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THE MAJOR CHURCHES IN ICELAND AND NORWAY

***A STUDY INTO THE MAJOR CHURCHES
IN SKÁLHOLT DIOCESE AND BERGEN
DIOCESE IN THE 11TH TO THE 15TH
CENTURIES***

**Hovedoppgave i Historie ved Universitetet i Bergen
Høst 2006
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1 INTRODUCTION

As part of a Nordic inter disciplinary project, the Reykholt project, I wrote my BA thesis¹ about the church in Stafholt in Borgarfjörður Iceland. Stafholt was a handsomely endowed church of the *staðir* type, i.e. it owned the land on which it was built. This sparked my interest in the major churches in Iceland and in all of Scandinavia as well when later I attended a conference in Reykholt about ecclesiastical activity throughout Scandinavia and Iceland during that same period. The close relationship between Norway and Iceland in the Middle Ages was the main reason behind my choice of subject, as I found the idea of isolated evolution within the Church in Iceland, or any other country for that matter, rather unlikely and wanted to see if the evolution had been similar in those two countries.

My focus is on the function. First, a major church had a larger and more widespread area to serve. Service might be provided at other subordinate churches. Therefore we would expect to find many clerics in residence in a major church. Second, at a major church one may also find a school for priests, teaching young boys to read and write in Latin as well as in the vernacular. As a result literary activities are to be expected at or in close connection to these churches. The historian Jón Viðar Sigurðsson who has studied the phenomenon in Iceland concludes that major churches are those who had at least 3 clerics in residence. He points out that the majority of them can be connected with major chieftains (*goðar*) and with either schools or literary activity.² The archaeologist Dagfinn Skre's thesis on the prehistoric lordship in the district Romerike just north of Oslo has implications for the major churches in East Norway. He emphasises that the major churches in the region were built on the farms of aristocratic families but one, which was built by the king at an assembly site. Skre does not specify which functions a major church had in Norway, but points out that these churches received tithe from other churches in the area in the late 14th century.³

The value- and monetary system in Medieval Iceland was based on the value of one cow and on homespun woolen cloth of a fixed size measured in ells, hence homespun, which again was the length from the elbow to the fingertips. The value of one cow equalled 90 ells until the end of the 12th century and thereafter 120 ells or 1 long-hundred as this was a duodecimal system. 1 *eyrir* (sing. *aurar* pl., also *aur* sing.) equalled 6 ells homespun. The

¹ Júlíusdóttir 2002.

² Sigurðsson 2005.

³ Skre 1998: 64-128.

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name *eyrir/aur* is derived from the Latin name for gold *aureus*. A smaller unit than the *eyrir*, *ertog* (sing.) derived its name from the Latin name for the silver coin, *argenteum pondus*, which also gave its name to the pound, ON *pund*. The relationship between the different units is best described with a table:

Table 1.1– The relationship between monetary and measuring units in Iceland⁴

UNITS	EQUALS:	TO MEASURE FX.:
1 ell	48,5 cm.	homespun, land value
1 <i>stika</i> (13 th century)	2 ells 97 cm.	homespun, length
1 <i>ertog</i>	originally 10 <i>penningr</i> 20 <i>penningr</i> measured silver	metal, <i>money</i> , stock, goods
3 <i>ertog</i>	1 <i>eyrir</i>	stock, goods, <i>money</i>
1 <i>eyrir</i>	6 ells 27 gr.	stock, goods, <i>money</i>
1 <i>eyrir</i> silver	4 <i>eyrir</i>	stock, goods, <i>money</i>
1 hundred (ells)	120 ells = 20 <i>eyrir</i>	land, stock, goods, <i>money</i>
1 hundred silver	4 hundred ells = 480 ells	goods, <i>money</i>
1/2 <i>merkr</i> homespun	1 <i>eyrir</i> silver	goods, <i>money</i>
1 <i>merkr</i>	8 <i>eyrir</i>	food, weight, volume, <i>money</i>
2 <i>merkr</i> of wax	1 <i>eyrir</i>	wax
1 quarter	20 <i>merkr</i>	food, weight, volume
1 <i>vætt</i>	8 quarters	food, weight, volume
1 cheese	1/2 <i>vætt</i>	food, tolls, rent
1 cow until ca. 1200	90 ells = 3/4 of a hundred	land value, stock
1 cow after ca. 1200	120 ells	land value, stock
1 cow	1 bull 2-3 years old 6 ewes with wool and lamb 6 rams 2 year old 8 ewes with wool 8 castrated rams 2 year old 12 castrated rams 1 year old	fx. rent

The word *money* should not be understood in modern terms, but rather as that which was accepted as a standardized unit of payment. There were no coins minted in Iceland at the time in question. Orri Vésteinsson uses the term ounce to describe the *eyrir* as its weight (ca. 27 gr.) is compatible with the weight of the English ounce (28,125 gr.). The *eyrir* was

⁴ *Grágás*: 476-478, 510-512; Jónsson 1938; Steinnes 1938; Brøgger 1938.

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equivalent to the Roman ounce.⁵ Furthermore, all hundreds are long-hundreds (120) and will be used as such in this paper unless otherwise indicated.

Table 1.2 – The relationship between monetary and measuring units in Norway⁶

UNITS	EQUALS:	TO MEASURE FX.:
1 ell	47,4 cm.	homespun, length
1 <i>stika</i>	55,3 cm.	homespun, length
1 <i>ertog</i>	ca. 8,93 gr.	with scales: goods, metals
1 <i>eyrir</i>	3 <i>ertog</i>	goods, metal, <i>money</i>
1 <i>merkr</i> old	8 <i>eyrir</i> 3 <i>laupr</i> butter 1/3 <i>merkr</i> burnt silver	goods, food, metal, rent, tax
1 cow	1 <i>merkr</i> old 6 sheep 6 goats	rent, tax, stock the value of 1 cow is the measurement used for farmland
1 <i>laupr</i> butter	16,2 liters	volume; tax, toll, rent
1 <i>merkr</i> of burnt silver	9 <i>laupr</i> butter 4 <i>merkr</i> weight silver	goods, food, metal, rent, tax
1 <i>månadsmat</i> (<i>mm</i>) = food to sustain 1 man for 1 month	36 <i>merkr</i> butter and 72-96 <i>merkr</i> grain	tax, rent
<i>Månadsmatbol</i> (<i>mmb</i>) = <i>laupsbol</i> = <i>laupsland</i> .	size of land that yields 1 <i>mm</i> in rent per year	farmland, rent
1 <i>þveiti</i>	1/16 <i>mm</i>	tax, rent
<i>spannsbol</i>	1/4 <i>laupsbol</i> (Gtl.)	farmland, rent
72 <i>merkr</i>	1 <i>vog</i> grain 1 <i>spann</i> butter	volume, weight; food, rent, toll, tax
1 <i>hefseld</i> butter (Hordafylke)	4,5 <i>spann</i> 162 <i>merkr</i> 36,45 liters	volume, weight; butter, food
1 <i>hefseld</i> butter (Sygnafylke, Fyrdafylke)	4 <i>spann</i> 144 <i>merkr</i> 32,4 liters	volume, weight; butter, food
1 <i>skjettingr</i> (Sygnafylke, Fyrdafylke)	60 <i>merkr</i> 13,5 liters	volume, weight; butter, food
1 <i>såld</i> grain (rye)	6 <i>mælir</i> 1/2 ship- <i>pund</i> 97,2 liters (rye)	volume, weight; grain, food
1 <i>mælir</i>	6 <i>settungr</i>	volume, weight; grain, food
1 <i>lispund</i>	24 <i>merkr</i>	volume, weight
1 <i>ask</i> (In Voss)	16,2 liters	grain tithe
1 <i>mæle</i> (N. Hordafylke)	40,5 liters	Beer, beverages, butter, herring, tar, sulphur, coal, beans
(S. Hordafylke)	24,3 liters	
(Sygnafylke, Fyrdafylke)	16,2 liters	

