differences between the nunneries and monasteries diminished since the elite appears to have placed their daughters in nunneries to a lesser extent than before. Instead, these nunneries were probably populated by a relatively higher proportion of women from the burghers.

In the article, it has further been argued that a plausible explanation for the aristocracy's lack of interest when it comes to placing male family members in a monastery should be understood in terms of contemporary gender ideals. The monk's life and power broke (in contrast to the nun's) in a decisive way against several of the elements that were part of a secular aristocratic masculinity. The rule of St. Benedict prescribed a life of chastity and obedience, entirely devoted to prayer, Mass, and God. However, although the idea of monastic life was living "outside the world", monastic life undoubtedly resembled the world outside.

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Medieval Monastery Gardens in Iceland and Norway

Per Arvid Åsen

Natural History Museum and Botanical Garden, University of Agder, 4604 Kristiansand, Norway; per.arvid.aasen@uia.no

Abstract: Gardening was an important part of the daily duties within several of the religious orders in Europe during the Middle Ages. The rule of Saint Benedict specified that the monastery should, if possible, contain a garden within itself, and before and above all things, special care should be taken of the sick, so that they may be served in very deed, as Christ himself. The cultivation of medicinal and utility plants was important to meet the material needs of the monastic institutions, but no physical garden has yet been found and excavated in either Scandinavia or Iceland. The Cistercians were particularly well known for being pioneer gardeners, but other orders like the Benedictines and Augustinians also practised gardening. The monasteries and nunneries operating in Iceland during medieval times are assumed to have belonged to either the Augustinian or the Benedictine orders. In Norway, some of the orders were the Dominicans, Fransiscans, Premonstratensians and Knights Hospitallers. Based on botanical investigations at all the Icelandic and Norwegian monastery sites, it is concluded that many of the plants found may have a medieval past as medicinal and utility plants and, with all the evidence combined, they were most probably cultivated in monastery gardens.

Keywords: medieval gardening; horticulture; monastery garden; herb; relict plants; medicinal plants

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1. Introduction

Monasticism originated in Egypt's desert, and the earliest monastic gardens were vegetable gardens (McLean 1989; Meyvaert 1986). In approximately 350–400AD, organized monasticism spread from the Eastern Mediterranean to Italy, France and Spain and North Africa (Schumacher 2009). The rule of St. Benedict (c. 480–550) stated that the monastery should, if possible, be so arranged that all necessary things, such as water, mill, garden, and various crafts may be situated within the enclosure, so that the monks may not be compelled to wander outside, for that is not at all expedient for their souls. It is worth noting that the Benedict's rule was translated into the Old Norse language (Myking 2017). Further, the monastic rule of St. Isidore, bishop of Seville (c. 560–636), specified the need for a garden in the cloister (Harvey 1990).

Several thousand monasteries were founded in Europe, the northernmost located in Greenland (Grayburn 2015), Iceland (Kristjánsdóttir 2017) and in central Norway (Lunde 1987).

The plan of St. Gall (www.stgallplan.org, accessed on 12 January 2021) is the oldest surviving plan of a complete monastery. It originated in the Benedictine monastery Reichenau c. 819–826, and is now kept in St. Gallen monastery in Switzerland. The plan is probably a design for an ideal monastic community, complete with a herb garden by the infirmary, a kitchen garden and an orchard associated with the cemetery; for details, see Tremp (2014). Another plan is that of the Priory of Christ Church at Canterbury c. 1165, with the herb garden located near the infirmary, enclosed between wattled fences, and a tree garden included in the cemetery (Harvey 1990). Both plans show the cloister garden at the heart of the monastery, alongside the church. It was dominated by a green lawn, maybe with violets, lillies, strawberries and dasies symbolizing the virgin Mary (Behling 1967; Widauer 2009), an evergreen tree, a rose and a fountain. It was a place of retreat, and where the monks processed at regular intervals (Landsberg 1998; Stannard 1983).

The herb garden included general medicinal plants, those that are poisonous, narcotics, plants related to blood-letting needs, aromatics and some ornamentals that would refresh patients by their beauty (Landsberg 1998). The inventory would obviously vary with the different monastic communities. Not least would this apply to the Icelandic and Norwegian monasteries located at the northern borders of Christian civilization, where the establishments were smaller and the climate less favourable.

However, before the monasteries were established, there existed viking gardens, gardens in towns and possibly also at medieval farmsteads (e.g., Helweg 2020; Holmboe 1921; Sandvik 2006; Sjögren et al. 2021; Øye 2015). It seems obvious that the religious orders in Iceland and Norway would utilize this knowledge when monastic gardens were established. Both Norway and Iceland were highly influenced by Anglo-Saxon and Irish Christianity, where monastic gardens were common (Coppack 2006; Larsson et al. 2012).

In this context, a garden is understood as a fenced-in area where plants were cultivated at a small scale using only handheld tools (spade)—this in contrast to agriculture, with large crops in wider fields, where the plough was the main tool.

In Iceland, Kristjánsdóttir (2017) has described fourteen monasteries and nunneries, dated between 1030 and 1554, all assumed to have belonged to either the Augustinian or the Benedictine orders (Figure 1).

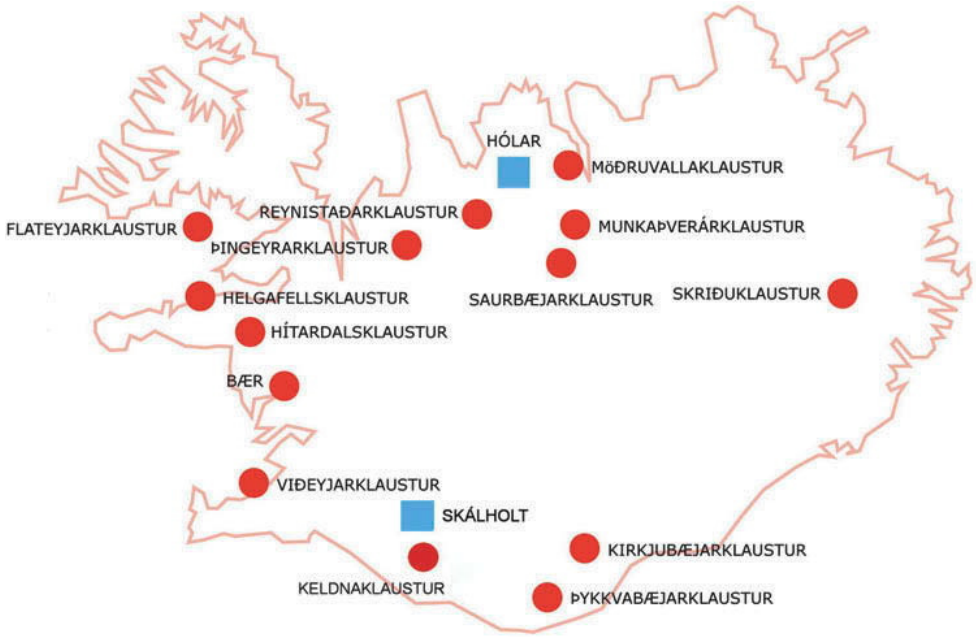

Figure 1. Medieval Icelandic monasteries and nunneries (red), and bishoprics (blue).

In the first complete description of the 26 Norwegian monasteries and five nunneries, Lange (1847) stated that «*All the monasteries had a garden, often several, and they were well tended...the monks brought fruit-trees, cuttings, herbs and flowers from abroad, in order to plant them in Norwegian soil. And still today one can find gardens by the monasteries that contain fruit-trees*». The monasteries were all dissolved during the Lutheran Reformation c. 1536.

Archaeobotanical material from excavations in the medieval towns in Norway (e.g., Buckland and Wallin 2017; Dunlop and Sandvik 2004; Eriksson 1990; Griffin 1977, 1981, 1988; Hjelle 2007; Lindh et al. 1984; Moltsen 2016a, 2016b; Petersén and Sandvik 2006; Sandvik 2000a, 2000b; Sture 2017a, 2017b, 2017c; Wallin 2017) and six monastic sites in Iceland (https://notendur.hi.is/~sjk/KK.htm, accessed on 10 February 2021) give important evidence on the kind of plants that were present in the Middle Ages, and possible cultivation in monastic gardens (Figure 2).

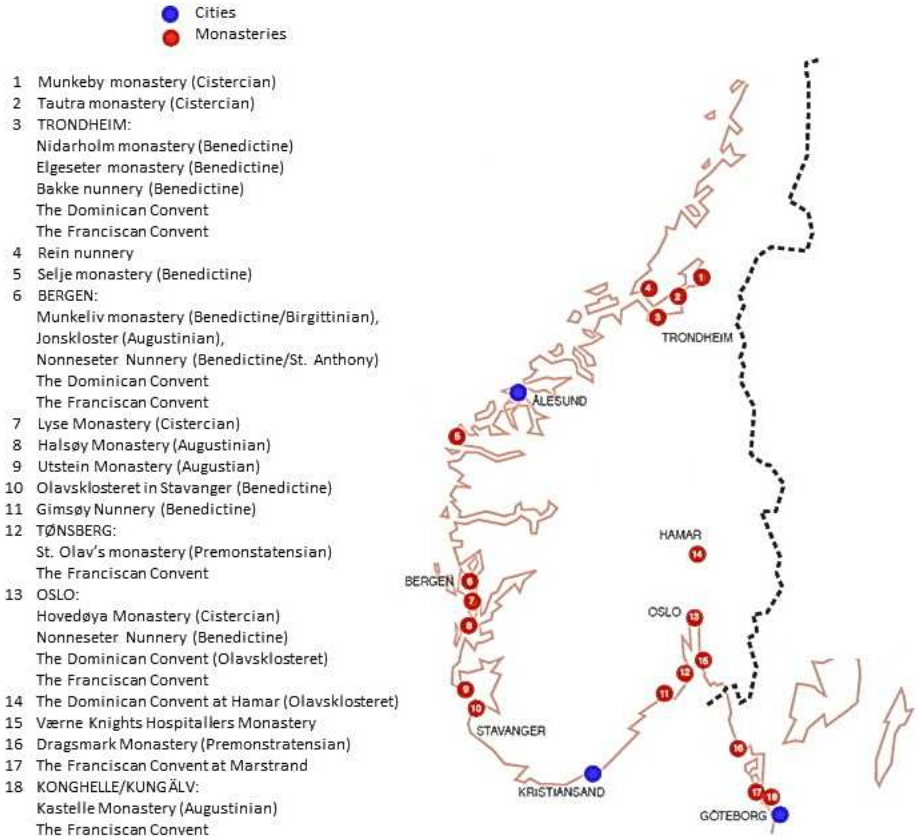

Figure 2. Medieval Norwegian monasteries, nunneries and convents.

Medieval cultural relict plants are considered living remnants from medieval times, i.e., they have survived at a certain locality since medieval times. Løjtnant (2017) has investigated the relict flora of 2600 medieval localities in Denmark between 1993 and 2011. He has shown that a particular medieval relict flora exists that, in his opinion, dates back at least to medieval times. Problems always exist in interpreting which species can be termed a medieval relict plant. I have focused on introduced plants, the isolation of a given locality, the presence of archaebotanical records, finds in other similar loacalities and literature records.

This article is based on botanical surveys of all the Icelandic and Norwegian monastic sites between 2003 and 2014 and known archaeobotanical data (Larsson et al. 2012; Kristjánsdóttir et al. 2014; Åsen 2015) in order to increase the knowledge of the Icelandic and Norwegian monastic gardens and plants to be able to compare and interpret these results with prevailing opinions about the monastic garden, cultural relict plants, and the plant material found in similar contexts in other parts of northern Europe.

The main purpose of this research—*from a strictly botanical view*—is to to establish a possible connection between introduced medieval utility plants, relict plants, archaeobotanical data and written sources with possible monastery gardens in Iceland and Norway, suggesting foremost utility gardens. The scope of the research does not focus on garden design or the aestetics of gardens, since no monastery garden has been exactly located or excavated and very little archaeobotanical data exists from the actual monastic sites.

2. Results

2.1. Iceland

The Benedictine Monastery at Bær í Borgarfirði was established by the English missionary bishop Rúðólfur in 1130 as the first monastery in Iceland (Bæjarklaustur). Three monks were still present in 1149, when Rúðólfur became abbot of the Abington monastery in England and the monastery at Bær ceased. It is suggested the monastery was probably located beneath the present church (Kristjánsdóttir 2014).

Not far from the church, *Laukaflatir*, a plain approximately 100 × 100 m, is completely dominated with field garlic (*Allium oleraceum*), an introduced species known only from Bær and Skáney today, and the first record from Bær is in Halldórsson (1783). The place name Laukaflatir has been known for a very long time (Daviðsson 1943). There is an unverified story that Rúðólfur brought the field garlic to Bær from the Trondheim area in Norway. (At the the Tautra monastery on an island in Trondheimsfjord, the field garlic is common.) At Skáney, a German doctor, Lazarus Mattheusson, practised in the period 1527–1570. He could have introduced the field garlic from Germany or maybe from Bær (Larsson et al. 2012). Table 1 provides a list of the utility plants mentioned in the text.

Table 1. Utility plants mentioned in the text possibly cultivated in Icelandic and Norwegian medieval monastery gardens.

Scientific Name	English Name	Norwegian Name	Icelandic Name
Aegopodium podagraria	ground-elder	skvallerkål	geitakál
Aethusa cynapium	fool's parsley	hundepersille	villisteinselja
Allium oleraceum	field garlic	vill-løk	villilaukur
Allium scorodoprasum	sand leek	bendelløk	
Allium ursinum	ramsons	ramsløk	bjarnarlaukur
Anchusa officinalis	alkanet	oksetunge	nautatunga
Angelica archangelica ssp. *archangelica*	garden angelica	fjellkvann	ætihvönn
Aquilegia vulgaris	columbine	akeleie	skógarvatnsberi
Arctium lappa	greater burdock	storborre	krókalappa
Arctium minus	lesser burdock	småborre	
Artemisia absinthium	wormwood	malurt	malurt
Artemisia vulgaris	mugwort	burot	búrót
Asparagus officinalis	asparagus	asparges	spergill
Asperugo procumbens	madwort	gåsefot	gæsalöpp
Ballota nigra	black horehound	hunderot	
Balsamita major	costmary	balsam	maríubrá
Bellis perennis	daisy	tusenfryd	fagurfífill
Berberis vulgaris	barberry	berberis	ryðbroddur
Borago officinalis	borage	agurkurt	
Brassica oleracea	cabbage	kål	garðakál
Campanula rapunculoides	creeping bellflower	ugrasklokke	skriðklukka
Cannabis sativa	hemp	hamp	hampjurt
Carum carvi	caraway	karve	kúmen
Chelidonium majus	greater celandine	svaleurt	svölujurt
Cichorium intybus	chickory	sikori	sikoría
Conium maculatum	giftkjeks	hemlock	eitruð plöntutegund
Corylus avellana	hazel	hassel	hesli
Crataegus monogyna	hawthorn	hagtorn	snæþyrnir
Cynoglossum officinale	hound's tongue	hundetunge	hundatunga
Daucus carota	wild carrot	villgulrot	gulrót
Descurainia sophia	flixweed	hundesennep	þefjurt
Digitalis purpurea	foxglove	revebjelle	fingurbjargarblóm
Euonymus europaeus	spindle	spolebusk	beinviður
Fagopyrum esculentum	buckwheat	bokhvete	bókhveiti
Fagus sylvatica	beech	bøk	beyki
Foeniculum vulgare	fennel	fennikel	fennika
Fraxinus excelsior	ash	ask	evrópuaskur
Fumaria officinalis	common fumitory	jordrøyk	reykjurt
Glechoma hederacea	ground-ivy	korsknapp	krosshnappur
Hedera helix	common ivy	bergflette	bergflétta
Hesperis matronalis	dame's violet	dagfiol	næturfjóla
Hyoscyamus niger	henbane	bulmeurt	
Hyssopus officinalis	hyssop	isop	ísópur
Lamium album	white dead-nettle	dauvnesle	ljósatvítönn
Leonurus cardiaca	motherwort	løvehale	
Linum usitatissimum	flax	lin	spunalín
Lithospermum officinale	common gromwell	legesteinfrø	

Table 1. *Cont.*

Scientific Name	English Name	Norwegian Name	Icelandic Name
Malus domestica	apple	hageeple	epli
Malus sylvestris	crab apple	villeple	villiepli
Malva neglecta	dwarf mallow	småkattost	
Marrubium vulgare	white horehound	borremynte	vallarhélukrans
Myrica gale	bog myrtle	pors	mjaðarlyng
Nepeta cataria	cat-mint	kattemynte	kattablom
Papaver somniferum	opium poppy	opiumvalmue	draumsól
Pastinaca sativa	parsnip	pastinakk	pastínakka
Petasites hybridus	butterbur	legepestrot	hestafífill
Peucedanum ostruthium	masterwort	mesterrot	
Pisum sativum	garden pea	ert	gráerta
Plantago major	greater plantain	groblad	græðisúra
Primula veris	cowslip	marianøkleblom	sifjarlykill
Prunus cerasus	dwarf cherry	surkirsebær	súr kirsuber
Prunus padus	bird cherry	hegg	heggur
Pyrus communis	pear	pære	perur
Ribes rubrum	red currant	hagerips	rauðberjarifs
Ribes uva-crispa	gooseberry	stikkelsbær	stikilsberjarunni
Rosa rubiginosa	sweet-briar	eplerose	
Sambucus nigra	elder	svarthyll	svartyllir
Sanguisorba officinalis	greater burnet	blodtopp	blóðkollur
Saponaria officinalis	soapwort	såpeurt	þvottajurt
Solanum dulcamara	bittersweet	slyngsøtvier	náttskuggi
Solanum nigrum	black nightshade	svartsøtvier	húmskuggi
Tanacetum vulgare	tansy	reinfann	regnfang
Urtica dioica	common nettle	stornesle	brtenninetla
Urtica urens	small nettle	smånesle	smánetla
Valeriana officinalis	valerian	legevendelrot	garðabruða
Verbascum densiflorum	dense-flowered mullein	prydkongslys	
Verbascum nigrum	dark mullein	mørkkongslys	surtarkyndill
Verbascun thapsus	great mullein	filtkongslys	gullkyndil
Veronica beccabunga	brooklime	bekkeveronika	veitarbládepla
Vica faber	broad bean	hestebønne	hestabaunir
Viola odorata	sweet violet	marsfiol	ilmfjóla

Most likely *laukr* (leek, onion, garlic) was cultivated in Iceland during the Middle Ages. Guðrún Ósvífrsdóttir converses with her sons in the laukagarðr (leek garden) near the Helgafell monastery. Further, a laukagarðr is mentioned at Holar, known between 1457 and 1525, where the bishop is said to have died in 1457. The only pollen record, from Skriðuklaustur (see below), indicates cultivation in Iceland (Jensson 2004), although pollen from a single place does not prove conclusively that it was grown in Iceland at the time. Laukagarðr is also mentioned in Jónsbok, but this may originate in Norwegian laws (Larsson et al. 2012).

In a recent pollen study from Bær, *Allium* was not recorded. Pollen of *Brassicaceae*, *Hordeum*-type (barley) and *Polygonum aviculare* may indicate cultivation. However, according to Riddell and Erlendsson (2015a), the only definite conclusion from the rapid scanning of pollen is that cereal grain was present at Bær at some point in the past.

Þingeyraklaustur í Húnaþingi (1133–1551). The present church, farm and Benedictine monastery site are situated upon the summit of a ridge. Today, the primary land use is grazing for horses and hay fields. The flora surrounding the church is dominated by rather common plant species, except for madwort (*Asperugo procumbens*), found growing on open, stirred soil east of the church in 2009 and 2010. The madwort, an annual, first recorded from Þingeyrar in 1929, may sprout from dormant seeds in the soil when stirred. It is suggested

as a relict utility plant of medieval monastic cultivation in Norway (Åsen 2015); in Denmark, madwort is listed as a good indicator of medieval gardening (Løjtnant 2017).

The pollen record for Þingeyrar shows that from foundation, the monastery was active in altering the character of its immediate environs to a pastoral landscape, probably through livestock grazing, perhaps by deliberate scrub clearance, but also through other forms of resource use, e.g., dwarf birch (*Betula nana*) for fuel (Riddell et al. 2018), and possible development of a monastery garden.

Munkaþverárklaustur í Eyjafirði. The Benedictine monastery (1555–1551) was arranged in a traditional manner, with the church forming the northern range of the cloister garth. It was located near the present church and in front of the farm (Kristjánsdóttir 2017).

No monastery garden is known. However, it is interesting to refer to the monastery's first abbot, Nikulás Bergsson (1155–1159), who made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in approximately the period 1149–1153 (Jensen 2004). In his itinerary, he mentions the good doctors of Salerno. This could indicate that he had some knowledge of medicine and medicinal herbs, and it is tempting to suggest a possible herb garden once placed along the productive banks of Þverá.

An inventory of the monastery, dated 1525, listed both a mustard seed and pepper seed grinder (Kristjánsdóttir 2017). In an Icelandic cookbook, dated from the last quarter of the 15th century, recipes with both mustard and pepper are presented. Grinding mustard seeds with honey and vinegar made a good dressing that could keep for forty days (Grewe and Hieatt 2001; Veirup 1993). Mustard was an important ingredient in the medieval kitchen, both as medicine and condiment, and the seeds could have been imported or harvested in the monastery herb garden. Both white and charlock mustard (*Sinapis alba* and *arvensis*) are known in Iceland (Wąsowicz et al. 2013).

Hítardalsklaustur á Mýrum (Benedictine 1166–1201/1237). Georadar investigations in 2013 indicated possible traces of ruins in the ground north of the farm. Further, a cornerstone with a carved face exists above ground (Kristjánsdóttir 2014). Meadows and grazing fields dominate the area around the farm, with common species and commonplace courtyard vegetation.

Þykkvabæjarklaustur í Álftaveri (Augustinian 1168–1548). The monastery area, surrounded by hayfields, is located like a green island on Mýrdalssandur southeast of Mýrdalsjökull. Georadar investigations in 2015 suggested a traditional cloister garth buried underneath Klausturhóll and Fornufjós, north of the present church (Kristjánsdóttir 2017).

The Augustians are well known for hospitals and medicinal herb gardens, e.g., Æbelholt in Denmark (Møller-Christensen 1982) and Soutra Aisle in Scotland (Moffat 1995). We may speculate that the present findings at Þykkvabæjarklaustur, e.g., the sheer size of the ruins could indicate the presence of a monastic herb garden.

Our records of the flora in the area present common species, including the archaeophyte caraway (*Carum carvi*; Larsson et al. 2012). The use of caraway in Europe dates back at least to Roman times. In addition, it was found at four other monastic sites in Iceland—Flateyarklaustur, Kirkjubæjarklaustur, Möðruvallaklaustur and Viðeyjarklaustur—growing in courtyards and pastures. Pollen finds at Mývatn from the period 1000–1300 may suggest medieval introduction (Kristjánsdóttir et al. 2014).

Flateyjarklaustur á Breiðafirði. The Augustinian monastery at Flatey (1172–1184) was probably located northeast of the present church, at Klausturhólar.

At Flatey, greater plantain (*Plantago major*), Icelandic græðisúra, was recorded. It was an important medicinal plant in Scandinavia, and well known in the Middle Ages, but it is rare in Iceland today. It is probably a cultural relict plant. Its vernacular name implies that its value as a medicinal plant was known before written evidence about the plant's virtues and properties reached us. Pollen records are known from several sites, including Skriðuklaustur and Viðey; in addition, plants were observed at Viðey (Larsson et al. 2012). Further, caraway was found.

Helgafellsklaustur í Helgafellssveit was the Augustinian monastery moved from Flatey in 1184 and dissolved 1543. Located south of Stykkishólmur, the buildings probably

stood beneath the present church and cemetery, with no traces above ground today. The monastery was rich with extensive land holdings, livestock, objects and books, hosted a school, produced beer, books, iron and textiles, and provided housing for lay people (Kristjánsdóttir 2017). In the Saga of Laxdæla, a leek garden is mentioned near the monastery.

Today, the area around the church and farm is dominated by meadows (*graslendi*) with commonplace vegetation. A pollen sample from a possible floor layer within a medieval building presents a matrix of habitat types: grassland, heathland and woodland, with wetland perhaps the most dominant. The pollen analysis revealed little evidence of plants with the potential for medicinal application or utility, except for a single grain of *Artemisia*-type pollen (Riddell and Erlendsson 2015b).

The species of *Artemisa* are well-known medicinal herbs, even back in Antique times. Several other archaeobotanical finds, including written accounts that report mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*) growing in Iceland in the 17th century, and cultivation near Skálholt in the 18th century, may indicate possible cultivation and use as a medicinal herb (Larsson et al. 2012; Riddell and Erlendsson 2015b).

Kirkjubæjarklaustur á Síðu. The Benedictine nunnery at Kirkjubær (1186–1542) has been partly excavated, but no specific monastic buildings have been revealed. The archaeophyte caraway was common at the site.

Saurbæjarklaustur í Eyjafirði (Augustinian 1200–1224). The area around farm and church was dominated by commonplace vegetation, except for flixweed (*Descurainia sophia*), found among a heap of rocks south of the present church. The rocks could be either parts of old ruins or placed there in order to level the surrounding fields (Larsson et al. 2012; Kristjánsdóttir 2017). Although flixweed has probably been used as a medicinal herb and has been recorded with many archaeobotanical finds in Europe, including Scandinavia, it is difficult to have an opinion concerning its present status in Iceland. No archeobotanical record exists, so conclusions are rather tentative. It is characterized as a neophyte by Wąsowicz et al. (2013), with the first Icelandic record in 1889.

The Augustinian **Viðeyjarklaustur**, 1226–1539, was one of the wealthiest monasteries in Iceland. Excavations of a farm mound took place in 1987–1995, including archaeobotanical investigations (Bjarnardóttir 1997; Hallgrímsdóttir 1993; Hallsdóttir 1993). Introduced utility plants found that could have been cultivated were *Artemisia*, *Myrica gale*, *Plantago major*, *Sanguisorba officinalis*, *Urtica dioica* and *Valeriana officinalis*. Later investigations have shown that the Viðey monastery probably stood on the northwestern part of the farm mound (Kristjánsdóttir 2017).

Further pollen analysis was performed by Riddell and Erlendsson (2014) in order to look for possible utility plants. They noted *Plantago major* and *Valeriana officinalis* as possible evidence of a monastic garden. In addition, we observed greater plantain as well as a large population of caraway (Larsson et al. 2012).

A small statue of St. Dorothy—the patroness of gardeners—was found during the excavations. She is regarded as the patroness of gardeners, known both in Iceland and Norway (Wolf 1997). This finding may be an indication that gardening was part of the work at the monastery (Kristjánsdóttir et al. 2014). A similar statue was found during the recent excavations in medieval Oslo (see below).

Reynistaðarklaustur í Skagafirði was a Benedictine nunnery (1295–1551), with ruins located underneath the farm mound southwest of the present church. Pollen analysis revealed that the presence of *Hordeum*-type pollen along with the occurrence of other plant species and taxa associated with disturbed ground might suggest that cereal cultivation was a feature of the land management regime in the past (Riddell and Erlendsson 2015c). Further, pollen of the *Brassicaceae* family was recorded. However, they concluded that there was no definitive evidence of other plant species that harbor utilitarian properties in the pollen assemblage.

Möðruvallaklaustur í Hörgárdal. The Augustinian monastery (1296–1551) burned in 1316 but was rebuilt in 1326, with the help of brethren from Elgeseter sister monastery in

Trondheim. The monastery probably stood beneath the present church and cemetery, but the buildings have not yet been found with certainty (Kristjánsdóttir 2017).

Further, at Möðruvallaklaustur, a mustard seed grinder was included in an inventory (together with pepper and malt grinder). Mustard seeds were either imported or perhaps harvested from *Sinapis* plants in a monastery garden (see Munkaþverárklaustur above). No archaeobotanical analysis has been published so far, and the only possible utility relict plant found was caraway.

Skriðuklaustur í Fljótsdal (1493–1554). The excavations of the Augustinian monastery revealed a complete layout of a monastic building, consisting of several small cells, a church, and a cloister garth with a well, laid out in a manner similar to most medieval monastic buildings outside Iceland (Kristjánsdóttir 2013).

Archaeobotanical analyses have been summarized by Larsson et al. (2012). Of some twenty taxa, *Allium*, *Borago officinalis*, various species of the *Brassicaceae* family, *Plantago major*, *Urtica dioica* and *Urtica urens* could have been introduced as medicinal herbs, possibly cultivated in a monastery garden. Today, all have a restricted distribution in association with human activity. In addition, Shaw (2012) published a find of a charred seed tentatively identified as crab apple (*Malus sylvestris*), suggesting import for food. (Dried crab apple is eatable.) However, even if the climate was becoming cooler, cultivation could have been a possibility before the onset of the Little Ice Age c. 1550. This is somewhat in line with the Norwegian priest Ivar Bårdsson, who reported good-tasting apples growing in Greenland c. 1360. (Jonsson 1930).

The pollen analyses revealed a grass-dominated vegetation both before and after the monastic period, the herbs only present in between (Jensson 2004).

These herbs, together with the skeletons and surgical equipment found at the site, indicate strongly that the monastery may have functioned as a hospital (Kristjánsdóttir 2013). Following European tradition, the herb garden was probably a fenced-in area near the infirmary, outside the cloister garth. However, the excavations completed in 2011 gave no indication of its placement. Today, the area around the monastery ruins is dominated by meadows and grazing fields with commonplace vegetation.

2.2. Norway (Bohuslän Included until 1658)

Tautra Cistercian monastery was founded in 1207 on Tautra island, NE of Trondheim, as daughter of Lyse monastery. Only parts of the church are still standing. An inventory dated 1532 proves that the monastery once had extensive activities in agriculture and gardening, including the entire island (Ekroll 1996).

The apple garden was extant and described in 1613 (Nøvik 1901). In 1743, some gardens at Tautra included cherries, hazelnuts, hips and ash trees; and in the monastery ruins, there was a profusion of rare herbs (Nøvik 1901). Remnants of a large monastery garden south of the ruins, that included a grove of old apple trees, were described in 1774. Further, trees including ash, oak and hawthorn probably originated from the monastery garden. Several cherry and plum trees, pear, and garden berries, that were cultivated at the island, could be a possible continuation from monastic gardening (Schøning 1910). In 1807, cherries were still present in large quantities at Tautra (Nøvik 1901); and in 1808, the island was described as a place where the monastic garden herbs grew wild (Suhm 1808). In 1817, parts of the monastery garden could still be seen; and in 1879, the cloister garth was excavated (Ekroll 1996). At the start of the 20th century, nothing was left of the monastery garden (Nøvik 1901).

The cherries mentioned are probably all sour cherries (*Prunus cerasus*), and were most likely a monastic introduction, like the cherries introduced by the mother monastery at Lyse and growing wild at Utstein monastery in 1758. Crab apples (*Malus sylvestris*) and hawthorns (*Crataegus*) growing at the beach south of the ruins might also originate from the monastery, as well as the ashes and columbine (*Aquilegia vulgaris*) still common in the ruins. Other possible relict plants growing on Tautra today include *Allium oleraceum* (see Bær above), *Arctium minus*, *Berberis vulgaris*, *Carum carvi*, *Hesperis matronalis*, *Verbascum*

densiflorum, *Verbascum thapsus* and *Veronica beccabunga*. Some earlier finds may include *Asperugo procumbens*, *Balsamita major*, *Bellis perennis*, *Hyoscyamus niger*, *Papaver somniferum* and *Sambucus nigra*.

Today, **Reinskloster nunnery (c. 1226)** is part of Rein manor NW of Trondheim. Manorial gardens were established at least from 1762. An old tree garden, Gammelhagen, is located just south of the manor and ruins. Local history—at least since 1703—says that the nunnery garden originally included 24 ash trees (*Fraxinus excelsior*), brought by German nuns in the 13th century. Today, a few large ashes are still standing, probably third-generation trees, approximately 200 years old. However, a big tree that was cut down approximately fifty years ago had an age of approximately 700 years (Sundfør 1996). Since this part of the manorial property has been left undeveloped, it is suggested as an originally medieval garden relict.

Nidarholm Benedictine Monastery (c. 1100) is located at Munkholmen, just north of Trondheim harbor. The island was probably used for grazing after the dissolution until the 17th century, when the military acquired the property. Nothing is known of the presence of a monastery garden, but the area north and west of the cloister garth may have been used for cultivation. Further, some gardening may have taken place in the graveyard. Sour cherries are prominent on the island, a possible monastic garden relict. Further, a previous find of *Asperugo procumbens* could be of medieval origin.

Four monasteries are known from the medieval Trondheim town. No ruins exist above ground of **Elgeseter Augustinian Monastery (c. 1160)** and **The Dominican Convent (c. 1234)**. The last one, located 200 metres NE of Nidaros cathedral, probably had gardens in the same area, where Sandvik (2008) has found plant macrofossils indicating cultivation. Remnants of the church of **Bakke Benedictine nunnery (c. 1150)** still exist in the basement of the present building at Bakke, and ruins of the **Franciscan Convent (c. 1430)** can be seen in the public library.

In the old Norse laws, c. 1000–1300, different forms of gardens are mentioned several times. The law of Frostating includes hazelnuts and leek garden (*laukgarðr*), probably including different species of *Allium*, apple and hop. Bjarkøyretten, Trondheim's city law, regulates cultivation of garden plants in the city, Angelica garden (*kvanngarðr*), cale (vegetable) garden (*kálgarðr*) and leek garden (*laukgarðr*); and in Magnus Lagabøte's law, leek garden, angelica garden, apple garden, turnip garden, pea garden, bean garden and everything that can be cultivated and fenced in are listed (Fægri 1987).

A garden (grasgarð) belonging to the canons in Nidaros is mentioned in 1311, and in another letter dated 1341, a garden near the Clemens church should include hop and be tended by a gardener. Further, he should mow hay (Nøvik 1901).

Some macrofossil finds of possible medieval monastic garden plants from Trondheim include *Cannabis*, *Carum carvi*, *Digitalis purpurea*, *Hyoscyamus niger*, *Iris*, *Linum usitatissimum*, *Malus*, *Papaver*, *Prunus* and *Pyrus* (Sandvik 2006; Östman et al. 2016).

The area just in front of **Selje Benedictine monastery (c. 1100)**, on the small island Selja, is dominated by a conspicuous large plain with traces of cultivation. Pollen analyses revealed cultivation of cereals when the monastery was in operation. At the time, the landscape opened up, and a meadow vegetation rich with herbs was present in addition to the cereal fields. Pollen of *Allium* was present before and during the monastic epoch, but not after. This could originate from cultivation, and both wild onion (*Allium vineale*) and ramsons (*Allium ursinum*) are present at Selja today. Ramsons could possibly be a monastic relict. Pollen of *Plantago major*, *Urtica* and *Artemisia* relates to culture (Hjelle et al. 2009). Possible monastic relict plants found in the ruins include *Aegopodium podagraria*, *Allium ursinum*, *Aquilegia vulgaris*, *Arctium*, *Bellis perennis*, *Urtica dioica* and *Veronica beccabunga*.

It has been suggested that the monastic gardens were placed in a warmer and more protected locality on the island's southern side, called Heimen. Possible monastic relicts here are *Arctium*, *Digitalis purpurea*, *Humulus* and *Verbascum thapsus*. In addition, a particular space in Heimen had once been called Kvanngarden, literally *The Angelica garden* (Høeg 1974). This could likely be a remnant of the monastic gardens at Selja.

Today, the convent church of **The Franciscan Convent (c. 1250)** in Bergen stands as the city's cathedral. In the times following the Reformation, it was said that the Franciscan garden was unequalled in Bergen, although this was based on post-medieval observations. In 1856 it was non-existent (Lange 1847). A group of bird cherries (*Prunus padus*) was planted by the Franciscans, according to local tradition described in 1760 (Hartvedt and Skreien 2013). The plantings are reflected in the present street name, Heggebakken.

Recent archaeological excavations just outside the southern range of the convent indicated possible occurrence of garden soil or an area associated with gardening and agriculture dated approximately the period 1200–1300 (Dunlop et al. 2017). It is not unlikely that the Franciscan garden was placed here, as pollen analyses indicated an area characterized with grass and herbs, including *Artemisia*, *Brassicaceae*, *Urtica*, and possibly *Allium ursinum* (Overland 2016). All could indicate medieval gardening.

No physical trace of the **Dominican Convent (c. 1245)** in Bergen is known today. In approximately 1600, an old beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) was still standing near the convent (Edvardsen 1951). The tree was felled by a storm in 1778. It could have been part of medieval plantings.

Munkeliv monastery (c. 1110), placed on top of Nordnes, was originally Benedictine, but housed Birgittinian nuns in approximately 1420. The monastery possessed extensive meadows in the surrounding area, suitable for agriculture and gardening. A barn near the monastery graveyard is mentioned in the saga of king Sverre (Gundersen 1996). And possibly nearby post-medieval gardens are remnants of the monastery gardens (Lange 1847; Olafsen 1898).

The cult of St. Dorothy—the patroness of gardeners—was practised in Bergen, with an altar to her in the church of the Black Monks (Cormack 2000).

The Agustinian **Jonskloster (c. 1150)** was located east of Munkeliv. The street named Jonsvollgaten is a reminder of the monastery, and the adjacent area Engen (meadow) is probably named after the fields associated with the monastery (Hommedal 2011).

Nonneseter (Benedictine nunnery c. 1140–1507, St. Anthony order 1507–1528), with remnants of two structures from the monastery church, is still standing near Bergen railway station, and was developed into a manorial estate from 1528 (Lange 1847). In approximately 1870, several large ash trees dominated the centre of the cloister garth, with two still standing in 1893. A previous nearby garden was eradicated at the time. Both ash trees and garden could possibly have been parts of the monastery gardens (Bendixen 1893; Bruun 2007; Schnitler 1915). Today, nothing remains.

Excavations in 2006 revealed a stone terrace, dated c. 1250, along the southern monastery range, possibly a foundation for a garden. Several layers on top of the terrace have been interpreted as garden soil. Further, in the eastern part, the excavations indicated sence of presence of a monastery garden that later developed into part of the manorial gardens (Reinsnos 2009). Pollen analyses from the area showed an open and grazed meadow vegetation in medieval times, including herbs like *Artemisia vulgaris*, *Centaurea*, *Persicaria maculosa* and *Plantago lanceolata*. In addition, pollen of *Cerealia* and *Humulus/Cannabis* were found, possibly from local cultivation (Halvorsen 2009). The nearby local place name Marken (meadow) reflects the original monasterial fields (Hommedal 2011).

No doubt an extensive gardening activity was present in Bergen in medieval times, and this includes orchards and cultivation of berries, vegetables and herbs (Olafsen 1898; Øye 2015). At least 20–30 different pollen and macrofossil records of possible cultivated utility plants have been recorded, e.g., *Brassica*, *Cannabis*, *Carum carvi*, *Fagopyrum esculentum*, *Humulus*, *Linum usitatissimum*, *Malus sylvestris*, *Malva*, *Mentha*, *Papaver*, *Pisum sativum*, *Prunus cerasus*, *Ribes* and *Vicia faber* (Åsen 2015).

Lyse Cistercian monastery, located 20 km south of Bergen, was founded in 1146 as a daughter monastery of Fountains Abbey, England. In 1670, the area including the monastery was privatized and new gardens were established. Today, the land is in private hands and included in the Lyse manor estate. Lyse Monastery also had activities in Opedal in Ullensvang municipality, including a farm, *grangie* (Lidén 2014). The fruit growing,

including apples, plums, pears and cherries in the Hardanger area, may originate from the monks in Opedal according to Olafsen (1900a). Lyse founded Tautra monastery in Trøndelag (see above), and likewise advocated the fruit growing in that area, with apples and sour cherries.

A covered passage led to the infirmary buildings east of the northern range, and a possible infirmary garden could have been placed here, but little is known of the history of the monastery, and gardens are not known. The ruins are located in the middle of an agrarian landscape, where gardening and agriculture could have taken place in medieval times.

Lyse Monastery is well known for its lush growth of masterwort (*Peucedanum ostruthium*), first recorded in 1908. Today, the plant grows fairly close to the actual ruins, together with the Martagon lily (*Lilium martagon*). Masterwort may be a true monastic relict, or it could be a garden escape from the manorial garden dating from the 17th century. Lundquist (2005) has shown that the Martagon lily is a post-medieval introduction to Norway. The masterwort is known from several collections in the Bergen area from 1909 onwards.

Halsnøy Augustinian monastery (c. 1163) in Sunnhordland had extensive landholdings in the southern part of Norway, and the estate became a manor after the Reformation. The monastery gardens have most likely been situated outside the buildings. According to Lange (1847), the gardens were in a good condition when he visited the ruins in 1843. He described the monastery buildings based on a drawing and stated that the inner courtyard was planted with ash, of which two were still standing alongside the church wall. A garden—also designated a monastery garden (Lidén 1967)—was marked south of the church on the drawing, and the accompanied text stated that a large kitchen garden was located alongside the beach, south of the ruins (Lange 1847).

Documents dated c. 1750 described an enclosed herb garden outside the main gate of the monastery (Lidén 1967). The herb garden is visible south of the "school" on a painting by Fiigenschough 1656 (Nerhus 1957). The painting also pictures a lot of trees (ash?) around the monastery. South and west of the manor building, three partly walled gardens have been described (Hvinden-Haug and Meyer 2018; Lange 1847; Nøvik 1901). These walls may have originated in medieval times and indicate a continuity from medieval gardening.

Today, Halsnøy monastery with surroundings have a parklike appearance, with extensive lawns and tall trees. Ash is common and was probably once cultivated in a separate garden. A protected ash tree stands in the middle of the ruins. The trunk is hollow, with a circumference over 7 m, and approximately 12 m in height. With a suggested minimum age of approximately 525 years, the old ash is probably a true medieval relict (Moe 2000).

Other possible monastic relict plants recorded at the Halsnøy site include *Aegopodium podagraria*, *Allium ursinum*, *Aquilegia vulgaris*, *Bellis perennis*, *Corylus avellana*, *Crataegus monogyna*, *Malus sylvestris*, *Prunus cerasus*, *Ribes*, *Sambucus nigra* and *Sanguisorba officinalis*.

The present park at **Utstein Augustinian monastery (c. 1265)**, north of Stavanger, is an 18th-century manorial development of the monastery plantings. In 1758, the there was the presence of large ash trees and wild cherries like the ones growing at Tautra (Wagner and Johansen 2019) that could likely be medieval relicts, once growing in an orchard placed east of the monastery buildings.

Gimsøy Benedictine nunnery (c. 1150), in Skien, was a powerful spiritual centre between Tønsberg and Stavanger. In referring to nunnery gardening at Gimsøy, we know nothing. Archaeological excavations in 2007 yielded no traces of either monastery, graveyard or gardens (Meyer and Molaug 2007).

From 1666, the property became part of Gimsøy manor and extensive manorial gardens were established, part of it long referred to as "*The old garden*" (Johnsen 1982; Schnitler 1915). Orchards were important parts of the manorial gardens (Skard 1938) and in 1789, an eyewitness described trees weighed down by apples (Mumssen 1789). This could have been a continuation of possible nunnery gardens. Apple is known from medieval place names in Telemark county, and we may speculate that the knowledge of fruit cultivation could have spread from the nunnery (Olafsen 1900b).

The following list contains possible medieval relict plants growing on Klosterøya today, the island where the Gimsøy nunnery was once located: *Aegopodium podagraria*, *Aethusa cynapium*, *Aquilegia vulgaris*, *Arctium lappa*, *Artemisia vulgaris*, *Bellis perennis*, *Berberis vulgaris*, *Carum carvi*, *Chelidonium majus*, *Fumaria officinalis*, *Hesperis matronalis*, *Lamium album*, *Pastinaca sativa*, *Saponaria officinalis*, *Solanum dulcamara*, *Tanacetum vulgare*, *Urtica dioica*, *Verbascum* and *Viola odorata*.

In the town of Tønsberg, there were two religious houses, a **Franciscan convent (c. 1250)** and **St. Olav's Premonstratensian monastery (c. 1190)**. No ruins are visible above ground of the Franciscan convent. The St. Olav's round church and other ruins after the Premonstratensians are located in the centre of Tønsberg.

Tønsberg was a town of approximately 1500 inhabitants in 1300, with thriving trading activities, and warehouses tightly packed in the harbor. Adjacent open grounds (grasgarð) were exploited for gardening, hay and grazing (Johnsen 1929; Lindh et al. 1984).

In 1277, an agreement between king Magnus Lagabøte and bishop Jon Raude that took place in the Franciscan convent stated, among other things, that tithe should be paid of all fruit (presumably apples, cherries, and may be plums), and of rye, wheat, flax, hemp, turnip and peas. This indicates that these plants were common in cultivation in Norway.

According to a royal letter from 1551, the Franciscans had a garden called "Munkelykken" (Lange 1856), with cherries and some vegetable beds (Johnsen 1929).

Further, the Premonstratensians had a similar enclosed field associated with their monastery, probably including gardens (Johnsen 1929), and there was room for gardens inside the walled monastery precinct. Pollen samples from the monastery yielded high values of possible cruciferous vegetables or just arable weeds. Pollen of broadbeen (*Vicia faba*) suggests cultivation. Other finds include barley and wheat, in addition to *Artemisia*, *Fraxinus excelsior*, *Plantago major*, *Urtica* and *Valeriana* (Hjelle 1988).

Other gardens in Tønsberg (often associated with the church) are mentioned in various texts from the period 1300–1651: hop gardens, grass or hay gardens and flower gardens (blomegard) (Nøvik 1901; Johnsen 1929).

Botanical analyses of pollen and macrofossils supply a long list of utility plants that grew in Tønsberg in the Middle Ages (Eriksson 1990). Some examples of possible monastery relict plants from central parts of Tønsberg include *Allium oleraceum*, *Anchusa officinalis*, *Arctium*, *Artemisia*, *Berberis vulgaris*, *Campanula rapunculoides*, *Carum carvi*, *Chelidonium majus*, *Cichorium intybus*, *Hesperis matronalis*, *Humulus lupulus*, *Hyoscyamus niger*, *Sambucus nigra*, *Solanum dulcamara*, *Solanum nigrum*, *Tanacetum vulgare*, *Verbascum* and *Viola odorata*.

In the Middle Ages, Hamar bishopric was an ecclesiastical centre, including cathedral, the bishop's residence, **the Olavskloster Dominican convent** and hospital (Jordåen 2006). From this area, we have a late medieval description of Norwegian monastic gardens: "*This convent, with its building and location, with orchards, apple—and cherry-gardens, hop-gardens and other glorious facilities, was handsomely and favourable built.*" Further, the bishop's castle had apple and hop gardens, and on a small island in the lake Mjøsa, the bishop cultivated small trees and herbs. The farms located near the convent had all vegetable and herb gardens, orchards with apples and cherries and hop gardens.

All the herbs of Hamar gave a pleasant fragrance, and the pilgrims to Rome and Jerusalem did their best to bring back sweet-smelling herbs. At the time (late medieval), the inhabitants of Hamar loved the rose called the eglantine (*Rosa rubiginosa*), with its pleasant fragrance (Pettersen 2012).

Archaeobotanical samples from a fire, dated 1567, contained *Brassica oleracea*, *Linum usitatissmum*, *Marrubium vulgare* and *Pisum sativum* (Jessen 1956), and all have most likely been cultivated in medieval Hamar.

To sum up, possible monastic garden plants from Hamar may also include *Aquilegia vulgaris*, *Arctium*, *Artemisia absinthium*, *Chelidonium majus*, *Glechoma hederacea*, *Hesperia matronalis*, *Humulus lupulus*, *Hyoscyamus niger*, *Hyssopus officinalis*, *Malus domestica*, *Prunus cerasus*, *Tanacetum vulgare*, *Verbascum* and *Ribes rubrum*, *Ribes uva-crispa*, *Rosa rubiginosa* and *Sambucus nigra*.

The nuns at **Nonneseter Benedictine nunnery (c. 1186)** in Oslo had their own home farm (Inntjore 2000), and gardens could have been part of the farm. Further, the nuns had other properties that point to gardening in approximately the period 1300–1400 (Inntjore 2000).

Following the Lutheran Reformation, parts of **Olavsklosteret Dominican convent (c. 1239)** in Oslo were reused as a school and residence for the bishop (Ekroll 2011). In 1546, the buildings, together with churchyard and garden, were transferred to the latin school (Nøvik 1901). The schoolyard was designated the monks' garden (Schnitler 1915). In approximately 1627, the school moved, the bishop resided in the eastern part of the convent (Ekroll 2011), and he was keen on keeping a herb garden and vegetable garden just like his predecessors (Nøvik 1901).