In Norway the system was similar to the Icelandic monetary system in some ways but not identical and much more complex. The coins varied both in weight and purity of silver

⁵ Vésteinsson 2000: 289; Jónsson 1938.

⁶ Brøgger 1938; Steinnes 1938; **BK**: 91.

and therefore in value as well. There were different systems in use at any given time after ca. 1300 due to trade and due to different customs in different law districts and even in different areas within each law district. The table above is therefore only an attempt to explain the Norwegian monetary system.

1.1 Problem statement

The idea behind this paper was twofold, first to look at the most prestigious of the *staðir* in Iceland and see if they could be classified as major churches, *ecclesia majores*. Second, to contest and hopefully disprove that the Church in Iceland had been unique, by comparing the major churches in Iceland to the major churches in Norway. What is a major church and which are its functions?

The main problem with a comparison between Norway and Iceland is that the sources may be both different from each other and not corresponding in time. This issue is a matter of principle, which I will discuss in chapter four.

The timeframe is from the 11th to the 15th century, with the main focus on the 12th to the 14th century. I limit the thesis to the diocese of Skálholt in Iceland on one hand and the diocese of Bergen in Norway on the other, as there are simply too many churches to be looked at otherwise. This also frees me from having to compare different diocese within the two countries. There is one drawback at limiting the thesis in this way, as the different dioceses, although not homogenous, might contribute to the overall understanding of the churches in each country internally.

In Iceland, two thirds of the major churches are so called *staðir*, but surprisingly there are a lot of *bændakirkjur* (lit. farmers' churches), which I choose to call layman churches, that fit the criteria as well. The first part of the thesis is therefore a comparison of the two and an attempt to answer the questions: What, if any, was the purpose of the *staðir*? Did the main layman churches have a common purpose with the *staðir*? Why did these not become *staðir* like the other churches?

In Norway the situation is a little different, for the major churches in the diocese of Bergen were the *hofuð*⁷ churches, I have chosen to call this type of church a main church; and the *fiorðong* churches. A *fiorðong* (ON) means one fourth or a quarter and I have therefore called these quarter churches. The main and quarter churches were required by law built and maintained by the population of each corresponding area; i.e. the *fylki* and the quarters. A

⁷ NGL I: 7-8.

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quarter (*fjorðong*) in East Norway was also called a commune (*hreppr*), which probably corresponds to their Icelandic counterparts. According to the laws of Gulating, there should be one main church in each *fylki* and one quarter church in each quarter, which was a subdivision of the *fylki*. In Bergen diocese there were three *fylki*, Firdafylke, Sygnafylke, and Hordafylke, but only in Sygnafylke has the main church, Stedje, been identified. The second part of the thesis is therefore an attempt to identify the main churches in the districts of Hordafylke and Firdafylke. To do so we will have to take a closer look at the priests at these churches. I will therefore try to discover if there was a significant difference between the office of the priests at the main churches and the quarter churches.

The third part is a comparison of the two dioceses, the difference and similarities of the roles of the churches in question. I shall also go into a brief comparison of the appliance of the term *staðir*, for although the term was mainly used in Iceland, it was used in Norway as well, where it supposedly only applied to the bishoprics. There is, however, an interesting similarity between the uses of the word as a part of a place name in both countries, as further discussed in Chapter **Error! Reference source not found.**

1.2 Sources

When dealing with churches in the Middle Ages, there are only a few sources that are either contemporary or have to do with the churches in question. I will therefore have to apply the retrogressive method as used by the Norwegian school of agrarian history.⁸ Their method is to study cadasters and taxation registers from early modern time to understand how property rights have been transferred from the Middle Ages. The presumption is that the church property was preserved when expropriated by the king after the Reformation. In addition I will use a comparative method.

The main sources for the Icelandic churches are the *máldagar* (sing. *máldagi*) or charters.⁹ They are published in *Diplomatarium Islandicum*, hence **DI**. The charters were formal written documents containing records of property that belonged to a church, often the conditions of the endowments if there were any, obligations, rights, inventory, etc. The term *máldagi* originally meant ‘contract’. A typical charter might contain:

- I. A foundation letter
- II. Dedication of the church

⁸ Holmsen 1940: 27-45. About how he applied the retrogressive method see Weidling 2004: 349-354.

⁹ See Lárusson 1967a.

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- III. Land owned by the church
- IV. Stock owned by the church, i.e. cattle, sheep, horses.
- V. Rights of usage in other peoples land, commons etc.
- VI. Inventory
- VII. Obligations regarding clerical staff
- VIII. Specific details about number of masses and offices to be sung at the church
- IX. Tolls that should be paid to the church.
- X. Obligation regarding incapable persons
- XI. Tithe area or number of tithe paying farms
- XII. Other churches and chapels subordinate to the church
- XIII. Recent donations to the church

The charters were preserved at the churches as well as the cathedral. Originally the charters were only kept at the churches it seems, but the bishops began relatively early to keep copies of the charters they found at the churches they visited in a manner that shows the rounds of their visit. The question is how the charters were composed. When the bishop visited the inspection of the charters was one of his duties. If there were changes from his last visit the full text was either written on fresh parchments, which he brought with him, or he added the new information below the previous text.

The oldest preserved original is the so-called *Reykholtsmáldagi*. The charter is written in 6 different hands in the 12th and 13th century, and it clearly shows how charters were composed over time. I shall discuss the charter in a more detailed manner in chapter 2.3.2 below.

According to the Old Christian laws, charters should be publicly read at the general assembly in Alþing, and annually after that at the church which possessed the charter. The public reading at the Alþing gave notoriety to the title rights. The promulgation thus served the purpose of legalizing the document.¹⁰

There are some churches for which either no charters are preserved or only post-reformation charters. Individual churches burnt with inventory and archives alike. Some were destroyed in volcanic eruptions or other natural catastrophes. Skálholt burnt down in 1309, again during the episcopate of Bishop Ögmundur (1521-1541), and a third time in 1630.

¹⁰ For a comparison with Norwegian legal practice see Hamre 2004: 47, 62-68.

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Finally a ship containing at least one cadaster and the accounts for Skálholt was lost at sea together with the steward of Skálholt.¹¹

Efforts were made to save as much information as possible from the old charters and emissaries from the Cathedral travelled to the churches to copy the charters that were preserved there. In 1601 a priest by the name of Bjarni Marteinnsson sat in the remaining archives and wrote down in a cadaster, all the old pre-reformation charters that were still preserved.¹² Some were preserved together either bound or unbound and others were preserved in what must be called cadasters. Instead of sorting the cadaster by churches, Bjarni copied the cadasters and charters in the order they had been preserved. It is therefore possible to see where one cadaster ended and another began.

The charters are now deposited at the National Archives of Iceland in the Bishops Archives,¹³ and the Priests Archives.¹⁴ The transcriptions in *Diplomatarium Islandicum*, hence **DI**, are not always correct and, especially in the first volume, have been edited in a manner that would not be accepted today. The orthography was changed to a more archaic form, the way the editor of **DI** I ment it must have been in the original. Another problem is that he was in the habit of removing all later additions to the charter so that a part of a document would be printed and dated and not always accurately. This is especially true for the charters that were preserved in the cadaster of Bjarni Marteinnsson. I have thus used the original charters from the Bishops Archives for all the Icelandic churches in this paper, but only the originals from the Priests Archives for Stafholt church.¹⁵ I give references to corresponding documents in **DI** as well.

Land registers are also a valuable source of information. These are, however, 17th and 18th century sources and must be understood as such. I have mostly relied on the land registers of Árni Magnússon and Páll Vídalín from the first two decades of the 18th century. Árni and Páll gathered all the landowners and all the tenants in each commune and meticulously wrote down all the information the tenants or the owners could give forth about each farm. The procedure was witnessed and the document signed by a few prestigious men. Typical information about a farm in the land register is:

¹¹ Júlíusdóttir 2002: 34; *Safn til sögu Íslands og íslenkra bókmenta að fornu og nýju*. I: 34.

¹² Bps.A.II.1: 169v; *Skrá yfir skjöl í Steinklefa*. XXIV, 1; Júlíusdóttir 2002: 20, 23.

¹³ *Pjóskjalasafn Íslands* or the National Archives of Iceland (*PÍ*) in the archive *Biskupsskjalasafn*, *Bps.* for short.

¹⁴ *PÍ* in the archive *Skjalasöfn presta*.

¹⁵ I gathered all such information for Stafholt for *Staður í Stafholti* but the Priests archives are too extensive to

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1. Is there church or a chapel at the farm?
 - a. Is the church a benefice or receives service from which other church.
2. A discontinued chapel or a church. Ruins still visible?
3. Any rumours about a church or a chapel?
4. Tax value of the farm
5. Ownership
6. Who lived at the farm, how many were they and what was their status, i.e. owner or tenant
7. Rent
8. Number of hired cattle and the rent paid thereof
9. The overall conditions of the land, i.e. meadows and fields, access to firewood and water, bogs, sand, etc.
10. Tenant farms from the main farm if any and the same information as for the main farm.

An example about the accuracy of these rumours is Kaðalstaðir. In the landregister it says that there are rumours about a former chapel at the farm but that none that now lived could remember it. There were, however, ruins of a cemetery wall still visible and a smithy now stood where the chapel had stood before.¹⁶ In 1937 the remains of graves were found at the site where the rumours placed the chapel.¹⁷

But not all churches or chapels, which had been discontinued before the 18th century, are registered in the land register. This is probably mostly true about those who were discontinued relatively early or in the 15th century. An example of this is the church in Gröf, which was an annex to the church in Hrúni, and has a charter in the Cadaster of Bishop Vilchin from 1397. No mention is made about a church at that farm in the land register.¹⁸ Another example is the farm Neðranes, which was owned by Stafholt church where no rumours about a chapel were mentioned but where human remains have been found on two occasions in the 20th century.¹⁹

In Norway the sources are mainly the laws published in “Old Laws of Norway”, *Norges gamle love indtil 1387*, *Diplomatarium Norvegicum (DN)*, and *Björgynjar Kálfskinn (BK)*, a cadaster written in the beginning of the 14th century and onwards. It contains any number of information about the income of the churches and the beneficiary, as well as donations to the churches.

One of the problems that arise when writing about medieval Iceland and Norway is what language to use when certain terms are explained as well as when names are used. For although Norwegian and Icelandic were once the same language, they have evolved in

¹⁶ *Jarðabók* IV: 321.

¹⁷ Eyþórsson 2002: 46-48.

¹⁸ *Jarðabók* II: 346.

¹⁹ Eyþórsson 2002: 46-48.

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different directions, for not to go into the different directions within Norwegian which has two official languages. Old Norse, hereafter ON, would therefore be the language of choice, logically so as it was used by Icelanders and Norwegians throughout the period that I focus on. There is, however, another problem that arises with the use of ON. Names of people and places are totally different in some cases although they might be relatively similar in other cases. To take but a few examples: Hopperstad in Vik, where one of the churches I focus on is situated, also called Hoprekstad, was in the 14th century called Hópreksstaðir in Vík, which incidentally is identical in modern Icelandic. But if ON was to be applied, it would be Hópreksstaðr (sing.). Breiðabólstaður (sing.), a name quite a few churches in Iceland bore, would be Breiðabólstaðr. Jón, Ólafr, and Gyrðr in 13th and 14th century ON²⁰, would be Jon, Olav, and Gyrd in Norwegian but Jón, Ólafur, and Gyrðir in Icelandic. For these reasons, and others not mentioned here, I have chosen to use the modern spelling of place names and names of people, such as King Olav Haraldsson and Bishop Ísleifur and so forth.

I have also chosen to use English translations of terms where ever I can, the main exception being that of *staðir*, which incidentally is not ON but the plural of the Icelandic term *staður* (ON *staðr*), thus following in the footsteps of other scholars who have written about the *staðir* in Iceland. Other terms will be mentioned and translated as they appear in the text below.

²⁰ It is of course possible find different ways of writing these names, but I have only mentioned these to make a point and not to go into linguistic discussions.

2 ICELAND

I will discuss the *staðir* as well as churches that were owned or controlled by laymen, hence laymen churches. Both had full obligations at home and in addition they might be required to provide service at other churches which either had a limited number of masses and offices sung at home or if they required full service, were without a residing priest. It is probable that the churches with full service were the first to get independent status with a residing priest. It is common to see in the charters a clause dictating how many churches the priests should provide service at. They are sometimes called churches (*kirkja*), sometimes *saunghús* (lit. houses where mass should be sung) or just *hús* (lit. house), and finally there are the *bænhús* (lit. houses for praying). The “houses” must be understood as chapels.