We sense that these gardens are old and may originate in the Dominican gardens. When the area was excavated in 1927, probably parts of the bishop's garden were found as well as a dam (Fischer 1928). Most likely these structures once constituted the gardens and fish dam of the Dominicans (Bruun 2007).

The citizens of Oslo acquired **the Franciscan convent (founded c. 1285)** in Oslo as a hospital after the Reformation. The buildings burned down in 1567. However, the church stood until 1794, when the present church was erected, partly in connection with the convent church (Inntjore 2000; Nedkvitne and Norseng 2000).

A regular cloister square with Oslo hospital to the north and gardens on the southern side is shown on a 18th-century map (Schnitler 1915; Schia 1991). In 1737, fields, garden and vegetable garden are mentioned connected to the area (Nøvik 1901). This indicates a gardening tradition. The Franciscans in general were invited to grow fruit and vegetables for their own use (Rasmussen 2002). In Oslo, they owned several enclosed fields (Øye 1998); and in 1453, the Franciscans had their own farm in Oslo (Digernes 2010). (Oslo Hospital shut down in 2018.).

From 1970 onwards, several archaeobotanical investigations were carried out in the ecclesiastical centre in Gamlebyen, the old medieval town of Oslo, not precisely at any of the monastery sites, but close by (Griffin 1977, 1979, 1988; Høeg 1977, 1979, 1987), and recently archaeobotanical records from the expansion of the railway through Gamlebyen have been published (Buckland and Wallin 2017; Moltsen 2015, 2016a, 2016b; Sture 2017a, 2017b, 2017c; Wallin 2017).

These records give a general idea of the kind of plants that grew in the old medieval town, both as wild plants or as possible cultivated utility plants. In summary, we have approximately thirty pollen and macrofossil records of possible garden plants, some still growing in the area, e.g., *Allium, Arctium*, *Cannabis sativa*, *Chelidonium majus*, *Conium maculatum*, *Daucus carota*, *Foeniculum vulgare*, *Humulus lupulus*, *Hyoscyamus niger*, *Hyssopus officinalis*, *Lamium album*, *Leonurus cardiaca*, *Papaver somniferum*, *Pastinaca sativa*, *Sambucus nigra* and *Verbascum*.

It is interesting to note that a small figure of St. Dorothy was found during the recent excavations (Nordlie et al. 2020). A similar statue was found during the excavations of Viðeyjarklaustur in Iceland (see above). These findings may indicate that gardening was practised.

The ruins of **Hovedøya Cistercian monastery (1147)** are located on an island with calcareous rocks in the harbor of Oslo. The flora in the ruins have been corrupted by the introduction of so called authentic monastic plants in approximately the period 1950–1960. This makes it difficult, if not impossible, to accept new observations of possible relicts growing on the island after 1950, and we must rely on older observations and herbarium specimens.

"Just like other Cistercian monasteries Hovedøya monastery had likely its own garden, and presumably it was located west of the ruins", wrote Nicolaysen (1891). We know nothing of this with any certainty. The parent monastery Kirkstead in England had both fishponds and probably gardens (Aston 2007), and we assume the same at a smaller scale

at Hovedøya. The present landscape suggests monastery gardens located west and south of the ruins, with herb garden closest to the buildings.

A small dam is located 150 m SW of the ruins. Pollen analysis by Høeg (2002) indicates that the dam was established c. 1100. Pollen of bog myrtle (*Myrica gale*) was common. Bog myrtle was an important additive to beer and spirits, and also used against insect pests and bad smells. Other pollen finds of *Artemisia*, *Chenopodium*, *Hedera helix*, *Humulus/Cannabis*, *Malva Plantago* and *Urtica* indicate cultivation.

Hovedøya has longbeen well known for its rich flora, with a long period of floristic exploration, resulting in extensive plant lists, with 56 different species found in the ruins proper. The 19th-century observations of possible monastic relict plants from Hovedøya include *Aethusa cynapium*, *Allium oleraceum*, *Aquilegia vulgaris*, *Asparagus officinale*, *Ballota nigra*, *Berberis vulgaris*, *Chelidonium majus*, *Cynoglossum officinale*, *Glechoma hederacea*, *Humulus lupulus*, *Hyoscyamus niger*, *Lithospermum officinale*, *Primula veris*, *Sambucus nigra*, *Valeriana officinalis* and *Verbascum nigrum* (Åsen 2015).

Værne Knights Hospitallers Monastery (c. 1220) in Østfold has ruins located inside the Værne 18th-century manorial park. A long post-medieval history of farming and gardening with park and nurseries makes it difficult to conclude anything with certainty about possible medieval garden and relict plants. No archaeobotanical records exist.

Lange (1847) stated that the gardens of Værne still exist in good a condition. Possibly he meant that the manorial garden was a continuation of the monastic garden, part of which was called "the monks' garden", at least until 1915 (Schnitler 1915).

Infirmary gardens are associated with the Knights Hospitallers, the herbs were used in caring for their patients. The ruins of the parent monastery at Antvorskov in Denmark, one of the richest relict plants' monastic ruins in Denmark, contains several typical relict herbs, of which a few also occur at Værne monastery—*Chelidonium majus*, *Campanula rapunculoides*, *Lamium album* and *Viola odorata* are all indications of medieval gardening.

The ruins at **Dragsmark Premonstratentian monastery (Marieskog) (c. 1230)** at Bokenäset in Bohuslän are located close to large fields, and rather protected in a valley enclosed by ridges. The plain could be a location for possible monastic gardens. The dam where the canons raised carps is located southwest of the ruins. Dragsmark Lutheran church and churchyard are situated on the northern side. Interesting plants in or near the ruins that could indicate monastic garden relicts include *Aegopodium podagraria*, *Aquilegia vulgaris*, *Bellis perennis*, *Chelidonium majus* (grows everywhere in the ruins), *Cichorium intybus*, *Glechoma hederacea*, *Ribes uva-crispa*, *Urtica dioica* and *Tanacetum vulgare*.

Probably very old bushes (height 6–7 m) of European spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*) grow alongside the stonewall enclosing the churchyard. The spindle was first mentioned in 1838 (Berg 1895), and according to local tradition, planted by the monks and called "*the foreign tree* or *the monks' tree*") (Holmberg and Brusewitz 1867). It was assumed that the churchyard was originally the monastery garden. Further, cultivation of willows in Dragsmark has been associated with the monastery (Elling 1978). However, nothing conclusive can be said of these statements.

In 1423, a farm called Apildatuften ("*Appleground*"), owned by the monastery, is mentioned (Lange 1847), and this could indicate an orchard. According to an eyewitness account c. 1740, absinth (*Artemisia absinthium*) was growing in the ruins (Berg 1895). The absinth is a fairly good indicator of medieval gardening, and a probable relict of the Premonstratensian gardens. The same can be said of catnip (*Nepeta cataria*), growing by the ruins in 1841 (von Düben 1843). In 1847, Lange writes that the gardens of Dragsmark still exist in a good condition. Obviously, he must have seen some kind of gardens that originated in the medieval monastery gardens.

The Franciscan Convent (c. 1280) at Marstrand in Bohuslän was located around the present Lutheran church, this church being the original Fransiscan church (Lange 1847; Aasma 1974). However, diverging opinions on the original location of the convent exist. Carlsten fortress (c. 1658–1888/1993) thrones above the village of Marstrand.

During the Reformation, the convent was transformed into an hospital and a school. We know of nothing concrete with respect to the Franciscans possible gardens in Marstrand. The oldest known map of the village, dated 1644, gives no indication of the whereabouts of the cloister nor gardens. In a detailed map dated 1689, a large kålgård (cale garden or vegetable garden) is located west of the church (Aasma 1974), this could have been a possible location for a convent garden. Further, at the hospital, one might expect a herb garden.

Marstrand possessed an important harbor, fortress, hospital and school after the Lutheran Reformation. These circumstances obviously had a strong influence on the introduction of foreign utility plants, and it is quite impossible to definitely say whether a plant is a remnant of Franciscan gardening or rather from post-medieval activities related to the fortress and hospital. Today, the fortress and the streets of Marstrand abound with cultural relict plants, e.g., *Allium scorodoprasum*, *Chelidonium majus*, *Conium maculatum*, *Hyoscyamus niger*, *Lamium album*, *Malva neglecta*, *Papaver somniferum* and *Petasites hybridus*.

The site of **Kastelle Augustinian monastery (c. 1180)** in Bohuslän is located at Klosterkullen, a mound in an agrarian landscape, with trees lining a central area covered mostly by grass and containing the monastic ruins. Klosterkullen seems like a proper place for a herb garden, and some of the common plants growing there today may be characterized as cultural relicts from medieval times, e.g., *Aegopodium podagraria*, *Arctium minus*, *Campanula rapunculoides*, *Carum carvi*, *Glechoma hederacea*, *Primula veris*, *Solanum dulcamara*, *Urtica dioica* and *Veronica beccabunga*. At the parent monastery in Æbelholt, Denmark, both infirmary and herb gardens were present (Møller-Christensen 1982), and we would expect that this knowledge was transferred to their brethren at Kastelle monastery.

An inventory of the monastery, dated 1484, mentions a mustard seed grinder (Vigerust 1991). Mustard seeds were either imported or perhaps harvested from *Sinapis* plants in a monastery garden (see Munkaþverárklaustur above).

On the nearby island, Hisingen, the monastery had a cultivated field called Priorløkken (the prior field; Vigerust 1991), and we may visualize possible monastery gardens here. Further, hop is mentioned in the inventory list from 1484 and may have been cultivated in hop gardens.

3. Discussion

The monasteries in both Iceland and Norway were part of the wider Roman Catholic world, mostly showing the same physical layout with buildings surrounding a cloister garth. In Europe, monastic gardens were common (Coppack 2006; Harvey 1990; Hennebo 1987; Landsberg 1998; McLean 1989), and no monastery in the later Middle Ages lacked a herb garden (Meyvaert 1986. The cultivation of medicinal and utility plants was important to meet the material needs of the monastic institutions, and obviously this was true also for the Icelandic and Norwegian monasteries.

From Iceland and Norway, six medieval Norse manuscripts dealing with translated classical Greek and Roman traditional medicine are known, and the works of Hippocrates, Galen and Dioscorides eventually found their way to the North. The most important mediator of this knowledge was the Danish physician and canon Henrik Harpestræng (†1244) who has been attributed *Den danske urtebog* (manuscripts from ca 1300). His work was also heavily influenced by The School of Salerno (10th–12th cent.) and was well known and widespread in the Nordic countries (Larsson 2013). During his pilgrimage to Jerusalem in approximately 1150, the abbot, Nikolaus of Munkaþverárklaustur, North Iceland, acknowledged the good doctors of Salerno. The medical and botanical knowledge from southern Europe was mediated to the North by the monasteries, the monks and nuns being among the few who could read and write throughout the Middle Ages, and it is likely that the influence also included the herb gardens. Quite a few northmen were educated at the continental universities, among them Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson (†1213) from Iceland (Schwabe 2010).

According to the Rule of St Benedict, the monasteries should be self-sufficient, and this implied gardening for food and medicine. According to Coppack (2006), only a few

monastic gardens have been noted in excavations in England, and even if no physical garden has yet been found and excavated in either Norway or Iceland, the sum of the compiled data strongly points to the presence of monastery gardens. However, the data does not allow any conclusions with respect to botanical differences between types of monastery institutions, other than that climate and degree of landscape use since medieval times strongly affect the presence of relict plants. Over 80 utility plants are mentioned in the text, possibly cultivated in Icelandic and Norwegian monastery gardens (Table 1). However, extended archaeobotanical studies are highly needed in order to obtain more reliable data, and therefore it is rather impossible to conclude more with respect to existing historical understanding of the northern monastic garden.

4. Materials and Methods

All the Icelandic monastery sites were surveyed for landscape and plants (except Keldnaklaustur—unknown during the field work). The first part of the fieldwork took place in July 2009 by Kjell Lundquist, Inger Larsson, Steinunn Kristjánsdóttir and Per Arvid Åsen, the second part in July 2010 by Kjell Lundquist, Inger Larsson and Samson B. Harðarson, and the third part in June to July 2011 by Per Arvid Åsen. It should be noted that the Icelandic monastic sites today are dominated by farming, leaving little space for herbs to grow and survive. Complete plant lists are published by Larsson et al. (2012). The Norwegian monasteries were surveyed by Per Arvid Åsen during several visits between 2003 and 2014 Åsen (2015).

In order to determine possible medieval relict plants, the results were compared with compiled lists of the garden flora of north-western Europe between 800 and 1540 (Harvey 1990), in total over 250 species, and available archaeobotanical data. Further, the extensive list of c. 250 cultural relict plants in Denmark has been consulted (Løjtnant 2017). In addition, a wide range of native species are known as both edible and medicinal plants, but as common native species with a wide distribution including many monastic sites, it has been rather difficult to connect their presence to monastic traditions with certainty.

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Monastic Musical Fragments from Iceland

Gisela Attinger

Humanities and Social Sciences Library, University of Oslo, 0315 Oslo, Norway; gisela.attinger@ub.uio.no

Abstract: Little has survived from medieval liturgical books in the Nordic countries other than fragments. It is often difficult, if not impossible, to state their exact provenance, but the contents sometimes indicate that they once belonged to a monastic institution. The article presents some of these sources, focusing on two fragments with music for the celebration of St Olav from Iceland and Sweden which show how an already established sequence of songs was adapted to fit the liturgical needs of a monastic community. In addition, it briefly presents two other Icelandic sources that follow monastic use and can shed more light on musical traditions in the Icelandic monasteries in the Middle Ages.

Keywords: liturgical music; monastic institutions; St Olav; Iceland; Sweden; Middle Ages

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1. Introduction

The study of liturgical music in monastic institutions in the Nordic countries faces a great challenge: little is left of the medieval liturgical books. Only a few complete books have survived. As a rule, only a few pages, or even less, have remained of what once were codices of several hundred folios. They were made of parchment, a material much stronger than paper, and for that reason, many were taken apart, and the leaves were re-used as bindings for books or administrative accounts. These bindings, mostly dismantled but sometimes still attached to the documents they were supposed to protect, form the core of the fragment collections in the Northern countries and constitute the main research material for scholars interested in liturgical chant from the period before the Reformation.

In many cases it is not possible to decide where exactly the original codex was written or used. Often the contents are not of much help since many of the liturgical texts and chants were known all over Europe, and we have to look for saints or items that were particular to a certain place or area. Rarely these specific parts of the liturgy have survived, and we have to rely on other features, such as paleography or marginal notes, when trying to establish the primary provenance of a fragment.

To identify sources that might have been written or used in monastic institutions is therefore not an easy task. However, sometimes the contents of the fragments can be of help even if they consist of chants that were common for many areas, since the number and sequence of chants are not always the same in secular[1] and monastic use. This is easily spotted in the Divine Office, where the chants of the three nocturns at matins[2] on Sundays and feast days have the following order:

Matins	Secular use	Monastic use
1. nocturn	3 antiphons	6 antiphons
	3 responsories	4 responsories
2. nocturn	3 antiphons	6 antiphons
	3 responsories	4 responsories
3. nocturn	3 antiphons	1 antiphon
	3 responsories	4 responsories

Unfortunately, many remains of the liturgical books containing chants from matins are so small that they do not have enough content to indicate whether they represent secular or monastic use. For that reason, we can assume that among the fragments in the Nordic

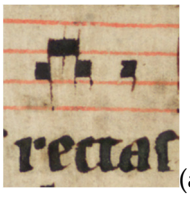
countries are many more items that belonged to books from monastic institutions than the few that have been identified so far by their content. A more detailed investigation might result in finding more witnesses to monastic use, but for many fragments the question of whether they have monastic or secular provenance will have to remain open.

The present paper discusses sources in Iceland and Sweden where the content clearly indicates monastic origin. The main focus is on two fragmentary manuscripts containing part of an office for St Olav, i.e., chants to celebrate his feast day on 29 July. Here the mode of the liturgical chants is used to support a "reconstruction" of the whole office in a hypothetical monastic form that has not survived as a whole. In addition, two more monastic sources from Iceland are described, problematizing the issue of secondary provenance as a means to identify the original place of production or use of a manuscript.

2. A Monastic Office for St Olav

Among the few Latin fragments kept at the National Archives in Reykjavik is a double folio from a monastic antiphoner[3] containing chants for the celebration for the patron saint of Norway, Olav.[4] It can probably be dated to the 14th century.[5] The fragment is cut in the outer margin of one of the pages, without any loss of text or music. The size of one leaf is 33.5 × 24 cm, the writing space 25 × 17 cm. There are 12 lines to the page. The musical notation is a square notation on four red lines. Both c-clef and f-clef are used. In addition, b-flat is used in three places, one of them in combination with the c-clef. The music scribe can well be the same person as the text scribe.

We do not know who wrote the manuscript or where it was written. In two places a note-sign typical for Icelandic liturgical manuscripts with music notation is used: a so-called double or twin note where two squares indicating the pitch are written so closely together (or even overlap) that they form one note head with two stems (see Figure 1a). Another detail that might point to Iceland as the place of origin is the use of a particular form of the letter **e** (see Figure 1b).[6]



(**a**) (**b**)

Figure 1. Details from National Archives, Reykjavik, Þjss "Antiphonarium 2": (**a**) Double note. (**b**) Uncial form of the letter **e**.

The fragment seems to have been used as a cover for other documents, a common way of re-using parchment as described above. For that reason, the leaf has been folded in a new place, and part of the outer margin of folio 2 has been cut off, probably to fit the size of the document it was meant to protect.[7]

The content of the fragment is chants from matins for the office of St Olav for his *natale* on July 29:

Second nocturn:

MA11	*[Sancte martir olave te . . .]cris nos expurges orationibus. Ps Exaudi deus orationem.*
MA12	*Sancte martir olave domini preciose Ps Bonum est.*
MR5	*Itaque devotissime V Jesu bone*
MR6	*Confluebant ad baptisma V Confusi erant*
MR7	*Florebat fides V Exultabat rex*
MR8	*Justum deduxit V In mortalis est*

Third nocturn:

MAc	*O beate pater olave*
MR9	*Devenerat martir christi V Hij ergo collecto*
MR10	*Egregius martir V In ammiratione*
MR11	*Rex inclitus V Felici commercio*
MR12	*Miles christi V Vt celestis regni sedem vale[amus]*

The number and sequence of chants shows clearly that the fragment follows the monastic cursus, with six (instead of three) antiphons for the second nocturn, and one (instead of three) antiphon for the third and last nocturn, in addition to four (instead of three) responsories for each of the two nocturns represented.

St Olav, king of Norway 1015–1028, was canonized in 1031, a year after his death in the Battle of Stiklestad. His cult became popular all over the Nordic countries, and the secular form of the proper office for St Olav has survived in many fragments from Scandinavia.[8] A comparison with the Icelandic fragment reveals that the monastic form must be secondary to the secular office: in the Icelandic fragment the series of responsories has been augmented by adding items that are not proper for St Olav but have been used for other saints as well (MR8, MR12). If the monastic office had been the original composition from which the secular office had been arranged, one would have expected proper responsories also in the place of MR8 and MR12.[9]

The Olav's Office is not the only office where the secular form has been expanded to comply with the liturgical needs of a monastic institution. Similar adaptions from secular to monastic use can be found for other saints. One example is the office for St Augustine (Szendrei 2000). Here, too, the series of three times three responsories at matins have been augmented by adding three chants from the Common, one for each nocturn. However, they do not occupy the place of the fourth and last responsory, but are inserted between the second and third responsories, thus keeping one of the proper chants as the final responsory in each of the three nocturns "in order to avoid distorting the usual festive closing of each nocturn" (Szendrei 2000, p. 437).

A different approach can be found in the office tradition for St Maurice (Hankeln 2019).[10] The secular series of nine responsories in a breviary with music notation from the diocese of Sitten in Switzerland can also be found in a source from France following the monastic cursus (Hankeln 2019, cf. Table 12 on page xlvii). Here, three responsories have been added at the end of the series to fill the gap. The first two nocturns each provide four of the chants also found at Sitten, whereas the third nocturn starts with the last responsory of the Sitten series followed by three responsories unknown to the Sitten breviary.[11]

The person, or persons, who adapted the secular form of the Olav's Office to the monastic form obviously had a range of different techniques to do this at their disposal, even if they chose to keep all items of the original office as they did. Firstly, they had to decide which responsories to use as a supplement to the already existing series for the night office. They had the choice of adding already existing chants, to set new texts to already existing melodies (as was done with many of the chants for the secular Olav's Office; see Østrem 2001 and Hankeln 2009), or to add completely new texts and melodies. Secondly, these additional chants could then be added in different ways to make up a series of 12 responsories, as, for instance, by placing the three new chants at the end of the series (Maurice), by adding one new chant to each nocturn but keeping the last responsory in its original place (Augustine), or by inserting a new chant at the end of each nocturn (Olav).

Celebrating a saint with chants from the repertory of items that could be used for a group of saints according to a category was a common way to find suitable liturgical items for new saints' feasts without a proper office written to honor this particular saint. Such chants were often collected in a separate section of liturgical books called *Commune Sanctorum*, the Common of the saints.[12] The two known additional chants in the monastic office for Olav are taken from this part of the liturgy.

Miles christi with its verse *Ut celestis* is the responsory given in the printed Nidaros Breviary (BN 1519) from 1519 as the responsory for first vespers and as first choice for the ninth responsory at matins from the Common for one martyr (*In natalico unius martyris*). It

appears in connection with Olav already in one of the 13th-century Icelandic manuscripts of the Nidaros ordinal.[13] *Miles christi* is here prescribed as the responsory for first vespers for the feast of St Olav.[14] The choice of *Miles christi* as the last responsory of matins seems thus to pick up on an already existing tradition to use this chant in connection with St Olav.

The other additional chant, *Justum deduxit dominus/Immortalis est*, is in BN prescribed as the responsory for first vespers, *In natalico unius confessoris non pontificis*, i.e., the Common for one confessor (not pope), and is (with the verse *Magnificavit eum*) also provided for martyrs. We can only guess what the third additional responsory might have been since the fragment has a lacuna for the responsories of the first nocturn where it would have had its place. Most likely it was taken from the Common as well.

A well-known aspect of offices from the late Middle Ages is that their chants often are ordered according to their modes (Hughes 1983).[15] In many cases a systematic order of modes can be found regarding the antiphons of the prayer on the evening before the feast (first vespers), the antiphons and responsories of the Night office (matins), and the antiphons of the morning prayer (lauds). This is the case for the Olav's Office as well, and a look at the chant modes supports the argument that the secular form was primary to the monastic one. In the secular version the antiphons and responsories are arranged in the following modal order:

Secular	**Modes**
First vespers antiphons	1–4,8
Matins antiphons	1–8,1
Matins responsories	1–8,1
Lauds antiphons	1–5

Adding four antiphons from first vespers (VA2–VA5) at the end of the series at matins to increase the number of chants from nine (3 + 3 + 3) to the required number of thirteen (6 + 6 + 1) in the monastic version retains the order of modes, just moving the modal order from first vespers to matins.[16] The insertion of one new responsory into each of the nocturns, on the other hand, disturbs the modal order of the responsory series:

Monastic	**Modes**[17]
Matins antiphons	1–8,1–4,8
Matins responsories	1–3,x,4–6,x,7,8,1,x

Olav was amongst the most popular saints in Iceland according to the máldagar (Icelandic church inventories). Here he is ranked after Mary, together with Nicholas, Peter, and Þorlákr (Cormack 1994, Figure 2 on page 29). There is no evidence that the adaption from the secular form of the office to a form suitable for monastic use took place in Iceland. On the other hand, no sources containing a monastic office for St Olav, the patron saint of Norway, have been found in Norwegian fragment collections so far. So where did the monastic version of the Olav's Office originate? In order to get closer to a possible answer, let us turn to Sweden.

3. A Cistercian Source in Sweden

Amongst the medieval fragments from liturgical books used as bindings for post-reformational accounts at the National Archives in Stockholm, there are two leaves from a 15th-century monastic antiphoner with chants for St. Olav.[18] The first leaf begins incompletely in the Magnificat antiphon of first vespers, *Adest dies leticie laudes*, and continues after the Invitatory antiphon, *Magnus dominus et laudabilis*, with chants from the first nocturn (antiphons 1–6 and responsories 1–2). The second leaf contains the last two responsories of matins, two antiphons for lauds, and the beginning of the antiphon for the first of the little hours (prime). Here are the preserved chants for matins:

Fr 29710:
First nocturn:

MA1	*Regnante illustrissimo rege olavo*
MA2	*Rex autem ille*
MA3	*Hic evangelice veritatis*
MA4	*Purificatus igitur*
MA5	*Consepultus christo*
MA6	*Cauebat uehementer*
MR1	*Jn regali fastigio V Sordebat ei omnis*
MR2	*O quantus fidei* (beginning only)

Fr 29711:
Third nocturn:

MR10	*Egregius mar]tir olavus V In ammiratione*
MR11	*Rex inclitus olavus V Felice commercio*
MR12	*Miles christi V Ut celestis regni/Gloria patri et filio*

As it was the case for the Icelandic Olav's fragment, the number and sequence of the chants easily allow us to conclude that the fragment followed monastic use. The two manuscripts do not have much of their content in common, but both prescribe *Miles christi* with the verse *Ut celestis* as the last responsory of the third nocturn, preceded by responsory eight and nine from the secular form of the office. They agree thus with respect to supplementing the secular series of proper responsories with the same responsory from the Common in the same place. The Swedish source (Fr 29711) also provides the doxology (*Gloria patri et filio*) after the verse of the responsory. In the Icelandic fragment, *Miles christi* breaks off in the verse, and we do not know whether the doxology was present or not, but there is little reason to assume that it was omitted.

Regarding the antiphons, the two Swedish fragments are far more substantial than the Icelandic source with respect to the number they contain: the Magnificat antiphon for first vespers, the Invitatory antiphon, the six antiphons of the first nocturn, in addition to two antiphons for lauds, the Magnificat antiphon for second vespers, and the beginning of the antiphons for prime. The Icelandic fragment only contains the last two antiphons of the second nocturn, and the single antiphon for the third nocturn. However, even though they do not overlap, together they give us a good indication how this chant category was arranged for the monastic form of the office. For matins, the matins antiphons were used first (MA1-6 in the first nocturn, then MA7-9 in the second nocturn), and then four of the antiphons from first vesper were added (VA2-4 in the second nocturn to make up for the three missing items, and VA5 was used as the single antiphon in the third nocturn). The use of vesper antiphons 2–5 at matins probably indicates that only one antiphon, *super psalmos*, was used for first vesper in the monastic version of the office. The use of the antiphons of lauds in the little hours is prescribed both in the Nidaros ordinary[19] and in the printed breviary, i.e., the monastic form exemplified in the Icelandic fragment follows the secular office here. Whether this also goes for second vespers, where the lauds antiphons are used once more, we do not know since this part of the office has not survived in the fragments. For a schematic overview over the secular and reconstructed monastic form of the office and the contents of the fragments, see Table 1.

Table 1. Overview over the chants in the Olav's Office[20].

	Secular Use	Mode	Monastic Use (Reconstructed)	Mode	Reykjavik National Archives Þjss "Antiphonarium 2"	Stockholm National Archives Fr29710+29711
First vespers	VA1	1	VA [=VA1]	1		
	VA2	2				
	VA3	3				
	VA4	4				
	VA5	8				
	VR (variable)					
	VAm		VAm			VAm
Matins	MI		MI			MI
1. nocturn	MA1	1	MA1	1		MA1
	MA2	2	MA 2	2		MA2
	MA3	3	MA 3	3		MA3
			MA 4	4		MA4
			MA 5	5		MA5
			MA 6	6		MA6
	MR1	1	MR1	1		MR1
	MR2	2	MR2	2		MR2
	MR3	3	MR3	3		
			MR4 *from the Common*			
2. nocturn	MA4	4	MA 7	7		
	MA5	5	MA 8	8		
	MA6	6	MA 9	1		
			MA 10 [=VA2]	2		
			MA 11 [=VA3]	3	MA11	
			MA 12 [=VA4]	4	MA12	
	MR4	4	MR5 [=MR4]	4	MR5	
	MR5	5	MR6 [=MR5]	5	MR6	
	MR6	6	MR7 [=MR6]	6	MR7	
			MR8 *Justum deduxit*		MR8 *Justum deduxit*	
3. nocturn	MA7	7	MAc [=VA5]	8	MAc	
	MA8	8				
	MA9	1				
	MR7	7	MR9 [=MR7]	7	MR9	
	MR8	8	MR10 [=MR8]	8	MR10	MR10 [=MR8]
	MR9	1	MR11 [=MR9]	1	MR11	MR11 [=MR9]
			MR12 *Miles christi*		MR12 *Miles christi*	MR12 *Miles christi*

Table 1. *Cont.*

	Secular Use	Mode	Monastic Use (Reconstructed)	Mode	Reykjavik National Archives Þjss "Antiphonarium 2"	Stockholm National Archives Fr29710+29711
Lauds	LA1	1	LA [=LA1]	1		LA
	LA2	2				
	LA3	3				
	LA4	4				
	LA5	5				
	LAb		LAb			LAb
Prime			PA [=LA2]	2		PA
Terce			TA [=LA3]	3		
Sext			SA [=LA4]	4		
None			NA [=LA5]	5		
Second vespers	*ant. de laudibus*		*?*			
	WAm		WAm			

Four more fragments in the National Archives in Stockholm have been identified as belonging to the same codex as the two Olav's fragments.[21] The MPO-database[22] suggests Cistercian origin for the manuscript.[23] In the first place, this might seem surprising as the Cistercian rite is known for its strict uniformity and reluctancy to give place to local traditions. However, feasts for local saints found their way into other Cistercian books in Sweden as well: both Birgitta, Elin of Skövde, and Sunniva appear in a 15th-century psalter, possibly from Gudsberga (Brunius 2013, p. 111). The reason for an office for St Olav to appear in a Cistercian book from Scandinavia can be traced to the Statutes from the Cistercian General Chapter. The edition by Joseph-Marie Canivez includes an entrance dated September 1237 which says that a petition from the abbots in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway to celebrate the feast day for St Olav with twelve lessons had been granted (Canivez 2010, p. 172).[24] There seemed to have been a wish to honor the saint with the highest grading.[25] Whether there already existed a monastic form of the Olav's Office that the Cistercians could make use of, we do not know. If only the secular office existed at that time, the adaption is likely to have taken place shortly after the positive response from the General Chapter in 1237 to meet the needs of the monastic communities.

All of the six Swedish fragments have a secondary provenance from Östergötland, i.e., they were used to bind administrative accounts from the Östergötland region. This suggests that the original book actually came from this area (Brunius 2013, p. 32, and personal communication). There were two prominent Cistercian institutions in Östergötland: Alvastra, founded in 1143 by monks from Clairveaux, and Vreta, a Benedictine nunnery from around 1110 that was turned into a Cistercian nunnery in 1162.[26] Michael Gullick characterizes the source as a "good looking book with distinctive cadels—distinctive enough to identify other fragments if they exist—and perhaps the quality may point to Alvastra or Vreta".[27] Perhaps a closer comparison with other codices known to have belonged to these institutions can confirm this tentative provenance.

4. Other Monastic Antiphoners in Iceland

The Cistercians never established themselves in Iceland, and we do not know how the monastic form of the Olav's Office found its way to Iceland. There were, on the other hand, five Benedictine foundations in Iceland in the Middle Ages: three monasteries (Þingeyrar (1133–1551), Munkaþvera (1155–1551), Hítardalur (1166–1207)), and two nunneries (Kirkjubær (1186–1548), Reynistadur (1295–1551)). All of them will have had books

containing the chants needed for the daily services. From the church inventories, we even know from some churches how many and what kind of books they owned at a certain time. However, we know very little about what happened to them after the Reformation, but the fragment from the National Archives in Reykjavik containing the chants for St. Olav might well once have been part of one of these lost books.

An investigation of the fragment collection in Iceland other than the National Archives shows that the Olav's fragment is not the only monastic manuscript among the fragmentary remains of medieval liturgical books in Iceland. One of the fragments kept at the National Library in Reykjavik, Lbs fragm 34, consists of a mutilated double folio from an antiphoner which has been used as book cover in the Northwest of Iceland.[28] It has been cut in the margins, and part of the written space which originally consisted of 11 lines to the page has been lost. The contents are parts of the office for St Lucy: Folio 1 contains the chants from the Magnificat antiphon of first vespers (two syllables only) to the first responsory of matins (ends incompletely in the verse). Folio 2 begins incompletely in the second antiphon of lauds and ends with the Magnificat antiphon of second vespers. The series of six antiphons for the first nocturn show that it represents monastic use.

The fragment has been dated to the 15th century, but was probably written earlier.[29] The primary provenance is unknown, and nothing regarding the paleography or liturgical content suggests that the manuscript has been written by an Icelandic scribe. The use of D-clef is not very common in Icelandic fragments, either, and suggests a foreign origin as well.[30] This does not exclude the scenario that the manuscript was written in Iceland by a person trained abroad, and it certainly does not mean that it has not been *used* in Iceland. Whether the presence of a possibly imported monastic manuscript indicates that there were not enough locally made books or rather is a witness to connections to monastic institutions outside of Iceland remains an open question.

Another monastic source has been described by Lilli Gjerløw in her publication on the Nidaros Antiphoner (Gjerløw 1979, pp. 259–61).[31] It consists of four fragments representing five leaves of an antiphoner following monastic use. One of the fragments is kept at the National Library (Lbs fragm. 43); the other three belong to the National Museum and are kept at the Árni Magnússon Institute in Reykjavik (Þjms 194, 954, and 7437). Gjerløw dates them to the 14th to 15th century and suggests the bishopric of Hólar as the provenance of the book, based on the catalogue notes for two of the fragments (Lárusson 1963).[32] However, only one of these can be connected to the Northern part of Iceland.[33] Regarding the other one, Gjerløw probably confused the place name with a place of the same name in the North.[34] According to the catalogue, the third fragment came to the National Museum from a book collector from the Northeast of Iceland.[35] The fragment of the National Library was part of a private collection, the owner of which was born in the North of Iceland but lived most of his life in Reykjavik, and we do not know when and where he acquired the fragment.[36] The manuscript certainly seems to have been written in Iceland.[37] However, contrary to the situation in Sweden[38], the secondary provenance of book fragments in Iceland is not a reliable indication for where exactly a fragment was written or where the original liturgical book was used. The fact that Lbs fragm. 34 ended up as binding for a book in the Westfjords of Iceland (belonging to the medieval bishopric of Skálholt), or that two of the fragments of the source by Gjerløw suggested as belonging to an institution under Hólar have a secondary provenance from the North-Eastern part of Iceland, should not be given too much attention. A study of paleographic features and a comparison with manuscripts with established provenance will probably give a more reliable result.[39]

5. Conclusions

The fragmentary state of many medieval liturgical books in the Nordic countries is a great challenge when trying to identify sources from monastic institutions. Sometimes the difference in order and selection of chants from matins in the Divine Office can help us to distinguish between sources from secular and monastic use. Several fragments in Icelandic collections can be assigned to monastic institutions due to this significant feature.

Even if the secondary provenance of fragments from books with music notation in Iceland does not provide information that can help with relating them to a specific monastery, still the sources can give us a better picture of what was sung during the church services not only in the Icelandic institutions following monastic use but probably also in other Nordic countries. As shown above, the Olav's fragment provides interesting information about how this saint, venerated widely all over Scandinavia, was celebrated in monastic institutions in the later Middle Ages, and together with the Swedish fragments allows for the tentative reconstruction of a monastic form of the office. However, there are more sources to be studied more closely. An open eye for musical fragments indicating monastic use in all the Nordic archives and collections is thus of great value for gaining more knowledge about liturgical and musical traditions in monastic institutions of the North.

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Abbreviations

1. Chants	
A	Antiphon
Ac	First antiphon of the third nocturn in the monastic office
I	Invitatory antiphon
Ps	Psalm
R	Great responsory
V	Responsory verse
2. Services	
V	First vespers
M	Matins
L	Lauds
V2	Second Vespers
N	None
P	Prime
S	Sext
T	Terce
A number indicates which place within a service a chant occupies.	
Example:	VA5 is the fifth antiphon at first vespers

Notes

1 Secular use is the liturgy followed by non-monastic churches and institutions.
2 Matins, the night service of the office (or night office), is divided into three so-called nocturns.
3 An antiphoner is a book containing the chants for the Divine Office.
4 The fragment has the shelf mark Þjss "Antiphonarium 2". I encountered this fragment for the first time in the middle of the 1990s when working on my doctoral project on the Nidaros Antiphoner. It has also been included in Eyolf Østrem's doctoral dissertation (Østrem 2001, pp. 43–45). Due to COVID-19 restrictions, it has not been possible for me to work with either this or any of the other fragments presented in this paper other than by studying digital images.
5 I am grateful to Åslaug Ommundsen for her opinion on the dating, and for sharing her notes on the size of the fragment with me.
6 These and other particular features of Icelandic medieval Latin manuscripts have been discussed in Ommundsen and Attinger (2013).
7 On folio 1r—what once probably was the front page of the cover—there are some words in Latin added by a later hand:nominativo genitivo dativoaccusativo vocativoablativo [et/ex/est?] dualis casis in [atinyo?]I have not been able to make sense of the paragraph as a whole, but it starts with listing the Latin cases according to Donatus in *Ars Minor (De nomine)* (Gottskálk Jenssen, personal communication).
8 See Østrem (2001, pp. 239–62) for a list and description of the sources known to him and an introduction to the history of the office. It came into existence probably shortly after the erection of the archdiocese of Nidaros in 1152/3. Most of the fragments are from the 14th and 15th centuries.
9 Another argument for the monastic form being secondary is the order of the modes which will be discussed below.

[10] I am most grateful to Roman Hankeln for helpful comments on the matter and for kindly providing me with a copy of this publication.
[11] A more complicated situation is encountered regarding the office for Louis IX of France: here a monastic office has been reworked into a secular form which then was taken as the point of departure for another monastic version (Gaposchkin 2009).
[12] For a presentation of the early liturgy of St Olav, see for instance Iversen (2000).
[13] For an edition of the Nidaros ordinal from these manuscripts, see Gjerløw (1968). Only ms B contains the feast of St Olav.
[14] The other Icelandic source (written by the scribe Jón Þorláksson in the 15th century: AM 241b IIIβ fol.) containing the responsory for first vespers of the Olav's Office provides *O quantus fidei*, i.e., the fragment does not follow the ordinal but agrees with the printed breviary which also has *O quantus fidei* in this place.
[15] In this article Andrew Hughes presents different modal schemes, and reflects on how the re-arrangement of modal orders might be used for working a way back to the original form of an office.
[16] This rearranged order of the antiphons is not only based on the Icelandic fragment but also the Swedish source presented below.
[17] x are placeholders for the modes of the added chants to illustrate where the order gets disturbed, independently of the actual modes of the chants.
[18] Fr 29710 and Fr 29711. Images of Fr 29710 can be found on https://sok.riksarkivet.se/bildvisning/R1029710_00001 (accessed on 27 April 2021). I am very grateful to the National Archives in Stockholm for providing me with images of Fr 29711.
[19] "Super horas diurnales antiphone <de laudibus>" (Gjerløw 1968, p. 272).
[20] Only modes for items relevant for showing the re-ordering of the modal order of the office are provided. When items have been moved to a new place, this is indicated by giving the original placement (in the secular office) of both antiphons and responsories in square brackets.
[21] Fr 29712, Fr 644, Fr 9234, and Fr 29925. They contain chants for the feasts for Mary Magdalen, Lawrence, Simon and Jude, All Saints, Martin, and chants from the *Temporale* (the movable feasts of the liturgical year). More fragments of this codex can perhaps be found in the fragment collection.
[22] Database of medieval book fragments at the National Archives in Stockholm (https://sok.riksarkivet.se/mpo, accessed on 28 April 2021).
[23] "Ord. Cist. auf Grund des Formulars, vgl. F. HUOT, L'Antiphonaire cistercien au XIIe siècle d'après les manuscrits de la Maigrauge, in: Zeitschrift für schweizerische Kirchengeschichte, 1971, Nr. 96, 127." (https://sok.riksarkivet.se/MPO?FragmentID=644&page=1&postid=Mpo_644, accessed on 28 April 2021).
[24] 21 Petitio abbatum Daciae, Suasciae, Norgeviae, de faciendo festo sancti Olani [sic] cum duodecim lectionibus in suis abbatiis tantum, exauditur.
[25] On the other hand, the feast of St Olav never found its way into the official Cistercian calendar.
[26] Vreta was the mother house of Askeby, a third Cistercian foundation in Östergötland.
[27] Personal communication. Gullick also emphasizes that there is no reason why a good-looking book should not have been made for a parish church. For more reflections on this matter, see Gullick (2017).
[28] "Voru utan um prófastsbók sr. Jóns Jónssonar og sr. Sigurðar Jónssonar í Holti í Önundarfirði". For an image, see https://handrit.is/en/manuscript/imaging/is/LbsFragm-0034 (accessed on 27 April 2021). The handwritten notes on the fragments of the National Library by Jakob Benediktsson have been published in Blöndal (1959).
[29] 14th century. Åslaug Ommundsen has been so kind as to have a look at this fragment and has suggested the earlier dating and a non-Icelandic provenance.
[30] The D-clef is used in Copenhagen AM Access 7b HS 50 which certainly is Icelandic.
[31] Gjerløw gives a detailed overview over the contents: parts of the Temporale (St John the evangelist, the octave of the Nativity, and Dominica in Quinquagesima) and Sanctorale (Agnes and Vincent) and traces the chants to other liturgical uses.
[32] All information about the secondary provenance of the fragments from the National Museum given in this article is taken from this catalogue.
[33] Þjms 7437: "Úr bandi á sálnaregistri Mývatnsþinga 1785–1815". According to the catalogue, the fragment was moved to the National Museum from the National Archives on 27 March 1917.
[34] Þjms 194: "Kom til Þjms. 26.9.1864 frá Birni Björnssyni bónda á Breiðabólstað á Álftanesi". Another fragment, not connected to the antiphoner (Þjms 102), came to the National Museum on the same date. Here the former owner is called farmer *á Bessastöðum* which is the same area, located south of Reykjavik.
[35] Þjms 954: "Kom til Þjms. 14/7 1873 frá Jónatan Þorlákssyni á Þórðarstöðum" (1825–1906, cf. https://handrit.is/en/biography/view/JonTho020 (accessed on 27 April 2021)).
[36] Lbs fragm. 43: *Úr safni Valdimars* Ásmundssonar (1852–1902, cf. https://handrit.is/en/biography/view/ValAsm001 (accessed on 27 April 2021)). See https://handrit.is/en/manuscript/imaging/is/LbsFragm-0043 (accessed on 27 April 2021).
[37] Gjerløw describes the greater initials covering a space over two lines as being "in the usual flowery style of late-medieval Icelandic manuscripts" (Gjerløw 1979, p. 259). The quality of the parchment and ink and the occasional occurrences of double notes (Þjms 7437) point in the same direction. Åslaug Ommundsen kindly confirmed Gjerløw's dating and provenance based on paleography (personal communication).
[38] In Norway, too, the secondary provenance of fragments can—with some caution—be used to say something about the area of origin or use for the book that the fragments once were part of (for a discussion of this matter, see Pettersen (2013)).

[39] Sometimes decorations can provide clues s to a possible origin: a leaf from a gradual kept at the Árni Magnússon Institute in Reykjavik (AM Fasc.V 12, V), for instance, has been ascribed to Þingeyrarklaustur due to the figurative initial on the first page (Kristjánsdóttir 2016, pp. 271–72).

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Þingeyrar Abbey in Northern Iceland: A Benedictine Powerhouse of Cultural Heritage

Gottskálk Jensson

Department of Nordic Studies and Linguistics, University of Copenhagen; Njalsgade 136, 2300 Copenhagen, Denmark; gthj@hi.is

Abstract: Þingeyrar Abbey was founded in 1133 and dissolved in the wake of the Lutheran Reformation (1550), to virtually disappear with time from the face of the earth. Although highly promising archeological excavations are under way, our material points of access to this important monastic foundation are still only a handful of medieval artifacts. However, throughout its medieval existence Þingeyrar Abbey was an inordinately large producer of Latin and Icelandic literature. We have the names of monastic authors, poets, translators, compilators, and scribes, who engaged creatively with such diverse subjects as Christian hagiography, contemporary history, and Norse mythology, skillfully amalgamating all of this into a coherent, imaginative whole. Thus, Þingeyrar Abbey has a prominent place in the creation and preservation of the Icelandic Eddas and Sagas that have shaped the Northern European cultural memory. Despite the dissolution of monastic libraries and wholesale destruction of Icelandic-Latin manuscripts through a mixture of Protestant zealotry and parchment reuse, philologists have been able to trace a number of surviving codices and fragments back to Þingeyrar Abbey. Ultimately, however, our primary points of access to the fascinating world of this remote Benedictine community remain immaterial, a vast corpus of medieval texts edited on the basis of manuscript copies at unknown degrees of separation from the lost originals.

Keywords: Latin literature; Icelandic and Old Norse literature; Þingeyrar Abbey; cultural heritage; monasticism

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1. Introduction

Umberto Eco's novel *Il nome delle Rosa* (*The Name of the Rose*) (Eco 1980) is deservedly famous for providing the modern reader imaginative access to the rich if occasionally poisonous mentality of a community of Benedictines in Northern Italy, anno 1327. Although variously shaped by the author's creative imagination and expertise in postmodern semiotics, Eco's idea of a Benedictine Abbey borrows heavily from existing Italian monasteries, chief among them the Sacra di San Michele, a picturesque monument poised on top of a mountain in Val di Susa, Piedmont. Even today this spectacular location can be visited and admired by Eco's fans, built as it is of stone and never discontinued or destroyed during a disruptive religious revolution. The situation with Þingeyrar Abbey in Northern Iceland, although founded already in the early 1100s and operating under the same monastic rule, is strikingly different. Today, a visitor to the site will find but a small stone church, which despite its Romanesque features was built as late as the 19th-century. The oldest artefact inside this church dates to the 15th century, an English alabaster altarpiece, known from a medieval inventory to have decorated the high altar of the monastic church, and a hexagonal pulpit with a few other artifacts from the 17th century. The natural site of Þingeyrar is impressive enough, situated as it is on a hill between two lakes, Hóp and Húnavatn, but there are virtually no material remains on site from the medieval Abbey. Icelanders built their churches and monasteries from wood, occasionally imported from Norway but more commonly, especially in the case of Þingeyrar, using the plentiful driftwood found on the neighboring beaches. According to a description from 1684, when a new caretaker took up

residence at Þingeyrar, there were 46 wooden buildings on location, large and small. Many of these were old and needed rebuilding, making it probable that they were remnants from the time of the monastery before 1551. Traditionally, buildings were renewed more or less according to their original design. Thus, we should picture the medieval Abbey as a small village of tarred timber houses and huts with an imposing stave church in the centre. Named constructions were the 'priests' hall', 'large hall', 'dining house', 'kitchen', and a 23 m long tunnel in between. In the medieval charters, apart from the church itself, mention is made of the cloister (Claustrum), chapter house (Capitulum), and the convent house (Conventum), where the monks sat when they read, wrote, and studied. The church was a timber stave church with apprentices surrounding the central space and a palisade walkway; two towers framed the façade, and probably carved pillars on each side of the main door, which was of a type rounded at the top. Similar structures are preserved in Norway to this day. Such wooden buildings, if not destroyed in fires at some point in history, have long since rotted away in the wet and windy Icelandic climate, or been torn down or reused, to leave no visible remains above ground. Naturally, something must still remain in the ground, at least post holes and stones, marking the outlines of former buildings, and these will no doubt be unearthed in the ongoing excavations, led by archeologist Steinunn (2017a), gradually giving us a more precise picture of the layout and arrangement of individual buildings at Þingeyrar Abbey.

Even though the modern visitor to the site may feel disappointed by its desolation, the Benedictine brothers would likely have begged to differ, despising as they did this world and spending their lives in preparation for Kingdom come, of which they thought they had reliable knowledge from their sacred books. Most moderns think they know better than to waste their lives on transcendent promises, but in a sense the *monachi Thingeyrenses* were actually quite successful in overcoming the material restraints of this world. Throughout its medieval existence, the Abbey was a center of book production like probably no other institution in the whole of Scandinavia. The monks of Þingeyrar were responsible for most of the original Latin literature of Iceland, which although largely lost today in its original form survives in vernacular versions, many of which were no doubt also created at the Abbey. Judging by the number of pages that survive in translation, the monks were highly productive authors of Latin texts, measured on medieval scales, when books were handwritten on animal skin, and a library of 200 volumes was large.