The churches were dealt into categories after the number of masses that were to be sung at the church per year. These were referred to as *alkirkjur* (full service churches), *hálfkirkjur* (half service churches), and *ffjórðungskirkjur* (quarter service churches). It is important to understand that a ‘quarter’ church in Norway and in Iceland was not the same concept. In Iceland ‘quarter’ referred to the number of masses and offices sung at the church while in Norway the word referred to a geographically defined area.

The priest should be paid a fixed sum for his services at these churches, 4 *merkr* for a church where full service was provided, 2 *merkr* for the *half* churches, and 1 *merkr* for a *quarter* church. A total of 12 masses should be sung at the chapels, for which the priest should receive 1/2 *merkr*, which was the equivalent of 6 *eyrir*.

2.1 *The staðir and their origin*

The term *staðir* was in the Middle Ages, according to Magnús Stefánsson,²¹ used for central ecclesiastical bodies, such as episcopal and archiepiscopal sees as well as monasteries, convents, and certain local bodies, mainly churches. What defines the *staðir* of the latter group, is the possession of the farmland the church is built on. A church which owned the farmland on which it was built in its entirety was, together with the farm, always defined as a *staðir*. But no rule is without an exception as there were a few *staðir* in the 13th century it seems, which did not own the entire farmland, but half of it or more. There was, however, a common link which tied them together with the other *staðir*. All owned a specifically outlined part of the land, no matter whether the part was the half, two thirds or the whole

²¹ See Magnús Stefánsson (1975), (1978) and (2000).

farm on which they were built. In this way the farmland and the church signified an independent institution.²² And this is what the *staðir* were in effect, independent ecclesiastical bodies.

Churches, which owned half or less and even no part of the farmland on which they were built, were in the late 13th century and onwards referred to as *bændakirkjur*, or layman churches. Instead of the homeland they might own a fixed amount of the harvest of the land, enough to sustain a priest and a deacon, or only a priest, and in some cases only some specific rights of usage. Some owned other farms of lesser value instead of any rights or parts in the farm on which they were built,²³ It is important to note that a church that owned other farms in its entirety but not the farm on which the church was built, was also labelled a layman church.

As layman churches did not necessarily own enough to sustain them, they were under the care of the owner of the land upon which they had been built, and were treated as their property. This had not been any different from how the *staðir* were treated, but in the 12th and 13th centuries, continental ideas about the patronage system and what a gift entitled, culminated in the dispute over the control of the churches, and the *staðir* in particular. This dispute has been called the *staðamál*.

The term *staðir* is a translation from Latin, although the Germanic word *staðr* (ON.) *staður* (sing. Icelandic) is a common one in Icelandic and means simply “a place”. The medieval concept is *locus*, in the context *locus religiosus*, *locus sacrosanctus*, or *locus pius*. Given that, the term might have become *heilagr staðr* (sing.) or *sælu staðr* (sing.),²⁴ but for some reason it did not. After the *staðamál* the term *staðir* gradually became identical with the term benefice (*beneficium*).²⁵ Barring of course the sees and the monasteries.

²² Magnús Stefánsson (2000): 35.

²³ DI. II: 65, 114, 258. “Allra heilagra kirkia a vatnslavsv a fimtan hvndrad j heima lande.” “Kirckia j niar vijk... a xx: kugilldi j landi...” “...kirkia ad rauda mel a x hundrud j landi eda j kuik fe...” “Kirckia vnder felli j kollafirdi... a huertt vor saud veturgamlan: or steina dal: anar at [hufu: stodum] þridia vr fiardarhorne: or hlijd vj alnir vadmalz: or Broddanesi fiorda saud: fimti or: fiardarhorne: setti vr trudu dal: kýr tuær a kirckia oc eina a...” DI. IV: 40, 45, 47, 51. “Andres kirckia j Tungu a so mikid j heimalande sem prestskyld heyrrer.” “Jons kirckia postula i Midfelli a eina kv.” “Olafskirkia ad Gnype a so micid j heimalandi sem prestz skyld oc diakna heyrrer til.” “Mariukirkia j Oddgeirsholumm a land ad Reykium.”

²⁴ *Heilagr* is then a translation of *sacrosanctus* or holy, while *sælu* is the translation from *pius* or pious.

²⁵ Magnús Stefánsson (2000): 19-36.

Knowing that the term *staðir* is a local adjustment of another international term, its origins should be sought outside Iceland. Soon after the conversion in the year 999²⁶ Gissur the white of the *Haukdælir* clan took his son Ísleifr (1006-1080)²⁷ to Herford in Saxony to be taught by the abbess of the convent. He in turn sent his son Gissur (d. 1118) to Saxony to study, according to *Jóns saga biskups* to the convent in Herford as well and he too was ordained by the time he returned to Iceland. Gissur later established Skálholt as a see, before AD 1106, but probably in the last decade of the 11th century, Skálholt consequently became one of the first, if not the first, of the *staðir*.

Sæmundur the wise (d. 1133) of the *Oddaverjar*, went abroad and studied so much that by the time he returned to Iceland, he was the most educated man in the country. We cannot say for certain where Sæmundur studied but according to *Oddaverjaannáll*, Sæmundur returned from his studies in Paris in 1077.²⁸ Later folklore tradition has it that Sæmundur had studied at Sorbonne, in the tradition translated to Icelandic as *Svartiskóli* or the Black school, where, supposedly, he had learned witchcraft allowing him to fool the devil. Scholars have suggested that what Ari the wise calls *Frakkland*, was indeed not France but the area south of Saxony which was known as *Franconia* or *Franken*.²⁹

Oddi became one of the earliest *staðir* in the late 11th or early 12th century, established by Sæmundur, probably at the same time as Gissur established Skálholt. German influence would therefore not be surprising, and it is precisely to Germany Magnús Stefánsson looks to explain the emergence of the *staðir* in Iceland, with special reference to the education bishop Gissur and the priest Sæmundur the wise received on the continent.³⁰

Orri Vésteinsson has argued that this is a rather too neat an explanation. He says:

In Icelandic historiography it is usually assumed that from the beginning the men of the Church were quite conscious of their separate identity and that there was a fairly well-defined division between the secular and ecclesiastical spheres. Representing the traditional stance is Magnús Stefánsson who thinks that in the

²⁶ Popular belief is that the conversion took place in the Alþing of 1000, a tradition almost as old as the conversion itself. The conversion took, however, place in the year 999. The Church in Iceland, nevertheless, chose to celebrate its 1000th year anniversary in the year 2000.

²⁷ According to *Íslendingabók* and *Hungrvaka*, bishop Ísleifr was consecrated when he was 50 years old, in the year of 1056 and died after 24 years as bishop. That means he died in 1080 and must have been born in 1006.

²⁸ *Isl. Annaler*: 471.