Nothing indicates that these monks intended to limit themselves to the exclusive literary medium of ecclesiastical Latin. They have not only bequeathed to us vernacular translations and discussions of classical authors (Sallust, Ovid, Lucan, Pseudo-Dares Phrygius, and Hyginus, to name a few) and of medieval historians (Beda the Venerable, Adam of Bremen, William of Malmesbury, Geoffrey of Monmouth, and Pseudo-Turpin), not to mention the numerous Icelandic renderings of Judeo-Christian scriptures, apocrypha, homilies, and hagiography; the Benedictines of Þingeyrar seem to have begun early on to experiment with writing original histories in the vernacular, now called 'sagas', as well as poetry, religious or otherwise, in an effort to preserve and expand local Icelandic, Scandinavian, and Germanic legends. Indeed, if it were not for these Icelandic Benedictines, we would not have some of the most important manuscripts transmitting the Eddas and studies on vernacular grammar and poetics, which today inform our Northern-European historical identity and cultural memory, since many of the manuscripts transmitting such texts were produced at Þingeyrar Abbey (Gunnlaugsson 2016; Kristjánsdóttir 2016). Perhaps strangest of all, at the end of the 12th century, the men of Þingeyrar got embroiled in the historical quarrel between *regnum* and *sacerdotium*, and in that connection penned past and contemporary political history (Jensson 2016). While much of Icelandic medieval literature is anonymous, we have the names of abbots, priests, and monks of Þingeyrar Abbey, who are spoken of as authors, poets, translators, compilators, and scribes, engaging with a diversity of literary topics. Remarkably, these monastics were able to fashion all of their subjects into a coherent universal whole, using an orthodox medieval theology, which

was largely established in antiquity by the Church Fathers, though long since revised today and all but forgotten.

After the Reformation, which in Iceland is marked by the beheading of the last Catholic bishop and his two sons in 1550 (one of whom, Björn Jónsson, was the caretaker and future abbot of Þingeyrar), both mobile and landed property belonging to the Icelandic monasteries was confiscated by officials of the Danish Royal Crown. In 1551, an armed band of Danish soldiers stole from the northern episcopal cathedral and monasteries most items of value, especially artifacts of gold and silver, which they transported to Copenhagen to be melted down by royal goldsmiths. Even more sadly, we have no accounts of what happened to the monastic libraries. For all we know, books were burnt, left to rot, or thrown overboard from the Danish ships on the voyage to Copenhagen. Another perhaps more innocent but equally devastating practice in the 16th and 17th century was parchment reuse, mainly in book binding. Several surviving codices are missing pages, cut out for this purpose 'by a barbaric hand', as the Icelandic manuscript collector Árni Magnússon (d. 1730) wrote on a slip of paper he inserted into one of them (Reykjavík, AM 382 4to).

Medieval libraries were quite different from their modern counterparts. As was usual elsewhere in Scandinavia in the Middle Ages, in Iceland books and documents were mostly stored in wooden chests and coffers. At Þingeyrar Abbey, these were apparently located near the high altar of the old church, according to an inventory of 1525. Liturgical books lay around in the church, and 'numerous' others were found elsewhere in the building (where exactly it does not say), while 'on the high altar there [were] many books in Latin, in good and bad condition, and books in Icelandic [nine titles are mentioned, among them the lives of the three Icelandic saints, Þorlákr, Jón, and Guðmundr], and a few other used up and rotten books'. The compiler of the 1525 inventory, Sigurður, who was the son of the last Catholic bishop of Hólar, seems not to have considered it important to describe all the books in detail or list their contents. The monks who knew and perused them no doubt took a different view. The large wooden church itself survived the Reformation well into the 17th century, when it was rebuilt by the king's bailiff, probably according to the same design, only smaller. We may have a rough design for the medieval church from one of the seals of Þingeyrar Abbey together with a miniature inside an illuminated capital letter in a manuscript written there (Reykjavík, GKS 1005 fol., 69v) (Sverrir 2009; Guðrún 2016). This codex, the grandest of Icelandic manuscripts, comprises a small library in one manuscript. Its copying was begun in 1387, apparently from the works available at the Abbey.

What happened to the books after the Reformation? Despite the damaging dissolution of monastic libraries and wholesale destruction of especially Latin manuscripts, fragments of 400–450 Latin books from Iceland have been identified but hardly any whole books. Codicologists have been able to trace about 40 surviving manuscripts and fragments to Þingeyrar Abbey and surroundings (Gunnlaugsson 2016; Kristjánsdóttir 2016). Some of the surviving manuscripts were probably not among the books in the church when it was inventoried in 1525. Many books were produced in the monastery to be sold elsewhere in Iceland or exported to Norway (Stefán 2000). However, the preserved manuscripts from Þingeyrar Abbey do not tell the whole story, because a vast corpus of texts still exists, material of the kind that Mortensen has dubbed 'intangible cultural heritage' (Mortensen 2020), i.e., ancient and medieval texts edited on the basis of manuscript copies at unknown degrees of separation from the lost originals, and therefore usually not included in the definition of cultural heritage, which mainly focuses on preserved material artifacts. The quality of preservation of these medieval texts from Þingeyrar Abbey varies, but on the whole they give a good picture of the learned and religious mentality of this and other monastic communities in Iceland. Numerous studies of individual texts have been published in the past, but few have attempted to survey this corpus of literature for evidence of the historical consciousness of the Benedictines of Þingeyrar Abbey, nor to understand how the diverse topics they subjected to study relate to each other, indeed, how they were made to cohere in a catholic (in the original sense of that word) whole. What was the *Thingeyrenses*' view on essential issues for medieval Icelanders, such as the connection between languages,

peoples, and the outline of the terrestrial orb? What were the epochs of world history from creation to the present? How did the idolatry of their pagan ancestors relate to the true faith of Christianity? Where did they see their own place in the world as Benedictines in Iceland? The aim of the present study is to try to answer such questions.

2. The Þingeyrar Abbey Corpus: 12th Century

One of the first writers of Þingeyrar was Abbot Karl Jónsson (c. 1135–1212/13), who authored *Sverris saga* ('The Saga of Sverrir'), which follows the career of King Sverrir Sigurðarson of Norway (r. 1177–1202) from the time he left the Faroe Islands, where he grew up and where his mother revealed to him that his true father was King Sigurðr Haraldsson of Norway (d. 1155), through his uprising against King Magnús, chosen by the universal church to rule Norway as vassal of St Óláfr of Niðaróss, and concludes with Sverrir's attainment of monarchy through armed struggle, shrewdness, and good fortune. King Sverrir drove two archbishops into exile and was himself excommunicated in 1194 by Pope Celestine III together with all of Norway. Nevertheless, he managed to hold on to power for over two decades and establish the future dynasty of Norway. *Sverris saga* is medieval literature at its best, and its sober and understated narrative style no doubt set the standard for later Icelandic historiography. The saga paints a highly sympathetic picture of a struggling but resourceful leader of men, assigning him artfully composed orations that reveal his balanced character and sophisticated sense of humor. The saga is said to have been the chosen last reading of King Hákon the Old of Norway (r. 1217–1264), King Sverrir's grandson, on his deathbead in Orkney.

Sverris saga was begun by Abbot Karl during his stay in Norway from 1185 to 1188, in collaboration with the king himself, who 'decided what was written', as is stated in the prologue. Later, according to the saga's revised prologue in the aforementioned manuscript Flateyjarbók, the saga was completed or revised by the priest Styrmir Kárason (c. 1170–1245; on him below), who was probably the son of the abbot who replaced Abbot Karl while in Norway. The Norwegian scholar Munch suggested long ago that Abbot Karl may have begun writing *Sverris saga* in Latin, given that King Sverrir's Faroese fosterfather, Uni, is Latinized to *Unas* in the vernacular text, and two of Abbot Karl's contemporaries at Thingeyrar used Latin when writing Norwegian history (Munch 1857). The priest Styrmir would then have translated, revised, and continued the saga in the vernacular, and the preserved text would be largly from Styrmir's hand. To Munch's arguments could be added that the title of the latter part of the original saga was *Perfecta fortitudo*, according to the revised prologue. If we look at contemporary writing in Norway, King Sverrir's main opponent in the early 1180s, Archbishop Eysteinn Erlendsson (d. 1188), commissioned the Benedictine monk Theodoricus to write Norwegian royal history in Latin, *Historia de Antiquitate Regum Norwagiensium*. Against the choice of the Roman tongue, on the other hand, speaks that King Sverrir commissioned a propaganda oration against the church in the vernacular, *Ræða gegn biskupum* ('A Speech against the Bishops'), which exploits the vernacular to better get its message across to lay Norwegians. The King may, however, have wished to employ a different strategy in his biography, if it was aimed at the officials of the Roman Church. Just like Abbot Karl, Sverrir was clerically educated. If nothing else, our inability to determine with certainty the language of the original biography of King Sverrir underscores the bilingual nature of literacy at Þingeyrar in this period.

A contemporary of Abbot Karl at Þingeyrar was the priest Oddr Snorrason, whose precise dates seem impossible to ascertain. Brother Oddr wrote in Latin a pseudo-hagiographical vita of King Óláfr Tryggvason of Norway (r. 995–1000), *Gesta regis Olavi filii Tryggva*, a vernacular translation of which has come down to us, likely made at Þingeyrar Abbey, and certainly preserved in a manuscript written at the Abbey: Copenhagen, AM 310 4to (dated to 1250–1275). King Óláfr Tryggvason was virtually unknown or even reviled in written accounts outside of Iceland (such as the *Passion of St Olav* and Adam of Bremen's *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*) but in the earliest Icelandic historical writings by Sæmundr Sigfússon and Ari Thorgilsson, from the early 12th century, he was much

loved as the king who brought Christianity to five countries in the north, Iceland among them. One of Oddr's sources on King Óláfr I was Ásgrímr Vestlidason (d. 1161), the second Abbot of Þingeyrar. Brother Oddr prefaced his work with a letter in Latin, addressed to his 'Christian brothers and fathers', his intended audience presumably being, besides other monastics in Iceland and Scandinavia, the archiepiscopal court at Niðaróss, Norway, in the last decade of Archbishop Eysteinn's period of office (1177–1188).

In his prefatory letter, Brother Oddr further announces his intention to promote King Óláfr Tryggvason, 'as you promote King Óláfr'—meaning the royal Saint Óláfr II of Niðaróss, who was the head figure of the new Olavian ideology of ecclesiastical control over the kingship of Norway. Brother Oddr writes that King Óláfr I held his namesake, St Óláfr, as a babe during baptism, and just as John the baptist was the precursor of Christ, so King Óláfr I prepared for the arrival of St Óláfr. Oddr concedes that after his death King Óláfr did not shine with miracles like St Óláfr, but he nevertheless believes him to have been 'a saintly man, virtuous, and a friend of God'. To underpin Oddr's daring claim to royal sanctity for King Óláfr I, he describes when the king and his bishop discovered the earthly remains of the Saints of Selja, the site of the first Benedictine monastery of Norway, citing in full the entire Latin legend of Sunniva, the saint of Bergen (St Óláfr's cult was centered around Niðaróss). The prominence of Selja in Oddr's work might indicate a possible institutional bonding between these two Bendictine Abbeys in times when Augustinian influence was increasingly felt in the archdiocese. A number of prelates in Norway collaborated with King Sverrir despite the papal ban and the flight of their archbishops to England and Denmark. The message Oddr wished to get across to his reader is that men should, with Peter the Apostle, 'fear God and do honor to the king' (1Peter 2:17: *Deum timete: regem honorificate*). The king gives men good things, God gives them the king; thus, human approval is due to the king and divine worship to God. Put more plainly, the Church should not meddle in politics. Oddr's work likely reached both Niðaróss and Lund, in his days, and was studied in both archsees, as is evidenced by Theodoricus' account of the *Norwegian Kings of Old* and Saxo Grammaticus' great *Deeds of the Danes*, written in Lund in the decades before and after 1200.

Another Latin work by Brother Oddr, *Gesta Inguari late peregrinantis*, is preserved only in an Icelandic translation, *Yngvars saga víðfǫrla* (The Saga of Yngvar the Far-traveler). This is the story of a Viking pretender to the throne of Sweden, who on a pseudo-missionary exploration into "Russia" sails upstream (on the Daugava?) through unknown territory filled with strange peoples such as the Amazones, a tribe of women warriors, Cyclopes, monsters, and dragons. Yngvar and his men come to cities with Greek sounding names—Scythopolis, Heliopolis—most of the material for which ultimately derives from Adam of Bremen and Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*. Surprisingly, at least from the modern point of view, Oddr's fantastic narrative has a historical kernel, as is shown by some 26 runestones from the 11th century, found primarily in the Stockholm area, which were erected in memory of the men who "perished in the east with Yngvar". True to history, in Brother Oddr's original *Gesta Inguari late peregrinantis*, Yngvar never returns, but his Icelandic travel companion Garða-Ketill (Russia-Katle) does, and it is he who brings the story to Iceland, although ironically no one in Sweden seems to have heard it, judging by the runestones. In the latter half of *Yngvars saga*, the protagonist's son, Sveinn, who was left behind to receive schooling in the languages of the East, follows in his father's footsteps and sails into Russia, where he ends up marrying a Greek-speaking queen, non of which is found on the runestones.

The story of Yngvar has both direct and subtle associations with the *Gesta regis Olavi filii Tryggva*, which, as we saw, plays into the ecclesiastic and political context of the day through undermining the 'Olavian' ideology of Archbishop Eysteinn of Niðaróss by ascribing the Christianization of the Northern countries not to St Óláfr but to his predecessor, King Óláfr I. Indeed, both texts decisively reject the policy of *libertas ecclesie* (ecclesial independence from secular government) by depicting the ideal role of Christian bishops *vis-à-vis* their lords and kings as that of loyal companions and subjects (Hofmann 1981). With his writings,

Oddr like Abbot Karl no doubt intended to lend indirect support to King Sverrir in his struggle for power in Norway and conflict with the universal Church of Rome. Brother Oddr must therefore have written his works after 1179, when King Sverrir had risen to power after killing Earl Erlingr, the father of King Magnús. In doing so, he shows himself to have belonged to a network of prelates and magnates in Iceland and Norway, who were sympathetic to King Sverrir and opposed Danish influence in Norway. Indeed, in a prefatory letter to the original Latin text, which is cited in the epilogue of *Yngvars saga*, Oddr addressed two clerically educated magnates in the south of Iceland, Jón Loptsson of Oddi (d. 1197) and Lawspeaker Gizurr Hallsson of Skálholt (d. 1206), almost as his patrons. The latter was also mentioned at the end of *Gesta regis Olaui* as the expert reader, who reviewed and emended the text, although this could be an interpolation from the other Latin work on King Óláfr I by Brother Gunnlaugr. Two short Latin fragments are embedded in the translations of Oddr's works, a Latin stanza from *Gesta regis Olaui* and a passage of *Gesta Inguari* relating information from a work well known in Iceland, Adam of Bremen's *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*. In one of the manuscripts containing Oddr's account of King Óláfr I (Stockholm, Holm perg 18, 4to; c. 1300), it is added at the end, where the author is identified, that Brother Oddr experienced visions. He had been unhappy, and was planning to leave the community, when Christ appeared to him in the church at Þingeyrar with arms spread and dropping his head, saying in a troubled voice, "Behold how I have suffered for your sake; you shall overcome your temptation in my name". After which it says that Oddr praised God and never again fell into temptation. He is also said to have had another magnificent vision of King Óláfr I (Hofmann 1988), who presumably command him to write his story.

Brother Gunnlaugr Leifsson (d. 1218/19) was the younger contemporary of Abbot Karl and Brother Oddr at Þingeyrar. He was the most prolific Latin author of the Middle Ages in Iceland and respected in his time for his extensive learning. His *magnum opus* was another, presumably much longer and more elaborate, history of King Óláfr Tryggvason, *Historia Olaui regis filii Tryggua*, which he submitted for review to Lawspeaker Gizurr Hallsson. Gizurr is said to have kept it for two years before returning it to Gunnlaugr, who then emended the text accordingly. Gizurr died in 1206, hence the work was drafted no later than 1204, and presumably already in the 1190s, when King Sverrir still ruled Norway, since the work would not have had the same exigency after his demise. Brother Gunnlaugr also collaborated with Lawspeaker Gizurr on the composition of the life and miracles of the first canonized Icelandic saint, Bishop Þorlákr Þórhallsson (1133–93), *Vita et miracula S. Thorlaci Skalholtensis episcopi*, whose earthly remains were translated at Skálholt See in the summer of 1198. Latin fragments of this work are preserved, which show Gunnlaugr to be a competent writer of ecclesiastical Latin.

Bishop Þorlákr was educated in Paris after the middle of the 12th century. Paris was the intellectual center of Europe at the time, and based on the known affiliations of other Scandinavians in Paris, such as the later archbishops Eiríkr Ívarsson of Niðaróss and Absalon of Lund, the most likely institutions where Þorlákr studied are the Abbeys of St Victor and Ste Geneviève, which were celebrated for their learning and together with the cathedral school of Notre-Dame the cradles of the University of Paris. It was Þorlákr who brought the Augustinian rule to Iceland by presiding over the first Augustinian house at Þykkvibær in Síða in the south of Iceland. The Augustinians were promoted by the newly founded archbishopric of Niðaróss and acted as agents of ecclesiastical policy in Iceland. By a clever stratagem, the magnates of Iceland, primarily Lawspeaker Gizurr, in collaboration with the Benedictines of Þingeyrar, promoted the canonization of St Þorlákr, who died in 1193, and wrote his *vita*, where the conflicts between these factions of society were so downplayed that a revised vernacular version of the saga of St Þorlákr was deemed necessary in the early 14th century (Fahn and Jensson 2010). Incidentally, the abbot who likely wrote this revised saga, Brother Bergr Sokkason (d. c. 1350), was in his youth a monk at Þingeyrar Abbey. By promoting the canonization of St Þorlákr, Brother Gunnlaugr and

his magnate patrons could contribute to improving the relations with the papacy and the archbishop while at the same time controling the legacy of St Þorlákr.

Brother Gunnlaugr's second engagement with original Icelandic hagiography was through his *Vita et miracula S. Johannis Holensis episcopi*, written around 1202 at the request of Bishop Guðmundr of Hólar. Bishop Jón of Hólar (d. 1121) was the first *presul* of this newly founded northern diocese (before there was only one see in Iceland, Skálholt). He prepared for the founding of Þingeyrar Abbey and no less importantly for the northern Benedictines, he established a school at his see, where many of the later members of Þingeyrar Abbey received their clerical education. Bishop Jón brought with him to Iceland two experts from abroad, Rikini, who is said to be a *franzeis*, although judging by his name (*Richinne*, *Ricvine*) he may have been a Lotharingian (Kålund and Beckman 1914), and a schoolmaster, Gísli Finnsson, from Gothland (now in Sweden) in the ecclesiastical province of Lund (until 1153 the only archsee of Scandinavia). Rikini taught singing and versification, and he impressed the diocese of Hólar with his phenomenally retentive memory, having learnt by heart the complete *Opus Dei*, both the words and music of the liturgy from morning to evening for the entire year. Brother Gunnlaugr displayed a great interest in liturgical recitation and singing, portraying St Jón as a marvelous *cantor* with a great voice and capable of reading Latin aloud most beautifully. He reports that because of the quality of liturgical performance, people flocked to Hólar to celebrate Easter and Pentecost.

St Jón is made the spiritual founder of Þingeyrar Abbey, even if it was consecrated by his successor in 1133. An infectious passion for Latin runs through Brother Gunnlaugr's *Vita S. Johannis* (Jensson 2017). The reader is entertained with stories of the carpenter Þóroddr Gamlason, who while building the Hólar cathedral learnt Latin by overhearing students being taught at the school. There was also a pious lady, Ingunn by name, so learned in Latin grammar that she could correct the texts of others by listening to them read aloud; meanwhile, she busied herself with embroidery. Then there is the story of Klœngr Þorsteinsson, future bishop of Skálholt, caught reading Ovid's *Ars amatoria* (a copy of this work is attested in the 1525 inventory of Hólar cathedral; *DI*, IX, p. 298) and reminded by Bishop Jón not to stimulate his already excitable carnal appetites by perusal of such poetry. Indeed, according to the vita, St Jón went so far as to ban all erotic poetry in his diocese, as well as dancing. These stories of life at Hólar in the early 12th century may reflect the ideals of the community at Þingeyrar Abbey rather than actual history. A certain zealotry characterizes the figure of St Jón as a bishop, as for example when he is credited with reforming the designations of the weekdays, drawn from the pagan gods/heroes Týr (=Mars), Odin (=Mercurius), Thor (=Jupiter), and Freyja (=Venus), by insisting on referring to them by numbers or functions instead (third day, midweek day, fifth day, fast day, and washing day), appellations that have survived in Iceland to this day. In addition, the Life of St Jón contains many anecdotes and miracles *post mortem*, which give a bleak but interesting picture of everyday life in 12th-century Iceland: hunger, death, and poverty among the common people. These tales of suffering and disease provide authentic testimony about religious beliefs and practices, and give fascinating glimpses into the mentality of the period.

Finally, Gunnlaugr translated the *Prophetiæ Merlini* of his fellow Benedictine Geoffrey of Monmouth (d. c. 1155). The translation, entitled *Merlínusspá*, is composed in the eddic metre *fornyrdislag*, which is also used in the famous eschatological Old Norse-Icelandic poem *Vǫluspá* ('Prophecy of the Seeress'). The Icelandic poem includes material from Geoffrey's *Historia regum Britanniae*, which is also found translated into the vernacular in two manuscripts, Hauksbók (Reykjavík, AM 544 4to) and Copenhagen, AM 573 4to, no doubt the work of one of the members of the Þingeyrar community. Gunnlaugr is finally said to have composed a rhymed office in honor of St Ambrose, *Historia Ambrosii*, but when he performed it in the Hólar Cathedral, probably in 1209, Bishop Guðmundr of Hólar, a militant agitator for the liberty of the Roman Church, rejected the composition, saying that he preferred the old one by Gregor the Great. By then, Gunnlaugr had virtually replaced the half–manic bishop as the highest ecclesiastical authority in the diocese.

3. The Þingeyrar Abbey Corpus: 13th Century

The 13th century is arguably the golden age of Icelandic literature, when many of the greatest sagas of Icelanders were written. It was also during this century that Nordic mythology was put into writing in the so-called Eddas. Although 19th century scholars had a tendency to study this material in "splendid isolation", both earlier and later studies have emphasized that Norse mythological tales were embedded in a learned European context. *Snorra Edda*, which derives its name from Snorri Sturluson (d. 1241), who is believed to be its author, makes this clear when it explains its purpose as that of educating young poets in the art of vernacular poetry. The Icelandic grammatical treatises are preserved in the same context and found in the same calf-skin codices as *Snorra Edda*. The first treatise, from the middle of the 12th century, is concerned with how best to write the vernacular, using the letters of the Latin alphabet, and the third treatise insists on the unity of Greco-Roman and Icelandic grammar, illustrating the figures of style defined in ancient Latin treatises (Priscianus, Donatus) with examples taken from vernacular poetry. This treatise was written around the middle of the 13th century by Óláfr Þórðarson (d. 1259), nephew of the famous Snorri Sturluson.