²⁹ *Biskupa sögur II*: 6, 14, 16. Magnús Stefánsson (1975): 87. *Sturlunga saga. Skýringar og fræði*: 11. Þjóðsögur Jóns Árnasonar Magnús Már Lárusson (1967). Gunnar Karlsson (1997): 217.

³⁰ Magnús Stefánsson (2000): 207.

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eleventh and twelfth centuries ecclesiastical institutions like the *staðir* ... were established by a self-conscious clergy, whereas in the thirteenth century the *staðir* came under the influence of laymen who began to treat them as their private property. ... Bishop Ísleifr (1056-1080) and Gissur (1082-1118), St Jón (1106-21), and the priest Sæmundur *fróði* (d. 1133) are seen to have imported Christian institutions and quite consciously adjusted them to Icelandic circumstances.³¹

Receiving a proper Christian education, however, in a foreign country far away from the influence of one's own society must have been a rather secure way of bringing back ideas and norms, especially when we bear in mind that, once they returned, these were some of the most powerful men in Iceland.

Secular ownership of ecclesiastical bodies, or at least secular guardianship, was not an alien idea in 11th century Germany. The emergence of *staðir* in Iceland should not be seen as something out of the ordinary. On the contrary, it would have been worth mentioning if they, or similar institutions, had not emerged in Iceland. It was a long and painstaking process until the Nordic Church developed an identity of its own, but in the meantime, ideas were brought over from the Continent along with the faith, and the proper way to do things in a Christian society was slowly, but surely integrated into the common way of thinking.

In the first decades after the conversion, missionary bishops travelled around in the country, preaching, baptizing, confirming, and ordaining clergy to serve at the churches that were being built. Then the priest Ísleifr from Skálholt is consecrated as a missionary bishop to Iceland in 1056 by the archbishop of Hamburg/Bremen.³² His son and successor, established the see of Skálholt, adopted the tithe-laws, which I will discuss more extensively further down, and the *staðir* started to emerge. All are a fruit of a gradual organization and institutionalization of the Church in Iceland, which by the end of the 11th century had become a necessity.

Although these are just outward evidence of the organization that took place at that time, we should not assume that there was no internal organization at the same time. In a country where the Christian faith had been adopted only recently, and there were travelling missionary bishops and priests from different nationalities, the need for uniformity within the Church should not be underestimated. According to *Grágás*, *Íslendingabók*, and *Hungrvaka*,

³¹ Orri Vésteinsson (2000): 3.

³² *Adam of Bremen*, book IV: 36.

some of the bishops who found their way to Iceland were not a part of the Roman Catholic Church but rather Greek Orthodox, and others were even excommunicated.³³

As Vésteinsson points out in *The Christianization of Iceland*, it is “the interpretation of the scriptures and celebration of the rites which... makes it necessary for [the Church] to establish organization and hierarchies where there were none before.”³⁴ In order to monitor the teachings of the clergy spread around the country, to introduce new teachings, and to reach the entire population, there had to be an organization on a local level. It is here that the *staðir* served their purpose in the organization efforts of the Icelandic Church. It is my aim not only to discuss the purpose of the *staðir* but also to show that they were in constant development, from the time they emerged until the end of the 13th century when the church was recognized as their sole owner. Rather than a conscious adjustment to imported institutions the *staðir* were the imitations of institutions on the continent which once introduced and imported, took on a life of their own.

2.1.1 Skálholt, the *staðir* emerge

The *staðir* emerge during the episcopate of Gissur Ísleifsson (1082-1118), as mentioned above. The first as far as we can tell was Skálholt but the time of the establishment as *staðir* is not certain. According to both *Íslendingabók* and *Hungrvaka*, bishop Gissur had it decreed as a law at the general assembly in Alþing that the see would forever be at Skálholt. He then donated the land of Skálholt and “all kind of riches both in land and in stock” to the see according to *Íslendingabók*.³⁵ Skálholt was from thence a *staðir*.

The chapter in *Hungrvaka* that deals with the episcopate of Gissur has some information on the church in question. According to *Hungrvaka*, Gissur had ordered a church built, which length was said to be “30”. This is probably a reference to the length of 1 ell or 48,5 cm rather than 1 *stika* or 97 cm, which was used as measurement from the 13th century. That makes the church 14,5 meters long, a grand building indeed. The church stood ready when he established Skálholt as see. His mother Dalla, when widowed, wanted to live from her share of Skálholt’s land, so it was not until after her death, sometimes between 1082-1097, that Gissur could establish the see there. Scholars have argued that Dalla must have passed away before the tithe law was passed in the Alþing in 1097 because “it must be

³³ *Biskupa sögur II*: 8-9. Also *Sturlunga saga. Skýringar og fræði*: 10. *Grágás*: 18-19.

³⁴ Vésteinsson 2000: 4.

³⁵ *Sturlunga saga. Skýringar og fræði*: 12. “og margra kynja auðæfi önnur bæði í löndum og í lausum aurum”. “lausum aurum” translates as capital, livestock, goods and anything with monetary value other than land and probably also houses, although ships would be included in the term.

deemed likely that [Gissur] by that time had full control over Skálholt.”³⁶ It is to be understood from *Kristni saga* that the church was ready made when Dalla died, so Gissur must have had the work on the church started relatively soon after he became bishop.³⁷

We know of one church in Skálholt prior to the cathedral, a church Gissur the white had let build and at which he was later buried. Ásdís Egilsdóttir suggests that this church had been the only predecessor to the Cathedral, built some 80 years before. Hörður Ágústsson’s conjecture is that the first church would have been a small, partly dug down wooden church.³⁸

Although nothing contradicts the assumption that there had been only one church in Skálholt before the cathedral, neither does anything support the theory. If Ágústsson is right, Bishop Ísleifr would almost certainly have found the original church rather small for a bishop, especially one that had been educated on the continent. There were pupils in Skálholt in Ísleifr’s time, two became bishops, and there have been priests in Skálholt to assist the bishop in his many duties. Reason suggests that a small church would not suffice. If there truly was no other church in Skálholt prior to bishop Gissur’s church, the building of the new church must have been long overdue. Another possibility is of course that the first church had been larger than has been suggested until now.

2.2 Organization efforts of the 11th and 12th centuries

The passing of the tithe laws, the regulation of the Christian laws, e.g. the *kristinna laga þáttur*, and the *staðarmáls* are in my view evidence of the active organizational development of the Medieval Icelandic Church as were the *staðamál*, both the former and the latter. For the tithe laws there is nothing but praise for the instigators to be found in sources available to us. The *staðamál*, however, are in Icelandic historiography considered as an event that led to the loss of Icelandic property to the Church and later to the King in Denmark. Strangely as it may seem, both are seen to reflect the strong status of the ruling elite and not as a reflection of the intellectual and religious life in the country.