It may surprise the lovers of Norse mythology to know that essential eddic manuscripts were written at the Benedictine Abbey of Þingeyrar. This may even apply to Codex Regius of the Elder Edda (Reykjavík, GKS 2365 4to), the mother of all the so-called Sæmundar Eddas (an appellation based on the 17th-century hypothesis that the first historian, Sæmundr Sigfússon, collected and transcribed these poems from runic inscriptions), which preserves poetry on such Norse gods as Odin, Thor, Frigg, Freyja, Freyr, Baldur, and Loki, as well as narrative poetry about Germanic heroes and heroines. This manuscript occasionally has short prose bridges between the poems, some of which are based on *Snorra Edda* (Lindblad 1978; Lassen Forthcoming). There is only one other comparable source of eddic poetry, Copenhagen, AM 748 a I 4to, which is highly fragmentary. Codex Regius was originally compiled around 1270, and emended in the middle of the 14th century, apparently by Abbot Arngrímr Brandsson of Þingeyrar (Katrín 2003). When it was rediscovered in 1643 by Bishop Brynjólfur of Skálholt, it had presumably been handed down for generations from mother to daughter in the family of the royal caretaker of Þingeyrar after the Reformation, Henrik Gerkens (Helgi 1997; Stefán 2000). Gerkens was originally from Hamburg, Germany, and became quite wealthy on an Icelandic scale. He had a native wife, who may have picked up Codex Regius from the abandoned books at the monastery. At the time it was hardly considered to be worth much. Even though it cannot be proven beyond doubt that this essential codex for the survival of eddic poetry was written at Þingeyrar Abbey, we know for certain that the Benedictines of Þingeyrar took an interest in this genre, because the half-pagan, half-Christian eschatological poem of *Vǫluspá*, as found in the manuscript *Hauksbók* (Copenhagen, AM 544 4to; c. 1310), can be traced to Þingeyrar Abbey. The scribe who wrote this part of the manuscript was also responsible for most of the manuscript Codex Wormianus (Copenhagen, AM 242 fol., c. 1350) containing *Snorra Edda* (Johannsson 1997). *Snorra Edda* quotes numerous eddic poems in its presentation of pagan mythology, which it historicizes to a degree not seen elsewhere in manuscripts containing the *Eddas*. Besides the *Snorra Edda*, Codex Wormianus preseves all the vernacular grammatical treatises, so the context Old Norse pagan poetry enters into at the hands of the Benedictines is primarily poetical.

The learned priest Styrmir Kárason fróði (c. 1175–1245), Styrmir the Wise, was reputedly the son of Abbot Kári Runólfsson (d. 1187/8) of Þingeyrar (Hannes 1912), Abbot Karl's stand–in, while he was away in Norway, and grew up in and around the abbey, where he also received his education. He left Þingeyrar presumably around 1220, when he became the household priest of Lawspeaker Snorri Sturluson of Reykholt, alleged author of two of the most well–known works of medieval Icelandic literature, the *Heimskringla* (the history of Norway from the 8th to the late 12th century) and *Snorra Edda* (a handbook for young poets and one of our most important sources of Norse mythology). Styrmir is known to have worked on and contributed to Snorri Sturluson's historiographical and mythopoetic

projects, which again might seem to provide an indirect link between Þingeyrar Abbey and eddic poetry. The writing of medieval literature in monasteries and at royal courts or the estates of powerful magnates was not necessarily done by individuals, more likely such projects were collaborative to an extent not seen in modern literary practice. During 1210–1214, and again 1232–1235, Styrmir somewhat incongruously held the civil office of lawspeaker but ended his days as prior of the newly founded Augustinian House on Viðey Island, just off the coast of Reykjavík, the modern capital. Among Styrmir's works is a new redaction of *Landnámabók* ('The Book of Settlements'), now lost as such, although it was incorporated into the Hauksbók-version of this work by the knight and lawman Haukr Erlendsson (d. 1334, in Bergen). *The Book of Settlements* is a unique historical construct, providing information on where each newcomer to Iceland settled in the period of colonization, AD 870–930, and giving a brief genealogy of these people from their ancestestors in Norway into 12th–century Iceland, frequently including anecdotes and relating events associated with the settlement of Iceland. Over 3000 people and 1400 settlements are named.

Styrmir the Wise also wrote the biography of St Óláfr Haraldsson, king of Norway, a version of the saga thought to be partly preserved in the manuscript Flateyjarbók. As mentioned above, Styrmir translated, completed or revised Abbot Karl Jónsson's *Sverris saga*, at least the final part of that saga. He also had a hand in the composition of the prototype of the Icelandic outlaw saga *Harðar saga ok Hólmverja* ('The Saga of Hǫrðr and the Islet-Dwellers'), where presumably in acknowledgment of his work his estimation of the protagonist is quoted at the end of the saga. This saga, which is a sort of Robin Hood narrative, tells the story of the Viking-adventurer Hǫrdr, who leaves Iceland for Sweden where he has various adventures, for instance he breaks into a burial mound with the help of Odin, and stealing a cursed ring, which leads to his death at the end of the saga. In Sweden, Hǫrðr marries Helga, the daughter of a Swedish earl, and back in Iceland he takes up habitation with his band of robbers on an island in Whale Fjord, from where he raids the farmers of the neighboring estates, until they trap him on land and kill him. To save their two sons, the noble Helga swims a great distance from the island in ice-cold water.

Other 13th-century works, believed to have been written at Þingeyrar Abbey and associated church farms, are *Vatnsdæla saga* ('The saga of the People of Vatnsdale'; c. 1270–1280) about the family of 9th-century Norwegians who settled in this valley in the vicinity of Þingeyrar. The saga follows the first generations of their descendants until the crucial moment when Christianity arrives in Iceland around AD 1000. Even older is *Heiðarvíga saga* ('The Saga of the Heath Slayings') about the prolonged armed hostilities between the Men of Húnaþing, the region around Þingeyrar, and the Men of Borgarfjörður, leading up to the Heath Slayings, a battle on the mountain road midway between them. The hero of the latter part, Bárðr, afterwards travels to Norway where he is turned away by St Óláfr, whence he travels to Constantinople, where he ends his days in the emperor's Norse troupes, the *Væringjar* (Varangians/Confederates). Doubtlessly, a number of other Icelandic sagas were written by members of the community at Þingeyrar or associated priests (e.g., *Bandamanna saga*, *Kormáks saga*, and *Hallfreðar saga*), but since they are anonymous we cannot know for certain who wrote them or whether they derive from Þingeyrar Abbey, however probable this may be.

4. The Þingeyrar Abbey Corpus: 14th–16th Centuries

In the 14th century, the northern Benedictines became known for their translations and rewritings of hagiographic literature in the vernacular. Most of this material originated in Latin hagiographical works, compiled anew and contaminated by multiple texts, to make new vernacular reading material for church congregations on the Feast Day of the Saints whose lives and miracles were related in these works. The Benedictines of northern Iceland cultivated a particular style of writing in these retellings, which has been termed 'florid', a style characterized by an alliterative and occasionally rhymed prosody, peppered with synonym pairs and present participles, and ultimately inspired, it seems, by examples of Latin poetry in common textbooks like the *Liber Catonianus* (so named from the popular

poem *Disticha Catonis*, which it contained). In vernacular poetry, on the other hand, the clerical poets of the 13th century strove in the opposite direction, towards a clearer and more immediately intelligible diction than the one practiced in traditional skaldic poetry, and systematized in the *Snorra Edda*. In rebelling against the "eddulist" (the art of the Edda), these poets cite as precedence the rules of the 'new poetry', advocated by Geoffrey of Vinsauf in his *Poetria nova* a century earlier (Males 2020). Although the "Lilja" (Lilly), a prime example of this new and attractive vernacular style in poetry, is most often attributed to Eysteinn Ásgrímsson (d. 1361), an Augustinian canon of Þykkvibær in Ver, in the south of Iceland, the abbot of Þingeyrar Arngrímr Brandsson's "Guðmundarkvædi", a praise poem composed in 1345 in honor of the aforementioned Bishop Guðmundr the Good, is very much nourished from the same poetic vain as the "Lilja". Abbot Arngrímr (d. 1361) is otherwise credited with writing a Latin vita of Bishop Guðmundr, *Vita et miracula Godemundi boni*, also dated to 1345, which was no doubt used in several unsuccessful embassies to Avignon and Rome to attempt to have the good bishop canonized. Abbot Arngrímr may also be the poet of *Sancti Thorlaci episcopi officia rhythmica*, uniquely preserved among the Latin works written by the brothers of Þingeyrar Abbey (Róbert 1959).

In the beginning of the 14th century, there was a concentration of new literary talent at Þingeyrar Abbey. Great histories were recompiled out of the literature of the previous centuries with increased emphasis not only on style and prosody but also on narrative structure and continuity, in imitation of continental models. In the spirit of the 14th century, ancient heroes of remote times were in vogue, and a new taste for the chivalric and religiously outrageous was introduced into the storyworlds of the Benedictines of Þingeyrar. During Abbot Guðmundr's period of office (1310–1338), Laurentius (or Lárentius) Kálfsson, later bishop of Hólar (r. 1324–1331), joined the Abbey to lead its school. One of his named students was the talented if bibulous Árni, Laurentius' own son by a Norwegian concubine, who is believed to have written *Dunstanus saga*, a vernacular reworking of Adelard's *Vita S. Dunstani* and several other sources, a highly entertaining narrative about this popular English saint and archbishop, who was known as a musician, illuminator, metalworker, and trickster for cunningly defeating the devil. Another of Laurentius' students at Þingeyrar in the second decade of the 14th century was Bergr Sokkason, who has already been mentioned. Brother Bergr later became prior and abbot of the Benedictine monastery of Þverá and a prolific writer of vernacular hagiography. He reputedly wrote sagas about Bishop Guðmundr the Good, St Nicholas, the archangel Michael, and in all probability the B-redaction of *The Saga of Saint Thorlak*, as well as translating the history of King Óláfr I of Norway by Brother Gunnlaugr, and many others. Indeed, it is rarely possible to ascribe the anonymous Icelandic vernacular prose works on saints, angels, and sacred objects—there are sagas preserved on about 130 such subjects (Wolf 2013)—to individual writers, although the names of the religious poets are more often known (Wolf and Deusen 2017).

Laurentius' best known disciple from Þingeyrar Abbey is no doubt his chaplain Einarr Hafliðason (d. 1393), who joined him as a ten-year old in 1317 and served him loyally for 14 years, until Laurentius' death at Hólar See in 1331. Einarr became a fine cleric and wrote his master's biography sometime after 1346, which is our best source on life at Þingeyrar and in general on Icelandic intellectual life in the early 14th century. Especially informative are the descriptions of Laurentius' travels in Iceland and Norway, the accounts of heated quarrels within the ecclesiastical community, especially at Niðaróss, and last but not least the descriptions of Laurentius' teaching, and his ambition to sustain an international standard at the monastic houses where he sojourned, but primarily Þingeyrar, where he insists on the use of Latin not only in prayer and church service but in the daily interactions between the members of the community. It is from *Lárentius saga* that we have information that the monks conversed, read, wrote, and studied their books in the building at Þingeyrar Abbey called the Conventus, which probably opened out to the cloister garden adjacent to the south flank of the church, with the Chapter House (Capitulum) at the east end by the church's high altar. Einarr Hafliðason also contributed entries to the *Lǫgmannsannáll* ('Annal of the Lawman'), a reliable chronicle running from the early 9th century, and

continued by Einarr Hafliðason up to 1361, where another took over and carried on to 1430. In 1381, Einarr also translated from Latin a curious miracle story, *Atburðr á Finnmǫrk* ('An Incident in Finmark').

Einarr's connection to Þingeyrar Abbey was close, since he was raised at Breiðabólstaður in Vesturhóp, about 20 km southwest of the monastery. Breiðabólsstaður was one of two major church estates in the area, and had been the site of the first writing of the laws of Iceland in the winter of 1117–1118. Before this the laws were transmitted orally by the lawspeaker, each summer one third of the whole being recited at the annual General Assembly, the Althing. After they were committed to writing, however, and revised in the process, the laws would from that time on be read aloud from a codex, a practice which caused a major shift in how the laws were conceptualized (Sandvik and Sigurðsson 2005). Einarr's father, Hafliði Steinsson (d. 1319), was an important figure in Icelandic society. He received his clerical training at Þingeyrar Abbey in the time of Abbot Vermundr (r. 1254–1279), and functioned as the caretaker of Þingeyrar Abbey and the See of Hólar. Earlier in his career, he served as palace priest for King Eiríkr Magnússon of Norway (r. 1280–1299), who married princess Margaret of Scotland, daughter of King Alexander III, in Bergen 1281. She died giving birth to Margaret, Maid of Norway, who only lived to 1290, and whose death led to the Wars of Scottish Independence, when her father laid claim to the Scottish crown as his inheritance; he later married the sister of King Robert I of Scotland. King Eiríkr also made a claim to the throne of Denmark as his inheritance from his mother, Princess Ingibjǫrg, and spent many years warring the Danes on that account. He was nicknamed "Priest Hater" because of his strained relationship with the church.

As King Eiríkr's palace priest, Hafliði Steinsson is not an unlikely candidate for the authorship of *Bósa saga and Herrauðs* ('The Saga of Bósi and Herraud'), a comic legendary saga from the end of the 1200s, relating the fantastic escapades of Prince Herraud of East Gotland and his best friend Bósi, the son of a viking and a shieldmaiden. The two companions have many strange adventures, most unusual among them Bósi's erotic encounters with three farmers' daughters, which are told in a comically explicit dialogue of metaphors. Such erotic language is extremely rare in Icelandic sagas, and for it to have been acceptable to the audience of this saga, we must assume an unusual audience, beyond the reach of chastising clerics, i.e. a community like the powerful and rebellious court of King Eiríkr Magnússon of Norway. It is hard to imagine that the course, yet sophisticated chivalric humor of this saga would have been at home anywhere else in this period. There is only one other Icelandic saga, which stages an encounter with a farmer's daughter and uses explicit language reminiscent of *Bósa saga*, although toned down in comparison. This is *Grettis saga sterka* ('The Saga of Grettir the Strong'), one of the best loved of the anonymous Icelandic family sagas, and it has for other reasons been ascribed to Hafliði Steinsson. The saga is believed to be written shortly after 1300, and the author is evidently a clerically educated man from the district of Þingeyrar Abbey, who is likewise familiar with Norway.

Close by Breiðabólsstaður is Víðidalstunga, where the magnate Jón Hákonarson commissioned the manuscript Flateyjarbók (GKS 1005 fol.), which was mentioned above, the greatest of all Icelandic manuscripts. Breiðabólsstaður was a prebend of the archbishop of Niðaróss, granted only to the most senior of prelates. When Einarr Hafliðason was awarded Breiðabólsstaður in 1343, which he held for half a century, he doubtlessly received it in recognition of his services as *officialis* for several Norwegian bishops at Hólar, while they were away in Norway, but possibly also in recognition of his father's achievement.

At the turn of the 15th century, Iceland was struck by the Black Death for the first time, which devastated the community at Þingeyrar Abbey, reputedly leaving only one monk and three deans alive, although donations from God-fearing families poured in. Clerics were worse affected by the plague than the general population, because of their role in tending to the sick and dying. The Norwegian clergy and privileged class fared badly, and ships stopped sailing to Iceland with imported goods. With the establishment of the Kalmar Union in 1397, which was ruled from Denmark, English prelates and merchants became influential in Iceland for the first time in history. Literary life was seemingly

paralyzed after the Black Death, although books were still read and copied and occasional texts even translated from Middle English into Icelandic. It was in this period that the monastic church of Þingeyrar Abbey acquired its English alabaster altarpiece, now in the modern church. By the early 16th century, the Reformation in Scandinavia began to exert its influence in Iceland, though this happened later in the recalcitrant Hólar diocese than in Skálholt. The last Catholic bishop, Jón Arason, brought a printing press to Iceland in 1530, which ushered in a new usage of books and literature and initiated the transition of Icelandic books from handwritten to mass produced. As mentioned above, Björn son of Bishop Jón was expected to take over as abbot of Þingeyrar when he was brutally executed with his father and brother in 1550. Incidentally, the Swedish printer who worked the first printing press of Iceland was a priest at Breiðabólstaður in Vesturhóp by Þingeyrar Abbey, the very same estate where just over four centuries earlier the revolutionary technology of writing Latin letters with ink on animal skin was introduced to Iceland.

5. Time and History at Þingeyrar Abbey

Measuring and structuring time was essential for the monastic community at Þingeyrar Abbey. Each day was divided into seven regular intervals for the canonical hours, the fixed times of prayer. The day began around two in the morning in the church, the chapter house (Capitulum) or meeting house (Conventum), where the community gathered. About four and a half hours were spent in prayer every day. About the same time was reserved for reading and meditation. Equally essential was to know the ecclesiastical calendar for the year and to have an overview of world history from creation to the present. The Benedictines of Þingeyrar did not see themselves as living in the Middle Ages, according to them they were living in the Sixth Age of the world. Nonetheless, they counted the years from the birth of Christ, as we do, albeit with a seven-year difference. In the *vita* of St Þorlákr, this holy man is said to die in 1186, not in 1193 as would be correct according to the *aera vulgaris*. From around the middle of the 12th century and well into the 13th, the Þingeyrar Abbey writers followed Gerland the Computist (d. after 1093), a Lotharingian who dated the incarnation to seven years later than the common era. Likely it was the *franzeis* Rikini, a liturgical expert at the cathedral school of Hólar, who introduced Gerland's calendar to Iceland (Jón 1952). Most of the early Þingeyrar texts, and certainly those that were originally written in Latin in the late 12th century, were dated according to Gerland. The *Thingeyrenses* probably first realized that they were alone in following Gerland when an Icelandic representative returned from the Fourth Council of the Lateran in 1215 (Jón 1952).

However, there is a relatively minor difference between the Þingeyrar time reckoning of the early period and our own; a major difference was their belief that the world was only a few thousand years old. According to an Icelandic treatise, *Fimm stórþing* (Five Universal Councils), 5199 years had passed from the world's creation to the incarnation of Christ. Hence, the world was believed to be 6332 years old, when Þingeyrar Abbey was founded in 1133. Together with the Earth, the monks believed that man was created in God's image to rule over it. This was not a reactionary article of faith: there was no competing hypothesis. Before the arrival of Christian time reckoning, there was a different method in use among the Icelanders for dividing up the year with only two seasons, summer and winter. Instead of abandoning this tradition altogether, by the middle of the 12th century the Icelanders had integrated their own system into the Christian computistical system. In accordance with Mediterranean practice, the period from the creation of the world to the incarnation of Christ was divided into five Ages of the World (Icelandic: *heimsaldrar*; Latin: *aetates mundi*), based on a historical periodization first presented by the Church Father Augustine of Hippo. According to an Icelandic computational treatise from the 12th century—*Rímbegla*—apparently from the same northern Icelandic intellectual milieu as Þingeyrar Abbey, precisely 2557 years had passed from the creation of the first man, Adam, to the birth of Noah, who constructed the ark at the time of the flood. This was the so-called antediluvian period, the age of original sin, which ended in almost total

destruction because of God's displeasure with mankind. The original mankind was a race of giants, who lived for centuries.

The Second Age, the postdiluvian age, was that of Noah and his sons, who became the ancestors of all peoples living. At the beginning of this age, all of humanity spoke one language (usually believed to be Hebrew, although the Bible does not specify this) and believed in one God, but this mankind was also prone to sin like the antedeluvians. These great humans gathered to build the tower of Babel (Gen. 11). If we follow the prologue of *Snorra Edda*, as preserved in the *Codex Wormianus*, written at Þingeyrar Abbey around 1350, we find that there "were seventy-two leading craftsmen" who worked on this ambitious building project. To stop them from reaching heaven undeservedly, God divided their common tongue into as many languages, which "have since dispersed throughout the world, in accordance with how the giants were then distributed to the countries and the peoples multiplied". "[A]fter the division of tongues had come about, the names of men were also multiplied and those of other things". This is why the Greco-Roman gods have many names in many languages, e.g., the Greek Zeus is Jupiter in Latin and Thor in Icelandic (Lassen 2018). With the confusion of languages a confusion of the original true religion began, and idolatry arose: "when the appellations multiplied, thereby truth perished, and from the first error, every successor worshipped his previous master, or animals or birds, or the air, the planets and various inanimate things, until this fallacy became current throughout the world, and so completely did they forgo the truth that no one knew his creator except those men alone, who spoke the Hebrew tongue, which was current before the tower construction [...], and thus they understood everything with an earthly understanding, because they had not been granted spiritual wisdom" (cited after Lassen 2018).

The Third Age began with Abraham, and extended to David the king, the fourth to the Babylonian captivity, the fifth to the incarnation of Christ, which marked the beginning of the Sixth Age, the Age of Redemption, when mankind was saved through the sacrificial death of Christ, leading to the beginning of the New Testament and Christian history. The reunification of mankind through prozelitizing the Christian faith was an ambition that sought in some sense to overcome the linguistic and religious obstacles that were the consequences of the disaster at Babel, which had given rise to idolatry and false faith. In the New Testament, the story of the Pentecost miracle forms a sort of redemption from the sin committed by mankind at Babel, or at least a momentary lifting of the divine curse of miscommunication between the nations of the world (Lassen 2018). According to the acts of the apostles, on the day of Pentecost, suddenly they heard a noise and a wind from heaven blew into the house, tongues of fire were seen that separated and rested on each of them, and the Holy spirit came over them, and they began miraculously to speak in other languages. The people of Jerusalem understood them as if they were speaking their own language (Acts 2. 1–13).

Just as the Church Fathers integrated classical Greco-Roman history with biblical history, the Benedictines of Þingeyrar had no qualms in integrating the mythic history of the Germanic peoples with that of the Bible and Classical Literature. In this, they very much followed in the steps of continental authors, who imitated the Romans and derived their own origins from Troy, too. Old Norse translations of hagiography, such as *Clemens saga* ('The Saga of St Clement'), or of historiography, such as *Trójumanna saga* ('The Saga of the Men of Troy'), a translation of Dares Phrygius' *De excidio Troiae*, which was made at Þingeyrar Abbey, or at the very least copied by the monks there, rendered the names of Greco-Roman gods and Trojan heroes as Nordic Odin, Thor, Freyja, Sif, and others we associate only with Norse Mythology. This view of the past was not invented at Þingeyrar Abbey, as is shown by the Germanic translations of the planetary days of the week: 'Mars' is 'Tyr', 'Mercury' is 'Odin', 'Jove' is 'Thor', and 'Venus' is 'Freyja'. Clearly this way of matching the Germanic pantheon with the Greco-Roman is older, although no richer sources exist for the Germanic world-view than those written at Þingeyrar Abbey.

The emergence of paganism or idolatry was associated by the Benedictines of Þingeyrar with the building of the Tower of Babel and the confusion of languages, when "the names of men were also multiplied and those of other things", and with the increase in names, truth perished and people forgot their knowledge of god (Lassen 2018). Only the Hebrews of old, who still spoke the original tongue, retained a grasp of the spiritual truth until the incarnation of Christ. This is the historical background for the rise of the Nordic peoples, as explaind by the Benedictine compiler of Codex Wormianus: "When Pompey, one of the Roman generals, harried in the eastern part of the world, Odin fled from Asia to here, the northern part, and at that point he gave himself and his men their names, and claimed that Priam was called Odin and his queen Frigg [...] and whether or not Odin said this out of pride, or because it had come about with the division of tongues, many scholars have held it to be a true story [...]." (cited after Lassen 2018), with modifications). According to *Codex Wormianus*, when the eschatological poem of *Vǫluspá* speaks of the end of the world, *ragnarǫk*, this is really a memory of the Trojan War because Odin and his Æsir (understood as meaning 'Asians'), who brought the language and culture of the North to Saxony, Scandinavia, and even England, were refugees from Troy. The Swedes who first believed in the stories of Odin and his men and spread those myths throughout Scandinavia were naïve pagans, and no Christian should believe their stories because they are not true, except in the sense that these were the false beliefs that mankind held to be true when it lost its way after the disaster at Babel. Odin's men, who were Turks or Asians, fabricated stories like the pagans they were so that the simple rustics of Scandinavia would think they were gods (Lassen Forthcoming). Thus, in the *Third Grammatical Treatise* from the middle of the 13th century, the author Óláfr Þórðarson argues for an identity between Old Norse-Icelandic vernacular grammar and the Greco-Roman tradition: "It is all the same art of language" (*málslist*), he claims.

What emerges from this very brief look at the theory of world history, according to Þingeyrar Abbey, is a willingness on the part of this Benedictine community in the remote northern Atlantic to find a place for itself on the periphery of the Roman Ecclesiastical world, a creativity in solving apparent incongruities and differences between the pagan past and the Christian present, and finally an unworried and confident belief in the vernacular and its ability to match and represent ecclesiastical Latin in translation, and in conveying the essential messages of biblical discourse. From the vantage point of Þingeyrar Abbey, a small village of wooden buildings in northern Iceland, the Benedictines could fix their mind's eye on the centre of the Christian world, which was not so much Rome as Constantinople and Jerusalem, a wonderfully vague Asian paradise, where the greatest riches of the world were gathered, which they believed to be just as much their own place of origin as anyone else's in Europe. Through a supernatural and yet rational link—given the historical premise of the events at Babel—between all the world's languages, mythologies, and religions, they could comprehend and know the whole of the brief history of the world from creation to their own times, just as they were able to totally map out, geographically and genealogically, the origins of their own remote island community in the North Atlantic from its settlement to the present, to a degree that must have made them feel that whatever they did not yet know, they would soon be able to figure out—indeed a wonderful premise for enabling the rich contribution to world literature that was made by the Benedictines of Þingeyrar Abbey.