2.2.1 Bishop Gissur and the tithe law

After the adoption of Christendom the new religion was institutionalized and the Icelandic church organized. We have very little information about what Bishop Ísleifr might have done

³⁶ *Biskupa sögur II*: 16. Footnote 3. “...því þá verður að teljast líklegt að Gissur hafi full yfirráð yfir Skálholti.”

³⁷ *Biskupa sögur II*: 16. “En þá er hon var önduð ok byskup hlaut allt land þá lagði hann þat allt til kirkju þeirar er í Skálaholti er ok hann sjálfur hafði gera látit...”

³⁸ *Biskupa sögur II*: 7. Footnote 1. Ágústsson 1990: 299.

with this issue. But it is not unlikely that he spent most of his time trying to reach every corner of the country, with the help of the other missionary bishops, to eradicate all and any remains of heathen practices. He must have dedicated a lot of his time in convincing people to build churches and chapels on their lands. We know that he used his time to teach. *Kristni saga* says that he taught many a fine man to become a priest and that two of them became bishops: St Jón of Hólar and Kolr Þorkelsson in Viken (Oslo).³⁹

The tithe laws are an important part of the organization of the period, and affected the development of the major churches. The passing of the tithe laws was seen by Ari the wise as one of many examples of the greatness of Bishop Gissur. Scholars have spent many decades discussing the importance of the tithe as a deciding factor for the establishment of the *staðir*.⁴⁰

The Icelandic tithe law as we know it was a 1 per cent property tax, paid by those who owned 10 *eyrir* or more. The tithe of those who owned between 10 and 100 *eyrir* was solely distributed to paupers while the tithe of those who owned 100 *eyrir* and more was divided evenly into four parts: one for the church, one for the priest, one for paupers, and the last part for the bishop.⁴¹ The Icelandic tithe was a property tax “the rationale being that as standard interest was 10 per cent, 1 per cent of property would equal 10 per cent of potential yields”.⁴² Paid annually this was clearly usury, but something Bishop Árni (1269-1298) could justify on the words of Pope Innocent, according to *Árna saga biskups*.⁴³ Stefánsson suggests that the tithe in Iceland was based on a model from Carolingian Sachsen.⁴⁴

We know from *Íslendingabók* that it was bishop Gissur who, on account of the general affection his countrymen held him in, and under joint effort with priest Sæmundur the wise and the Lawspeaker Markús introduced the tithe law and had it passed as law at the Alþing in 1097, seemingly without any dispute.⁴⁵ It is obvious that Ari held Gissur in great reverence, understandably so perhaps, as this was the man who bequeathed the cathedral with the land of Skálholt and other riches, introduced the tithe and found it prudent to have another see established in the northern province of Iceland, Hólar. Ari does not mention anything

³⁹ *Biskupa sögur* Ib: 39.

⁴⁰ Stefánsson 1974; Vésteinsson 2000: 67-69, 90-92. For a further discussion of the meaning scholars have put into the tithe laws see Vésteinsson 2000: 69-76, 85-87.

⁴¹ *Grágás*: 35-40.

⁴² Vésteinsson 2000: 69.

⁴³ *Biskupa sögur* III: 96. Also, Vésteinsson 2000. Footnote 14, p. 69.

⁴⁴ Stefánsson 1974: 287.

⁴⁵ Regarding the dating of the tithe law, which some say should be 1096, Vésteinsson 2000: 67. Footnote 10.

about how the tithe was divided or distributed, he only says that all property was calculated and valued so it could be taxed.⁴⁶

Scholars have had little problems in understanding why the tithe law was passed without opposition, after all half of the tithe was payable to the owners of the churches. Stefánsson expressed in 1975 his opinion that the *goðar* and other chieftains had obvious interests in passing the tithe law; not only was the land the Church owned exempt from the tax for obvious reasons, but by donating their land to their own church, they thereby avoided paying the tithe of their former land without losing their control over the tithe which their church received from other farmers.⁴⁷ Also Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, who in 1989 said that after the tithe was introduced, many of the Icelandic chieftains donated to their church the farm where it stood. Often they had built the church themselves.⁴⁸

It is understandable that church owners would embrace the idea of the tithe, as half of it was meant to help sustain their churches, previously their sole responsibility. Now those who sought service at the church were also expected to help cover the churches expenses, a fair system for all.

Sometime between 1122 and 1133, and probably closer to 1133,⁴⁹ the Old Christian laws, *Kristinna laga þátr*, were composed and subsequently passed as law in the Alþing. This was the fruit of the joint efforts of bishop Þorlákur Runólfsson in Skálholt (1118-1133) and bishop Ketill Þorsteinsson in Hólar (1122-45), with the advice of archbishop Asker⁵⁰ in Lund (1104-1137) and priest Sæmundur the wise (d. 1133) in Oddi. To these laws, clauses regarding the tithe laws were added. This was logical since the tithe laws have to do with the matters of the Church. The pauper's tithe was, however, solely in the hands of the communes.

The old Christian laws are preserved as a special section in *Grágás*, as well as other laws of the commonwealth of Iceland. It is thus surprising that the tithe law is also preserved there in a separate section. Vésteinsson argues that this not only is an evidence of two stages

⁴⁶ *Sturlunga saga. Skýringar og fræði*: 12.

⁴⁷ Stefánsson 1975: 86.

⁴⁸ Sigurðsson 1989: 96.

⁴⁹ The *Íslendingasaga* of Ari the wise, was composed between 1122 and 1133, ending in the year 1120. He says himself that he had composed an earlier edition and shown it to the bishops Ketill and Þorlákur and that this edition was composed to better suit their wishes. He does not mention anything about the idea to compose Christian laws, which we might expect him to mention. We can therefore conclude that the idea to compose the laws came up after Ari had written his *Íslendingabók*, and since it probably would have taken some time to compose the laws, have them passed as law in the Alþing, we can assume that it might have been in the last years of Þorlákur, who died in 1133.

⁵⁰ Icelandic sources (*Sturlunga saga*) name him Özur, *Catholic Encyclopedia* Adzer, Kolsrud in *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* names him Asger, and *Svenskt Diplomatarium* names him Asker.

of the tithe law legislation, where the separate tithe laws represent a younger, more refined stage, but also that the church had not been the influential body scholars often have made it out to be. In fact, poor relief was probably the most important factor in the acceptance of the tithe law. Although the bishop had considerable powers regarding the tithe, it was limited to decide which churches were to receive half the tithe and direct the undivided tithe (see above) to specific churches.

Scholars tend to believe that the passing of the tithe law indicates “the close of the formative period of the Icelandic church organization and the establishment of a fully developed ecclesiastical structure.”⁵¹ Not so, Vésteinsson says, as there was no executive power in Iceland prior to 1262-4. The Church therefore had no means to enforce its rules on the population, as can be understood by the relatively relaxed way 12th and 13th century chieftains handled being excommunicated. The church was not recognized as a legal person in the eyes of the law and no single body controlled the payments of the tithe.⁵²

It is illogical to argue that the passing of the tithe laws led to the sudden burst in establishing of the *staðir*. A church that did not own land to sustain itself was ultimately the responsibility of the owner. By the passing of the tithe laws the church owner suddenly had an extra income to help finance the church. But the tithe was never enough to pay fully for all costs. The priest and other clerics should be maintained. Wax for the candles was necessary as was wine for the Holy Communion. The largest cost was probably the maintenance of both the church and its inventory. What was left had to come out of the pockets of the owner and ultimately from the land. Whether some of it was the tithe didn't really matter as half the tithe that should be paid to the bishop and in poor relief off the church-owners land was covered by the tithe that came in from the tithe paid from the farms in the district.

2.2.2 Bishop Þorlákur and the first dispute over the staðir

The chronicle of Bishop Þorlákur's life, *Þorláks saga biskups*, is our main source of the first disputes of the *staðir*. There are three main versions of the chronicles, called *A*, *B*, and *C*, thus *Þorláks saga biskups B*. The *A* version is preserved in a manuscript from 1360 and in a fragment from c. 1460. The *B* version is somewhat older, from the first half of the 14th century, but is rather badly preserved. The *C* version is preserved in 7 different manuscripts from the latter half of the 14th century to the middle of the 17th century, but only two of these,

⁵¹ Vésteinsson 2000: 71.

⁵² Vésteinsson 2000: 71.

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both from the 17th century, are intact. The *A* version only describes the general and not the specific, while the *B* and the *C* versions both describe specific quarrels that we know from the *Sturlunga saga*. In addition, both versions contain the so-called *Oddaverjapátttr*, which deals with the quarrels between St Þorlákur and the chieftains over marital matters and the first dispute over the *staðir*.⁵³

According to *Oddaverjapátttr* St Þorlákur went on his first visitation rounds to the East Quarter, *Austfirðingafjórðungur*, in Iceland in 1179 in his second year as bishop. His first visit was at Svínafell where a new church should be consecrated, but before he did so he insisted upon his rights to control churches and their charters. A claim that Sigurður Ormsson owner of Svínafell finally bowed to. St Þorlákur then gave the *staðir* as fief to Sigurður. The same happened at Rauðalækur where the father of Sigurður lived, Ormur the old. St Þorlákur claimed control over church property and when Ormur accepted St Þorlákur's claim he again received the *staðir* at Rauðalækur as fief. St Þorlákur continued his visitations in the East Quarter and succeeded in his claims until he visited Höfðabrekka on his way back and met with Jón Loptsson of the Oddaverjar clan. This is where St Þorlákur apparently met his match and had to relinquish his claims, or so we are told.⁵⁴

According to this same source, a part of the reason why St Þorlákur accepted that Höfðabrekka not be consecrated as *staðir*, but rather as a layman church, seems to be the natural catastrophies that had destroyed churches both at Höfðabrekka and at unspecified farms annex to Höfðabrekka as well as many of the farms that had previously paid tithe to the church there. The result was that there should now be two clerics at the church in Höfðabrekka and not four as before.

The traditional school has seen the account of *Oddaverjapátttr* as the evidence of the International Church's effort to achieve absolute power over the churches and their property. St Þorlákur acted in accordance to the policy of Archbishop Eysteinn (1161-1188) and the Catholic Church, by insisting on his right to control the matters of faith and therefore the churches. It was his duty to regulate that the churches were well provided for, as was the well-being of his flock. It was therefore of great importance that the church-owners recognized his authority over the churches and matters concerning them.

Stefánsson suggested that when cardinal Nicolas Breakspear was in Norway in connection to the establishment of Nidaros as Archdiocese, he had attained the control over

⁵³ *Biskupa sögur* II: xxxi-xxxiii.

⁵⁴ *Biskupa sögur* II: 164-168.

the churches in Norway as a gesture of goodwill from the council before he established the archdiocese. This would then explain why Archbishop Eysteinn and St Þorlákur tried to gain control over the churches in Iceland, when there was already a presence from Norway and it could be justified with the *Canones Nidrosienses (CN)*.⁵⁵

Vegard Skånland has contested the accepted idea that the *CN* had been adopted in 1152 when Cardinal Nicholas Brekespear met with the Norwegian bishops and king to establish the archbishopric of Nidaros, in his monograph *Det elste norske provincialstatutt*. He furthermore maintained that *CN* was not a direct result of negotiations between the council and the cardinal. Its character of a statute for the church points to it being given in a church meeting on provincial level.⁵⁶

Skånland showed that *CN* was based on Pope Gratian's *Decretum* and was edited by archbishop Øystein Erlendsson (1157/58-1188) sometime after 1170 as a statute for the province of Nidaros. Furthermore he points out that archbishop Øystein bore the title *legatus natus*, which made him the Pope's representative in Nidaros archbishopric.⁵⁷

It is statute 1 of *CN* that is directly relevant for 12th century Iceland, as it deals with the rights and obligations of church owners. There are five articles of the statute, which can be summarized thus:

- I. Lay patrons shall see to it that the priest does not squander the property of the church
- II. Patrons cannot use the property of the church as their own; they must seek acceptance from the bishop in order to get rid of a priest or instate one.
- III. Patrons who become impoverished can only be supported by the endowments that they have given to a monastery or a chapter-church, given that they want to live there
- IV. Patrons shall manage church property with the bishop's consent. Should they contest, the bishop can choose if he lets the matter rest or removes the relics from the church.
- V. Should heirs to a church dispute its control, the bishop shall have the relics removed and the church closed until a priest has been instated to everyone's consent and the bishop's approval.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Stefánsson 1975: 98-99, 103.

⁵⁶ Skånland 1969: 11-12, 166.

⁵⁷ Skånland 1965: 399-401; Skånland 1969: 169-185.

⁵⁸ Skånland 1969: 67-68. Also Vésteinsson 2000: 118-119.

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Removing the relics from the altar of a church means that the church is deconsecrated.

St Þorlákur's aim was not to achieve absolute power over churches and church property, but to abolish the absolute ownership that laymen had had over churches before. In his effort he tried to make sure that the churches were properly endowed, the result of which was that many became *staðir*. He claimed control over church property and the right to give the churches away as fiefs.