6. Conclusions

The modern reception of medieval Icelandic literature, including that of Þingeyrar Abbey, begins with the humanist Arngrímur Jónsson the Learned (1568–1648), who was born in Víðidalur in the vicinity of Þingeyrar and lived in the area for his entire life. His descendants were the first in Iceland to take up a Latinized family name, Vidalinus (in Icelandic *Vídalín*), beside their traditional patronymic, a custom that never caught on among the Icelanders. Arngrímur Jónsson's Latin scholarship was published in Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Hamburg, Leiden, and London, and reached a learned readership throughout Europe. His achievement was to mediate the vernacular literature of previous centuries in

a form that suited the *Res publica litterarum* of the Renaissance. Arngrímur Jónsson argued that the literature of Iceland was the product of a politically independent Common Wealth or Free State in Iceland that rose with the establishment of the Althing in 930 and fell when Iceland became a tax-paying province of the King of Norway in the late 13th century. He also argued that Icelandic was the ancient language of Northern Europe, a form of Gothic, and that Icelanders had preserved its pristine state, while the other peoples of Northern Europe had corrupted it (he mentions the Norwegians and the Danes in particular), and therefore Icelanders have a historic responsibility in maintaining the pristine condition of their ancient tongue (Jensson 2004).

Arngrímur Jónsson came in possession of the Þingeyrar manuscript *Codex Wormianus* with *Snorra Edda* and the Icelandic *Grammatical treatises*. He had the text of the former revised to be more presentable to modern tastes, and in that form it was eventually published as *Edda Islandorum* in 1665, an edition that became *the* reference point for Icelandic mythology and literature for over a century. Thus, a continuity was established between the literature of handwritten books from Thingeyrar Abbey and the new printed Latin-based scholarship of the humanists, which laid the foundations for the modern reception. However, Arngrímur Jónsson was a Lutheran priest, and he and others of that denomination deliberately played down the importance of the Roman-Catholic monastic communities of Iceland, and of Medieval Latin literacy in general, in the creation of Icelandic literature (Jensson 2017), so while the survival of the Icelandic literary tradition was secured by the humanist reception, the role of the Benedictine community at Þingeyrar Abbey was reduced to almost nothing, and whenever the monks of Þingeyrar and their contribution was mentioned in the scholarship, it was with the inclusion of harsh and judgemental comments about how they had strayed from the path of true religion.

Thus, not only was Þingeyrar Abbey closed and its library dissolved in a religious revolution orchestrated by the secular authorities of Denmark, the literary achievement of the Benedictines of Þingeyrar Abbey has to this day been deliberately and systematically underappreciated in surveys of Icelandic medieval literature (Steinunn 2017b). Yet, the richness of their contribution is still recoverable, albeit with some effort, through studying the cultural heritage of Þingeyrar Abbey, artefacts, originals, and copies alike, a treasure that first began to appear in print in the late 18th century, and has since been coming out in a continuous stream throughout the 19th and 20th century, and is still being published in first editions in the 21st century. As a phenomenon of the world Þingeyrar Abbey may not offer much to view for today's visitor, but as a powerhouse of cultural heritage it has certainly earned itself a place in history.

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Religious Images and Iconoclasm in Reformation Iceland

Sigrún Hannesdóttir

Department of Archaeology, University of Iceland, 102 Reykjavík, Iceland; sha@hi.is

Abstract: This work assesses what happened to liturgical objects from Icelandic churches and monastic houses during and after the Lutheran Reformation, through an examination of written sources, such as inventories and Visitation books, and material evidence in museum collections and from archaeological excavations. The aim of this work is first, to assess the extent and nature of iconoclasm in Iceland and secondly to re-examine traditional narratives of the Icelandic Reformation in the light of material culture.

Keywords: Reformation; devotional objects; iconoclasm; church history; Icelandic history

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1. Introduction

Judging solely from the vast collection of visual heritage from the Catholic period preserved in Iceland, it would seem that the pillaging and demolition of religious imagery that followed the Protestant Reformation in many European countries did not transpire there. Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest that some attacks on images and liturgical objects took place during and after the Reformation. It also seems that in some cases, objects were transformed and reused in ways that better suited the Lutheran faith and in yet other cases, objects of precious metals were stolen and shipped to Denmark as taxation for the king.

As elsewhere in Europe, church interiors and inventories in Iceland changed significantly in accordance with Lutheran conventions. The material culture of the churches and the changes thereof present valuable evidence in illuminating the nature of the changes that followed the Protestant Reformation and the pace at which these changes took place. As argued by Jürgensen, textual sources might provide us with "the reasoning and vocabulary of the reformers", but churches and their material culture reveal the ways in which reformers "expressed their ideas when it came to actually giving form or body to their visions of a new church free of the 'popery' they reacted against" (Jürgensen 2017, pp. 1041–42).

This work assesses what happened to religious images and devotional objects during and after the Lutheran Reformation in Iceland through an examination of written sources, such as church inventories and Visitation books, and material evidence in museum collections and from archaeological excavations. The aim of this work is first, to assess the extent and nature of iconoclasm in Iceland; was iconoclasm confined to a few isolated and erratic attacks or did a systematic confiscation and destruction of Catholic objects take place following the Reformation? What were the motives and targets of iconoclasts in Iceland? How were objects otherwise re-contextualized? Secondly, this study aims to re-examine traditional narratives of the Icelandic Reformation in the light of material culture; what can the evidence at hand tell us about the process of the Reformation in Iceland and its political implications? Was the Icelandic Reformation first and foremost a political struggle, centered around the monarch's acquisition of power? Furthermore, perhaps most importantly, what role did objects play in the advancement and resistance to Lutheranism? To gain a deeper insight into the political aspect of the Reformation, a wider Scandinavian context will be also considered.

2. The Reformation in Iceland and Denmark-Norway

On the morning of the 7th of November in 1550, Jón Arason, the last Catholic bishop of Hólar, and two of his sons, Ari and Björn, were beheaded in Skálholt, the other episcopal see of Iceland (Figure 1). A year later, in 1551, the diocese of Hólar submitted to the Lutheran Church Ordinance of King Christian III[1] which had been accepted in Skálholt in 1541. Consequently, the king became the head of the church, and church property was largely secularised (Ísleifsdóttir 2013, pp. 353–56). The execution of the three men marked a symbolic concluding event in a more than decade-long political struggle between the Catholic clergy in Iceland and Protestant Reformers working in the interest of the king (Hugason 2018, p. 173; Ísleifsdóttir 2013). With the death of Jón Arason "the external opposition to the Reformation was broken" and Lutheranism could be firmly established in the country (Andersen 1990, p. 156).

Figure 1. Map of Iceland, showing the two episcopal sees: Skálholt and Hólar. The diocese of Skálholt encompassed the Western, Southern and Eastern Regions, while Hólar encompassed the Northern Region.

Amongst the first advocators of the Reformation in Iceland was Gissur Einarsson, who had become acquainted with Lutheranism during his studies in Hamburg in the period 1531–1534. Two years after his return home he was appointed assistant to Ögmundur Pálsson Bishop of Skálholt but, in the interim, remained silent about this Protestant sympathies. Shortly after, in 1539, when Ögmundur, due to his old age and impaired eyesight, resigned his position, he recommended Gissur as his successor and in 1540 Gissur was appointed as the bishop of Skálholt (Guttormsson 2000, p. 54).

An important factor that differentiates the Reformation in Iceland from mainland Europe is that there was no evangelical movement prior to the formal conversion and thus it has been argued that, for Icelanders, the Reformation initially presented itself as a political struggle. Because of the low population density and absence of cities and market towns, a middling class of merchants and craftsmen, that often were the first to take to the message of Protestant Reformers in mainland Europe, was practically non-existent in Iceland, and there were no universities. Thus, it has been argued that there was little socio-cultural premise for any Evangelical movements and, therefore, Iceland was "completely

unprepared for the Reformation" (Andersen 1990, p. 154). However, around the time Gissur Einarsson came to power, some Lutheran influence had gained footing in Skálholt and in 1540 the first Icelandic translation of the New Testament by Oddur Gottskálksson was printed (Guttormsson 2000, pp. 51–52).

In 1538, shortly after Christian III had proclaimed the new Church Ordinance for Denmark, he attempted to introduce it in Iceland, but it was rejected by both Ögmundur Pálsson, Bishop of Hólar, and Jón Arason, Bishop of Skálholt (Andersen 1990, p. 155). In 1541 a royal emissary was sent to Iceland to have the ordinance accepted, in which it succeeded only in Skálholt which Gissur Einarsson was now in possession of. Ögmundur, who had turned against the new bishop, was arrested by the emissary and died on the journey to Copenhagen (Guttormsson 2000, pp. 57–59). In the meantime, some dramatic measures had been employed to put an end to Catholicism in the country and on the morning of Pentecost in 1539, Sheriff Didrik von Mynden and some other men working for King Christian III are said to have stormed into the monastery of Viðey, plundered anything of monetary value and struck and burned the rest (Diplomatarium Islandicum (DI) 1857–1972, X, pp. 478–80). During construction work near the monastic site in recent years, an effigy of St. Dorothy was found by chance. The head of the effigy is missing but other than that the effigy is whole (Gunnarsdóttir and Kristjánsdóttir 2016, p. 36). The headless effigy of St. Dorothy may thus present a tangible remnant of the attack on Viðey, led by Didrik von Mynden, which marked the dissolution of the monastery (See Kristjánsdóttir 2017, p. 326).

Bishop Gissur Einarsson died in 1548, only 36 years of age. In his short time in office, he had made great efforts to organise the diocese of Skálholt in accordance with the new church ordinance. He sternly opposed any Catholic ceremonies and, amongst other things, urged priests to obtain the Icelandic translation of the New Testament from 1540. In addition, Gissur had evangelical sermons translated into Icelandic, and himself translated parts of the Old Testament (Andersen 1990, pp. 155–56). After the death of Gissur, Jón Arason attempted to take possession of the diocese of Skálholt to re-establish Catholicism and in doing so, took prisoner Gissur's successor. Soon after that, Jón and his sons were arrested by the king's men and executed (Ibid.).

The execution of Bishop Jón and his sons has traditionally been regarded as the resolution of Roman Catholicism in Iceland and is commonly described as a turning point in Icelandic religious and political history. However, as various scholars have pointed out in recent years, the Reformation was a long and complex process, encompassing several realms of society, and did not straightforwardly end with the acceptance of the new church ordinance in 1551 but continued to develop over the next decades, or even centuries (Ísleifsdóttir 2013; Hugason 2018). In its narrowest sense, it has been suggested that the Reformation, strictly seen as the establishment of the Lutheran Church, took place in the decades between 1540 and 1600, from the first attempts of Christian III to introduce the new Church Ordinance at Alþingi until Lutheranism had become somewhat established in both dioceses (Guttormsson 2000, p. 110).

Another result of the low population density in Iceland was that the changes that followed the Reformation happened at a slow pace. This was also due to the fact that Iceland was, at the time, far removed from the sovereignty of the king and there was no central authority capable of effectively taking matters into their own hands and leading the change. With the exception of the envoys sent to Iceland in 1541 and 1551, the presence of the king was limited and did by no means suffice to propel forward the Reformation at the speed which the traditional narrative seems to suggest (Hugason 2018, p. 183).

It can be expected that the changes following the Reformation happened at a different pace in different localities depending on the willingness of parishes to adapt to the new tradition, and although the bishops were required to make regular visitations to each parish, the management of the churches was first and foremost in the hands of the priests. This is clearly demonstrated by an account of Sigurður Jónsson, the youngest son of Jón Arason, who served as a priest at Grenjaðarstaðir, in the diocese of Hólar, who shortly

before the Easter of 1554 officially stated that he would begin serving in accordance with the Lutheran doctrine instead of the Catholic one. It seems that Sigurður was amongst the first Icelandic priests who had been ordained by the Catholic Church but willingly converted to Lutheranism (Hugason 2015). According to a register of priests from the period it seems that only about a quarter of priests in the diocese of Skálholt and a fifth of the priests in the diocese of Hólar resigned their position as a result of the Reformation, which means that a majority of the priests serving in the new Lutheran Church had previously served as Catholic priests (Hugason 2018, pp. 187–89). Therefore, it seems likely that it generally took some years and perhaps a new generation of priests for any significant changes to take place (Ibid.).

The situation in Iceland was in many ways comparable to that in Norway where, following the victory of the Reformation in Denmark, Lutheranism was introduced in 1537. It has been maintained that the transition in Norway, for the most part, took place without much force from the Danish king who recognised the need for a slow and gradual change (Von Achen 2020, pp. 80–81). However, whereas the Reformation in the Danish-Norwegian kingdom may have been a political success for the king, it has been argued that Lutheranism did not gain a strong footing amongst the populace. Indeed, the Reformation in Norway has been described as a 'Reformation without people' (Laugerud 2018; Von Achen 2020, p. 82).

The progress of the Reformation in Denmark and Norway will not be traced in detail here. It suffices to say that a systematic destruction of images and devotional objects from the Catholic period did not transpire on a large scale following the Reformation and there seems to have been a moderate tolerance towards images within the kingdom, although a few iconoclastic riots broke out in Copenhagen, Malmö, and Schleswig in Denmark in the years leading up to the Reformation and in Bergen in Norway a few decades later (Johannsen and Johannsen 2012, p. 266; Von Achen 2020, pp. 80–81; Gilje 2011; Figure 2).[2] However, although such attacks were indeed very rare, the description of the Danish Carmelite Paul Helgesen (b. ca. 1485) of the attack on the Church of Our Lady in Copenhagen in 1531 suggests that they may have been dramatic (Quoted in Frederiksen 1987, p. 117. Own translation):

> *First they threw over all the Holy images, spat on them, blew them with their fists and mocked them with ghastly insults, while they smashed them with axes, thereafter they permeated the choir where they demolished completely the Canon's chair and the panel. [. . .]. They even went so far, as to rip the books apart.*

The series of iconoclastic conflicts which took place in Bergen in the period 1568–1572 were part of an attempt to introduce a second Reformation under Calvinistic influence. During these conflicts, the altars in many churches in Bergen were stripped of images of saints under the lead of Bishop Jens Skielderup (b. 1510–d. 1582) (Gilje 2011). Skielderup went so far in removing what remained of the Catholic tradition that the town council feared that he would "strip the churches down to the mere walls" (Ibid., p. 74. Own translation). Importantly, the removal of images from the churches of Bergen was largely initiated by the Danish nobility, specifically by the king's commission that, during an inspection of the town, criticised Skielderup for not having already taken steps to have them removed. As a result of the pressure posed on him by the king's commission, Skieldrup called together a synod where he decreed that images and effigies were to be removed from churches, albeit with some few exceptions (Ibid.).

Figure 2. Map of Scandinavia, with some key locations discussed in this paper.

Similar to Bergen, influence of the Danish monarch affected the tolerance towards images in the province of Jämtland which had ecclesiastically belonged to Sweden but was transferred to the Norwegian diocese of Trondheim in 1571. Consequent to the transferral, in the late 16th and early 17th century, many churches in Jämtland received new altarpieces and other church fittings which were decorated with catechisms in Danish instead of images of saints. It seems that in the Danish-Norwegian Jämtland there was generally less tolerance towards images than in the provinces east of it which remained Swedish, and while in the Swedish providences the old and the new were commonly mixed together, the priests in Jämtland more often disposed of Catholic imagery upon obtaining the new pieces. It has been noted that the removal of religious images from the churches of Jämtland was initiated by the authorities without popular support (Holm 2017, pp. 389–90). This is demonstrated by an incident in the parish of Offerdal in the north of Jämtland, where images of saints were disposed of by the vicar but salvaged by some members of the parish who continued their worship in non-official, semi-domestic chapels (Ibid; Zachrisson 2019, pp. 8–11). Thus, although the events in Bergen and the province of Jämtland are perhaps not representative of the general situation in Norway, they demonstrate the national politics at stake at the Reformation within the Oldenburg Monarchy.

3. Iconoclasm: Motives and Approaches

Shortly before his death, Gissur Einarsson, the first Lutheran bishop in Iceland, issued an edict which was to be read in the churches in the diocese of Skálholt and included instructions for the confiscation of all effigies worshipped by "ignorant and superstitious"

people (Biskupaannálar Jóns Egilssonar 1856, pp. 87–88). An exception was made for effigies depicting Jesus, Virgin Mary and the Apostles, which could be kept as tokens of remembrance. However, Gissur quickly took a less tolerant stance and a year later he journeyed to the church of Kaldaðarnes where he had the Holy Cross taken down. The cross, which was believed to be miraculous and had long been an attraction for pilgrims from around the country, was stored in Kaldaðarnes for a few years, until Bishop Gísli Jónsson (b. 1515–d. 1587) had it moved to Skálholt where it was broken into pieces and burned (Ibid.). The episode that supposedly followed was described by the poet Bjarni Jónsson (b. 1560–d. 1640) (Bragi Óðfræðivefur n.d., Own translation):

All writings and ornaments

Torn apart and burned;

Christ's images shattered,

Paper and icons rotten.

Much has been written about the iconoclastic destruction of images and sacred objects during and after the Protestant Reformation in Europe and the motives that drove such attacks (e.g., Aston 1988, 1989; Duffy 1992; Eire 1986; Koerner 2002). Iconoclasm varied much in intensity between regions and whereas in some places, both statuary art and two-dimensional images from the Catholic period have largely remained intact, in other places a significant part of the visual heritage from that time has been destroyed completely or damaged greatly (Graves 2008, p. 35). The latter was the case in England where the reformation was accompanied by a wave of plundering and destruction encouraged by the authorities. This wave reached its crest during the reign of Edward VI, when a systematic destruction of religious images was implemented throughout the whole country with the lead of Archbishop Cranmer and his associates (Duffy 1992, pp. 448–77). In some cases, objects were shattered or burned so that nothing remained of them. In other cases, images were defaced or painted over, and the heads, hands and feet of statues were hewn off, their eyes gouged out or noses scraped off. Many images subjected to such attacks were deliberately left to view in these states and can, to this day, be found in many parish churches and cathedrals around England (Ibid., p. 35).

The critical attitude of many Lutheran theologians and reformers towards images in the first decades after the reformation was first and foremost directed at the veneration of things, which had characterised Christian devotion from at least the 12th century (Eire 1986, pp. 13–14). In this cult of images, paintings, reliefs, relics, effigies, crucifixes and other liturgical objects in churches were regarded as embodiments of divine powers. As such, they were not conceived or treated as inert things but as animated and alive, and capable of conveying power and healing (Bynum 2011, pp. 21–25). The belief in the powers and vitality of sacred objects was invigorated by stories of such objects miraculously bleeding, weeping or changing colours, which proliferated in the late Medieval period (Ibid., pp. 21–22). Often, objects were not only thought to invoke external powers but were in themselves powerful; as in the case of the Holy Cross from Kaldaðarnes, people made pilgrimages to view them and touched them and kissed "as if Christ himself were present in them all" (Ibid., p. 127). After the Holy Cross had been burned, written accounts describe how the old people at Skálholt sought to get ahold of its ashes, demonstrating the power invested in the material traces of the Cross (Biskupaannálar Jóns Egilssonar 1856, pp. 87–88). Another such powerful item in Iceland was the reliquary of St. Þorlákur in the Cathedral of Skálholt, which people stroked with their hands before placing them on their eyes or other parts on their body that required healing. Regularly, the reliquary was carried around the cemetery, followed by people singing canticles or reading scriptures (Ibid.).

The Catholic cult of images was criticised by many Protestant reformers who feared that the veneration of objects misdirected people's worship to the material world, to the point that it overshadowed the worship of God (Eire 1986, p. 54). In the view of Protestants, objects could not "objectify a spiritual reality" and thus, worship offered to images "offered only to the artistic representation, not to the person represented by it" (Ibid., p. 59) The

aim of iconoclasts was, at least in part, to demonstrate this and to reveal the powerless and inert nature of images (Graves 2008, p. 39). Protestant reformers were, in other words, not only opposed to the veneration of saints, which were often the subject of religious imagery, but to the worship of material things and attempts to objectify the divine. However, Luther himself did not wish to ban images from churches altogether as, for example, Karlstadt and Zwingli did; he considered images to be neither good nor bad and if necessary, they could still be used within a certain framework as long as they were not worshipped. It is of interest whether this is reflected in the Icelandic material and whether iconoclasts exclusively targeted objects which were seen as particularly sacred or miraculous, such as the Holy Cross at Kaldaðarnes.

As already discussed, iconoclasm did not take place on a large scale in Denmark. Efforts were focused on modifying unsuitable objects rather than demolishing them completely; church furniture from the Catholic period certainly found its place within the Lutheran faith, and Bishop Peter Palladius (b. 1503–d. 1560) recommended that altar tables were used as foundations for pulpits and that altar cloths were used to make clothing or bandages for the poor and sick (Johannsen and Johannsen 2012, p. 267). One interesting example of modification of imagery is an altar piece made in 1496 which originally belonged to the monastic church of Esrum, in the north of Zealand but was moved to the church of St. Olai, in Helsingør in the east of Zealand in 1659. In the mid-17th century, an Abbot Peter which is depicted on the bottom of the piece was transformed into a Lutheran priest; the tonsure was covered up, a beard and a moustache were added to his face, his robe was changed and a ruff was put around his neck (Jensen 1921, p. 182; Skinnebach 2016, pp. 157–58). This suggests that it was not always the images in themselves which were considered unsuitable but rather their subject. However, a critical attitude towards images and the veneration of objects gained some footing in Denmark and in reforming the Danish church art, images were often replaced by text, as recommended by Luther (Johannsen and Johannsen 2012, pp. 262–65). As discussed earlier in the example from Jämtland, words became a popular decorative feature in Danish churches, particularly from in the late 16th century and onwards, and quotes from scriptures, often in gilded letters, were displayed on a great number of church walls, and altar pieces and fronts (Jürgensen 2017, pp. 1055–56). As expressed by Niels Palladius (b. 1510–d. 1560), brother of the bishop (Quoted in Jürgensen 2017, p. 1055):

> *The true ornament of the Christian churches is the sacred office itself of God's words, and the administration of the sacraments and pious ceremonies to whom they are joined, not logs, a wooden nose or eye, painted and fashioned faces.*

In some cases, the addition of text to unsuitable imagery could even offer a compromise. In 1593, an alabaster retable in Vejrum Church in Jutland depicting St. Catherine was, for example, 'neutralised' with the addition of the words: 'Saints, you should not serve, but worship God alone. These images are embellishment alone. They have no other power, nor virtue' (Ibid., p. 267). With the addition of the text, attempts were made to reveal the inert nature of the image and to strip it of its power; it could still be enjoyed as a piece of art or even as a historical curiosity (see Jensen 1921, p. 196), but in no instance was it to be worshipped or bestowed with divine powers.

As indicated by the account of Gissur Einarsson, some opposition towards the worship of objects seems to have been present in Iceland. However, scholars do not agree upon the extent to which this opposition materialised through iconoclastic attacks or confiscation of devotional objects; while some have regarded the story of the crucifix of Kaldaðarnes as a testimony of systematic destruction of church art and religious objects (e.g., Björnsson 1964) others reject the idea of such vandalism altogether (e.g., Kristjánsson 2017). Only a few studies have looked at what happened to devotional objects during and after the Lutheran Reformation in Iceland. The most influential of these is a study by medievalist Cormack (2017) where she examines church inventories of two Lutheran bishops. As will be discussed further, Cormack finds in these inventories some indications of vandalism as well as other important evidence for the fate of Catholic objects in the decades after the Ref-

ormation. However, Cormack does not look in depth at any extant objects from the Catholic period. Theologian Gunnar Kristjánsson (2017) has also examined selected inventories of churches as well as some Icelandic church art in the national museums of Iceland and Denmark but claims to find no examples of vandalism. Gunnar is highly critical of accounts about iconoclasm in Iceland and believes them to be untrustworthy dramatizations of the true events. However, Gunnar examines no other factors than iconoclasm and does not consider how the objects may otherwise have been recontextualised. Apart from these two, a few other authors have examined the change in church interiors and art after the Reformation (e.g., Harðardóttir 2017), but they have mostly been concerned with how the Lutheran faith influenced new church art and furnishings rather than the fate of the Catholic objects.

4. The Fate of Catholic Objects in Iceland

In examining the fate of religious images, statues and other devotional objects, church inventories and visitation books provide important evidence. In the aforementioned research on possible iconoclasm in Reformation Iceland, Margaret Cormack (2017) uses data from the visitation books of two Lutheran bishops of Skálholt, those of Gísli Jónsson (1559–1587) and Brynjólfur Sveinsson (1639–1674). In the inventories of Brynjólfur, Cormack finds several mentions of broken effigies; in the inventory of the church of Keldur, he, for example, noted "three heads broken off alabaster" and "three fragments so the images can not be identified". (Ibid., p. 247). In the same church, Brynjólfur listed a broken effigy of John the Apostle (Ibid., p. 250). Above the altar in the church of Þykkvibær Brynjólfur found "remains from alabaster effigies" and in Mýrar there were four effigies, one of which was broken. At Hvol, Brynjólfur also mentions a "broken stone altarpiece" which may have been decorated with images of saints (Ibid.).

Interestingly, the damaged objects listed by Brynjólfur seem to have been only partly damaged and then retained within the churches in that state rather than demolished completely. Only a few effigies of saints from the Catholic period which are preserved in the National Museum of Iceland show signs of such vandalism. Amongst those is a majestic statue depicting the sedes sapientiae missing the Christ child. The statue is carved in oak and is 90 cm high. It has been dated to the 13th century and is believed to originate from Sweden. In the right side of head of the effigy is a large cleft and one of the lilies is missing from the crown (Sarpur n.d., 10944/1930-355). Art historian Selma Jónsdóttir, who studied the statue, argued that this damage was purposefully inflicted with a blunt object (Jónsdóttir 1964, p. 9). Upon examination, this indeed seems probable. The statue was gifted to the National Museum of Denmark in 1853 but returned to Iceland, along with many other artefacts in 1930. According to Danish accounts, the National Museum of Denmark acquired the effigy from a Gudmann Jr. who came by it in Hjaltadalur, in which the Cathedral of Hólar was situated. In the accounts of the National Museum of Iceland from 1930 this is, however, claimed to be a misconception but no further explanation to this claim is provided (Sarpur n.d., 10944/1930-355). Selma Jónsdóttir questioned this and argued that statue was indeed imported to Hjaltadalur, in the episcopacy of Guðmundur góði Arason (Gudmund the Good, b. 1203–1237) who is said to have been devoted to Virgin Mary. Selma maintains that the inhabitants of Hjaltadalur regarded the statue as particularly sacred and that its special status eventually drove someone to attack its face with an axe or a similar tool (Jónsdóttir 1964, pp. 56–57). It is difficult to confirm the association of the statue to Hjaltadalur or to Guðmundur góði but it does indeed seem likely that it was attacked due to its special status.

Other than this effigy, very few of the religious images exhibited in the National Museum seem to have been subjected to iconoclastic attacks. Many statues of saints are missing hands, arms, or parts of their face, such as the nose, which were common targets of iconoclasts, but this is more likely due to the fact these parts are most liable to break off, rather than deliberate destruction. Nevertheless, such damage, albeit accidental, reflects

a changed attitude towards the images which were, in the Catholic period, regarded as sacred but were neglected and left to decay in the centuries after the Reformation.

Only two of the numerous effigies recorded in Sarpur, an online database for Icelandic museum collections, show possible signs of deliberate destruction. One of these is an effigy of Paul the apostle carved in oak, which belonged to the church in Hjarðarholt in Borgarfjörður. The effigy is missing its nose and its eyes have been gouged out, which is typical for iconoclasm. Another effigy recorded in Sarpur which might also have been subjected to vandalism is carved in pine and depicts Andrew the apostle. The effigy, which has been dated to the 13th century and was probably made in Iceland or imported from Norway, belonged to the church at Teigur in Fljótsdalur, a turf church dedicated to St. Andrew and the Virgin Mary which was abolished in the late 19th century (Sarpur n.d., 2441/1883-290). At some point the bottom half of the effigy was cut off. This is not typical for iconoclasm and thus possibly requires an alternative explanation. It is noteworthy that both these effigies depict apostles, which along with Marian images and images of Christ, were acceptable according to bishop Gissur Einarsson, as long as they were not worshipped. Thus, if these effigies were truly subjected to iconoclasm, it seems likely that they were attacked on grounds of their special status or supposed miraculous nature rather than their imagery, as in the case of the statue associated with Hofstaðir discussed above.

The effigy of St. Andrew is mentioned in an inventory of the church of Teigar from 1397 along with an effigy of the Virgin, a crucifix and an altar stone containing relics (DI IV, p. 78). In an inventory of 1553 made by Bishop Marteinn Einarsson, none of these items are listed (DI XII, p. 650). However, the National Museum of Iceland obtained the effigy from the church of Teigar in 1883 (Sarpur n.d., 2441/1883-290); therefore, it seems likely that it was retained in the church throughout the years, perhaps hidden or stored away. If that is the case, it can be inferred that the inventories are not always accurate in that they might not include all the objects kept within the churches, and that either the bishops responsible for the inventories intentionally avoided listing such items or they were hidden away by the parish priest before their visitations.

As in the case of the effigy of St. Andrew, a great part of the religious imagery and devotional objects from the Catholic period is missing from inventories shortly after the Reformation. For this study, two collections of inventories were examined in order to compare the listings before and after the Reformation: first, the abovementioned inventory book made by Bishop Marteinn Einarsson during his tour of the diocese in the period 1553–1554, only little over a decade after the Lutheran church ordinance was officially brought into force there. A transcript of the original manuscript of these inventories has been published in the series Diplomatarium Islandicum (DI) (1857–1972, XII, pp. 643–68). The second inventory book was written in 1601 by Bjarni Marteinsson, scribe at Skálholt, and contains a collection of inventories of churches in the diocese, the oldest dating to the 12th century and the most recent to the year 1600. The manuscript is preserved in the National Archives of Iceland but no transcript of it has yet been published (Biskupsskjalasafn AII n.d.).

The collection of inventories written by Bjarni is somewhat problematic as only a few of the individual inventories within it include a date and thus, it can be difficult to assess their precise age. However, the collection should not be dismissed completely. On grounds of their contents, the pre-Reformation inventories in the front of the manuscript can easily be distinguished from the 16th century inventories, which suffices for the aim of this study; although the exact dates of the inventories are unknown, they can still be used in comparison to inventories from after the Reformation (see Table 1).

Table 1. A comparison of the inventory book of Bishop Marteinn Einarsson published Diplomatarium Islandicum and the unpublished collection of inventories written by Bjarni Marteinsson in 1601. A majority of the devotional objects listed in the pre-Reformation inventories are missing from later inventories.

Dedications and Devotional Objects Listed in Inventories before and after the Reformation		
Church	**Pre-Reformation**	**1553–1554**
Berufjarðarkirkja	Dedicated to St. Olaf, altar piece	
Skógarkirkja	Dedicated to St. Nicholas, reliquary, 2 altar stones, 3 crucifixes, effigies of St. John and Virgin Mary, hagiographies of St. Peter and St. Nicholas	
Borgarkirkja	Dedicated to Virgin Mary, 3 crucifixes, hagiography of Virgin Mary	
Miðbæliskirkja	Dedicated to Virgin Mary, tabulum, 4 crucifixes, hagiographies of Virgin Mary and St. Agnes	
Steinakirkja	Crucifix, effigy of Christ	
Holtakirkja	Dedicated to all saints, 3 crucifixes, reliquary, altar stones, tabulum, hagiography of St. John	
Ásólfsskáli	Dedicated to St. Olaf, 2 crucifixes, hagiography of St. Olaf	
Dalskirkja	Dedicated to St. Peter, reliquary, crucifix	
Kross	Dedicated to St. Olaf, 3 crucifixes, reliquary, hagiographies of Virgin Mary, St. John, St. Olaf	
Skúmastaðakirkja	Dedicated to St. Olaf, reliquary, altar stone, 2 crucifixes with effigies, 2 other crucifixes, tabulum, hagiographies of Virgin Mary, St. Olaf, St. Thomas	
Vomúlastaðir	Dedicated to St. Peter, crucifix, hagiographies of Virgin Mary, St. Peter	
Teigskirkja	Dedicated to Virgin Mary, crucifix, altar piece, reliquary, hagiographies of Virgin Mary and St. Andrew	
Breiðabólstaður	4 crucifixes, 2 reliquaries, hagiographies of Virgin Mary, St. Jacob	
Oddakirkja	Dedicated to St. Nicholas, reliquary, 3 crucifixes, altar stones, hagiographies of Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalen, St. John, St. Nicholas, St. Thomas	Reliquary, 4 crucifixes, altar piece, effigy of Virgin Mary and some other idols
Gunnarsholt	Dedicated to St. Peter, reliquary, crucifix with effigy, two other crucifixes, hagiography of Virgin Mary	
Keldnakirkja	Dedicated to St. Paul, reliquary, hagiographies of Virgin Mary, St. John, St. Paul	Dedicated to St. Paul
Næfurholtskirkja	Dedicated to St. Peter, crucifix, hagiography of Virgin Mary	
Leirubakkakirkja	Dedicated to St. Peter, crucifix, hagiographies of Virgin Mary, St. John	
Klofakirkja	Crucifix, reliquary, altar piece, effigy of St. Þorlákur, hagiography of St. Þorlákur	
Skarðskirkja	Dedicated to St. Michael, reliquary, 2 crucifixes, hagiography of Virgin Mary	Reliquary
Villingaholtskirkja	Crucifixes and hagiography of Virgin Mary	
Gaulverjabæjarkirkja	Crucifix	
Gegnishólakirkja	Dedicated to Virgin Mary, hagiography of Virgin Mary	

Table 1. *Cont.*

Dedications and Devotional Objects Listed in Inventories before and after the Reformation		
Church	**Pre-Reformation**	**1553–1554**
Kaldaðarnesskirkja	Dedicated to Virgin Mary, St. Michael, St. Þorlákur	Broken crucifix
Oddgeirshólakirkja	Dedicated to Virgin Mary	
Hofskirkja	Dedicated to Mary Madgalen, St. Peter and St. Þorlákur	
Ásakirkja	No inventory	Hagiography of St. John and St. Paul
Ölfusvatnskirkja	Crucifix	
Reykjakirkja	Altarpiece	
Krýsuvíkurkirkja	Dedicated to Virgin Mary	
Kirkjuvogskirkja	Dedicated to Virgin Mary, 3 crucifixes	
Kirkjubólkskirkja	Dedicated to St. Peter, crucifix	
Þerneyjarkirkja	Dedicated to St. Jacob, St. Michael, St. Þorlákur, Mary Magdalen, St. Agnes, crucifixes	
Bessastaðakirkja	Altar stone, reliquary, 3 crucifixes, effigies of Virgin Mary and St. John under a crucifix, hagiography of Virgin Mary	
Húsafellskirkja		Altar piece
Gufudalskirkja	Altar piece, tabulum, crucifix, effigies of St. Anne, St. Anthony, St. Thomas, hagiography of Vigin Mary	Altar piece

The inventories in the collection of Bjarni reveal that in the centuries before the Reformation, the churches in the diocese of Skálholt were filled with effigies of saints, crucifixes and reliquaries. Moreover, in a majority of the inventories, the dedications of the churches to the various saints are mentioned. Already in the inventory from 1553 to 1554 this had changed radically. While many of the church inventories examined from that year include chalices, patens and corporals, only one included effigies, that is the church of Oddi which was said to own an effigy of the Virgin Mary and some other "graven images" (DI XII, pp. 652–53). The inventory from Oddi also includes a reliquary and four crucifixes (Ibid.). The only other mention of a crucifix was in the inventory of Kaldaðarnes which was described as broken (Ibid., pp. 658–59). In addition, the inventory of Skarð lists a reliquary with silver (Ibid., p. 656) and the church at Ásar had hagiographies of St. John and St. Paul (Ibid.). Three altar pieces, which might have included images of saints, were mentioned in the inventories: one in Oddi (Ibid., pp. 652–53), one in Húsafell (Ibid., pp. 666–67) and one in Gufudalur (Ibid., pp. 667–68). Only one inventory notes the church's dedication, that is the church at Keldur, which was dedicated to Paul the Apostle (Ibid., p. 654).

Evidently, a large part of the Catholic objects of the churches in the diocese of Skálholt are missing from the inventories from 1553 to 1554. As described earlier, Bishop Gissur Einarsson did order the confiscation of effigies and other objects worshipped by the people in the diocese. Written sources also cite that in the diocese of Hólar, Ólafur Hjaltason, the first Lutheran bishop, had all effigies and crucifixes which he considered to be objects of worship to be collected and broken (Cormack 2017, p. 243; Skarðsannáll 1922, p. 134). While these narratives have often been seen as unreliable exaggerations of the true events (see Kristjánsson 2017, pp. 218–19; Harðardóttir 2017, p. 195; Hugason 1991; Hugason 1988), the difference in the inventories before and after the Reformation might, at first glance, suggest that there is some truth to them. Importantly, however, as demonstrated in Cormack's study, some objects seem to reappear in later inventories, suggesting that they were omitted from destruction.

Indeed, returning to Cormack's study, one of the most interesting results is the difference in the two inventories she examines: whereas Brynjólfur, writing his inventories in the mid-17th century, lists various effigies of saints and other devotional objects of a Catholic

nature, Gísli, who served within the first decades after the Reformation, very similar to Marteinn Einarsson, does not mention effigies, and lists only a few crucifixes and relics as well as two hagiographies (Cormack 2017, pp. 249–50). As has already been postulated, this might suggest that the first Lutheran bishops simply avoided noting such objects in their inventories although they were present in the churches. However, if this was the case, the question remains why Marteinn Einarsson decided to note only a few selected items but circumvented such objects in all the other churches. Another explanation for the disappearance of objects from the inventories is that they were hidden away in the first decades after the Reformation but were slowly reintroduced as Lutheranism had become more established.

It is well known from other countries that devotional objects were hidden away during the Reformation. In England, for instance, a large number of alabaster panels from the Catholic period have been found hidden in roofs, walls or under floors of churches and even in domestic buildings (Cheetham 2005, pp. 53–54). The same seems to have occurred in Denmark; in Odense Cathedral in Funen, for example, a reliquary shrine of St. Canute was hidden in the choir walls and rediscovered in 1582 (Johannsen and Johannsen 2012, p. 266), and in the Cathedral of Roskilde in Zealand some epitaphs were hung over images of the Virgin Mary and some other saints which had been painted on pillars within the church (Lauring 1963).

It is well possible that this was also the case in Iceland. Some decades ago, the farmer of Klaustur by Lagarfljót, near the monastic site of Skriða in the diocese of Skálholt, found an effigy of the Virgin Mary, which has been dated to the Medieval period, in the walls of an old shed. It is not unlikely that it belonged to the monastery of Skriða and was hidden within the wall of the shed to protect it from vandalism or theft or for the fear that it would be confiscated by the church authorities (Sarpur n.d., 14414/1950-145). A 16th century effigy of Christ, removed from the crucifix, found under the floor tiles of the church of Staður in Steingrímsfjörður in the diocese of Skálholt (Sarpur n.d., 1834–1892), might similarly have been deposited to protect it from harm. At the same time, the deposition of the effigy may have been a part of a ritual to protect the church building from disasters, or even from riots. Similar deposits of devotional objects have been detected in Norway; for example, a textual amulet containing prayers to St. Dorothy and the Holy Cross was recovered from under the floor tiles of a medieval wooden stave church in Torpo. The amulet has been discussed by Hagen, who has speculated that it might have been deposited to protect the church from fires due to its connection with St. Dorothy (Haug Hagen 2019).

In any case, the effigy of the Virgin Mary in the wall at Klaustur and that of Christ under the floor tiles in Staður certainly imply that there was some motive to place objects out of sight, and that priests or parish members may have feared that the belongings of their churches would be confiscated or attacked by iconoclasts or the king's men. A broken effigy of St. Barbara which was found during archaeological excavations at Skriða makes compelling the argument that the effigy of the Virgin was concealed on a nearby farm to safeguard it from a similar fate. All the pieces of the effigy of St. Barbara were found in the choir of the monastic church in 2006, excluding the face which was found on its own near the kitchen in 2007. The fact that the face of the effigy was found separately, in a distinct building, suggests that it was deliberately hewn off, perhaps around the dissolution of the monastery at the Reformation (Kristjánsdóttir 2012, pp. 97–100). In an inventory of the church of Skriða from 1641 an effigy of "some holy maid" was listed, suggesting that the faceless effigy was retained within the church, although it had become unrecognizable to the writer of the inventory (Ibid., p. 100). The effigy is made of terra cotta and was probably produced in Utrecht in the 15th century. The individual pieces have now been attached back together and the effigy stands around 30 cm tall (Ibid., pp. 97–100).

For whatever reason that many of the devotional objects missing from the earliest inventories after the Reformation reappear in the inventories of Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson in the mid-17th century, this seems to suggest that the critical attitude towards religious imagery diminished or at least became more moderate some decades after the Reformation.

The same pattern has been suggested in Denmark, where the Protestant material critique diminished as the Reformation lost its potency and the exuberance and grandeur of the Baroque found its way into Danish churches (Jürgensen 2017, pp. 1052, 1074).

In addition to evidence for broken and damaged images and statues, there is also evidence to suggest that some liturgical objects from the Catholic period were modified as to better fit Lutheran customs. Such physical transformations reveal clearly the cultural transformations that the objects underwent during the Reformation and how their meaning and value changed (e.g., Dooijes and Nieuwenhuyse 2007). An example of a physically modified object is a 14th century manuscript which was originally a Catholic mass-book containing text in Latin. At some point after the Reformation, the Latin text was scraped off the pages of the manuscript and replaced with music notes and Icelandic song lyrics. The original illustrations of the manuscripts were kept in place and merged with the new notes and lyrics. On some pages, attempts were made to fit the new text with the subject of the illustrations but in other cases this was not possible, and the text and illustration do not relate to each other (Ingólfsson 2019, pp. 68–69). Through this transformation, the songbook bore physical marks of its history, and for its readers the illustrations would have conjured powerful memories of the original meaning of the book and the association to other objects, people and events from which that meaning emerged.

Other examples of repurposing of objects from the Catholic period include a piscina from the church of Saurbær which is said to have been used as a baptismal font after the Reformation, and parts of a monstrance from Skálholt which were recycled as feet for two candlesticks (Harðardóttir 2017, p. 196). In the church of Villingaholt, a case originally used to house an effigy was used for storage (Cormack 2017, p. 250). One remarkable instance of the repurposing of a liturgical object after the Reformation is described in an inventory of the Cathedral of Skáholt from 1698 where some old procession staffs were said to serve as hinges for a door (Harðardóttir 2017, p. 196). All these instances of repurposing reflect a radical recontextualization of the objects, which in the Catholic period were considered sacred but after the Reformation were translated into seemingly mundane objects. However, the translation of these objects certainly created the possibility of keeping them within the churches.

A relic case from the church of Valþjófsstaðir, exhibited in the National Museum, from which large parts of the gold overlay, which originally depicted a crucifixion scene and other religious imagery, has been removed (Sarpur n.d., 3612/1891-91), may present yet another example of modification. Church inventories after the Reformation in fact commonly mention reliquaries which are missing parts; the lid of the reliquary in Oddi noted by Brynjólfur Sveinsson was, for instance, lost and in Kálfafellsstaðir one side of a reliquary was missing (Cormack 2017, p. 248). However, although it is well possible that parts of the reliquaries were removed because of religious motives, they may also have been stolen. It is known that from the 16th century and onwards, religious objects of precious metal from Icelandic churches were shipped to Denmark as taxation for the king and it has been suggested that after the Reformation, church objects were often stolen from churches for this purpose (Kristjánsson 2017, pp. 236–37; Magnússon 2013, p. 34). In either case, it is significant that what remained of the cases was kept in the churches, whether they served as tokens of memory for the old religion or were actively used in religious activities.

5. Results

In tracing the fate of religious imagery and devotional objects in Iceland, at least three phases can be identified. In the Catholic period they were received as embodiments of divine power and played an important role in exalting the religious experience. Importantly, the significance of these objects stemmed from a certain understanding of their matter as potent and alive. During and around the Reformation the meaning of these objects changed drastically as Protestant reformers sought to reveal the inert nature of what they regarded as mere pieces of wood or stone. With the orientation towards the Word of God,

as advocated by Lutheranism, there was less room for the worship of such dead things. In Iceland, this message was received by some of the first Lutheran bishops who were critical, if not hostile, towards the worship of objects and ordered the confiscation and destruction of objects which were perceived as miraculous. However, the bishops do not seem to have been successful in this and there is not much evidence to suggest that systematic attacks on religious objects took place in Iceland.

Nevertheless, albeit neither common nor systematic, some sporadic attacks indeed seem to have transpired. It has been suggested that these exclusively singled out objects which were perceived as particularly sacred or miraculous (Cormack 2017), in accordance with the orders of the bishops and Luther's criticism of the cult of images. However, this is not entirely convincing since many objects which were indeed seen as particularly holy did survive the Reformation (e.g., Eldjárn 1958). It seems more likely that in the few instances that churches were attacked, iconoclasts struck anything they could find. However, it is noteworthy that according to the material evidence and some written sources, the heads or faces of effigies seem to have been a particular target, as, for example, was the case in England, and thus some aspect of iconoclasm was selective rather than erratic. Written sources also suggest that, in some instances, objects were burned or otherwise demolished, but this is impossible to confirm with material evidence.

As a result of the bishops' decrees, and some few iconoclastic attacks, many objects seem to have been either hidden away or physically modified and thereby incorporated into Lutheran customs. In many cases, these were reintroduced into the churches after the havoc of the Reformation. The fact that objects could successfully be hidden or stored away reflects what has been argued about the Icelandic Reformation, that it was not driven by a powerful, central authority but rather contingent on the readiness, or indeed reluctancy, of each parish to adapt to the new religion. In this phase, devotional objects went from being, first and foremost, devotional objects to being laden with political significance.

The narratives from Bergen and in Jämtland in Norway reveal the political implications of religious imagery during the Protestant Reformation. In both cases the stripping of the altars was set in motion by Danish influence and may have played a role in the establishment of Protestantism, and thus the authority of the Danish monarchy. This, in many ways, echoes the situation in Iceland where the Reformation, in some part, revolved around the king's acquisition of power and such efforts manifested themselves, for example, in the violent attack on the monastery in Viðey led by the king's men. The continued worship of images in illicit chapels or the depositing of religious imagery inside church walls or under floor boards, "out of sight, yet not out of mind to the still faithful defenders of the old confession", as expressed by Johannsen and Johannsen (2012, p. 266), may have been powerful acts of resistance, not only towards the new religious conventions but also towards external powers. Whereas the confiscation or destruction of sacred objects could serve to establish the new religion in the favour of the Danish king, hiding objects, or continuing their worship, could serve as a counteract to conserve the old, and signify resistance to Protestantism or to the authority of the king. Thus, although it is hard to say whether the Icelandic people received the Reformation first and foremost as a political struggle, religious objects certainly played an important role in that aspect.

After the first decades of the Reformation, the opposition towards images and the cult of saints seems to have diminished and the objects once again found their place within churches, either as an integral part of religious activities or as physical memories of the Catholic period that had survived even the turmoil of the Reformation. This underlines the fact that Lutheranism continued to develop and change long after the last Catholic bishop was executed and a new church ordinance was accepted, and that the Reformation cannot be understood merely in terms of specific dates or events but rather as a long and complex process. Thus, this examination of Catholic objects in many ways confirms what has already been stated about the Icelandic Reformation: namely, that it developed over a long period of time and advanced in different ways in each parish. Further work is needed to examine in more detail the advancement of the Reformation on local scales. In particular,

a detailed study of the parishes in the diocese of Hólar, where the opposition towards the Reformation is believed to have been stronger, is needed as well an examination of changes in devotion in domestic contexts.

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Notes

1 Iceland was brought under Norwegian rule in 1262 and thus entered the Kalmar Union in 1397. After the dissolution of the Union in 1523 Denmark and Norway entered a personal union under the Danish monarchy. Denmark-Norway, also known as the Oldenburg Monarchy, included the former Norwegian dependencies, that is Iceland, Greenland and the Faroese Islands. Until the Reformation Iceland belonged to the Norwegian Archdiocese of Nidaros. Norway left the personal union in 1814 but Iceland remained a part of the Kingdom of Denmark until it gained full independence in 1944.

2 Malmö and Schleswig belonged to Denmark at the time but now belong to Sweden and Germany.

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