2.2.3 Bishop Páll and the register of churches

The chronicle of Bishop Páll (1195-1211), *Páls saga biskups*, tells the tale of how he had all the churches in his diocese counted as well as the number of priests needed to serve them. The reason was that he was concerned about the well being of his flock and wished to make sure that there would never be a shortage of priests in the diocese. The churches counted 220 and there were 290 priests needed to serve them.⁵⁹

Sveinbjörn Rafnsson has argued that there were not so much pious reasons behind this counting as the benefit for the administration of the diocese. He suggests that what prompted this counting was the tax Pope Innocentius III passed on all clerics on December 31st 1199 to pay for his crusades to the Holy land. Bishop Páll would probably have received a demand for this tax in spring or summer of 1200 and made the register probably soon thereafter. Rafnsson suggests that it was made after the death of King Sverre in 1202 but no later than 1203. He bases his conclusion on the fact that Bishop Jón of Garðar in Greenland stayed in Iceland at Skálholt in the winter of 1202-1203 after which he then left for Norway and for Rome. Rafnsson suggests that Bishop Jón might have carried the tax from Greenland and Iceland to Rome. A similar register of churches in Greenland is preserved, and Rafnsson believes that register to be the work of Bishop Jón of Garðar.⁶⁰

If we look aside from the tax theory, it is still likely that the reason behind the church register was administration and oversight over the diocese. In which case it would be natural to assume that the register had been written down in the early years of Bishop Páll's episcopate when the new bishop was himself getting an oversight over his diocese. That the two bishops sat in Skálholt for an entire winter probably resulted in exchanged ideas and ways of practice. Perhaps the practicality of knowing exactly how many priests were needed

⁵⁹ *Biskupa sögur* II: 313.

⁶⁰ Rafnsson 1993: 82-89.

and at which churches was one of the ideas shared. In any case it is probable that the register dates from no later than 1203.

The result of bishop Páll's counting and estimates is a register of churches and their staff within the Skálholt diocese. From my point of view the register is an example of how the Church was organized and systematized on the local level in Iceland. Taking into consideration that the register only lists churches with the obligation to provide full service, i.e. mass and office it will be used as a reference in the further elaboration of this organization.

2.3 The charters

Before discussing the organization of the major churches within Skálholt diocese it is necessary to analyse the sources, in this case the so-called *máldagi* or charters. As mentioned above the charters were preserved at both the cathedral and at the individual churches. Over the centuries a number of charters and cadastres were lost due to fires and other catastrophes.

As the vellum on which the charters were written got older and illegible, they would be copied onto new parchment. The procedure was that the old charter and the copy should be read together in front of witnesses and then prominent men attested to the authenticity of these copies with their signatures.

It is important to keep in mind that the contents of the charters were accumulated over time. The church might have received a part of land or specific rights of usage and these would then be added at the time of the donation or during the next visitation. Some additions to the charters might simply be extra information like how many masses should be sung at the church, or to whom the church was dedicated, and even how many priests and deacons were necessary at the church so that the obligated service could be preformed. Especially in the case of the dedication and obligations it is unlikely that these were novelties.

In this paper I will discuss the number of priests and other clerics at the major churches as well as the number of churches and chapels served. These are the kind of information we find in the charters, although not for all the churches. Furthermore, although most churches have more than one charter in which this information is revealed, for some churches the first charter to divulge the number of clerics in residence, or churches served, is from the cadaster of Bishop Vilchin in 1397.

For the most part there is consistency between different charters over a space of a few centuries, but there are a few exceptions. Out of 86 churches⁶¹ in Skálholt diocese that I studied, only the churches at Bær, Breiðabólstaður in Steingrímsfjörður, and Tröllatunga in Steingrímsfjörður had charters with different information about the number of clergy at the church. At Tröllatunga the reduction from two clerics to one seems to have taken place sometime during the episcopate of Bishop Árni Helgason (1304-1320). At Bær it was in the latter half of the 14th century and at Breiðabólstaður sometime between 1286 and 1397.⁶²

The church at Höfðabrekka suffered a similar fate although this is not registered in the charters, but rather in a narrative source.⁶³ The church at Stafholt probably suffered a permanent reduction in the number of clerics in the 15th century. This is, however, not evident from the charters as the older charters all agree upon the number of clerics while the younger charters say nothing about the number of clerics.

Most of the charters, which include information about clerics and subordinate churches, are from the 13th and 14th centuries, but only a handful of charters are from the 12th century. When the overall stability of the information given in the charters is taken into consideration, it must be deemed probable that there had not been much change from the early 13th century at least.

2.3.1 The charters of Breiðabólstaður church in Fljótsdalur

The charters of Breiðabólstaður are an example of attested copies and accumulation of inventory and property over time. They can therefore also serve to better our understanding of the charters in general.

The oldest charter (A) is preserved in the cadaster of Bjarni Marteinsson from 1601 in a section that is believed to contain charters from Bishop Jón Halldórsson (1322-1339). We know that the church at Breiðabólstaður was destroyed in a storm on Saturday before Easter 1326, March 22nd. A new church had to be built and consecrated and the charter was probably renewed on that occasion. This means that if the charter is from the episcopate of Bishop Jón, it was probably renewed in 1327 at the earliest.

The editor of **DI II** dates the charter to 1332 on the grounds that Bishop Jón consecrated a priest in Eystra Skarð that year. He would then have gone on his visitation

⁶¹ These were all full obligation churches with at least one priest in residence. Subordinate churches are not included in this number.

⁶² Bps.A.II.1: 45v-46r, 60v, 89v-90v, 101r-101v, 105v-106r; Bps.A.II.2: 49v-51r, 75r-75v; DI.II.52, 132, 230: 119, 261, 408; DI.IV.162, 228: 130-131, 191.

⁶³ Bps.A.II.1: 9r-9v; *Biskupa sögur II*: 166-168.

rounds in the district.⁶⁴ I believe that this is incorrect as the consecration of a new church would have prompted the bishop's visits and it is very unlikely that there had not been a consecrated church in Breiðabólstaður between 1326 and 1332. I will therefore suggest that the bishop had travelled to Breiðabólstaður to consecrate the new church in ca. 1327.

The second charter (B) was preserved at the church in Breiðabólstaður and on February 12th 1412 it had been copied and attested. Jón Þorkelsson, editor of **DI III** dates *B* to the episcopate of Bishop Oddgeir (1365-1381) and suggests that the visitation had been in 1371. He bases his arguments on the grounds that the cadaster from Hítardalur, *Hítardalsbók* (DI III nr. 182), contains a comparison of the text in the cadaster of Bishop Vilchin and a cadaster believed to be from Bishop Oddgeir. The text of *B* and that of the charter in *Hítardalsbók* cadaster is the same according to Þorkelsson, who compared the two.

The third charter (C) is in the cadaster of Bishop Vilchin (1394-1405) and is from 1397 (**DN IV** nr. 76). The fourth charter (D) is obviously the youngest charter. The charter lists all the previously mentioned properties at the beginning, but there is no information about the inventory of the church, contrary to what we find in the other charters, with one exception, the arm bone of St Jón is mentioned, probably because of its value. *D* is preserved in the cadaster of Bjarni Marteinsson in a section with charters believed to be from Bishop Magnús Eyjólfsson (1477-1490). It is printed in **DI VI** nr. 314 and the timeframe “[around 1480]” is given there, but a more accurate approach would be to say between 1477-1490.⁶⁵

B and *C* are practically identical except that in *C* there is a clause at the back where additions to the church's properties to that which “old charters” show has been written down. This suggests that when *C* was written *B* had been laid aside. After all the charter was transcribed in 1412 due to the poor condition of the vellum or only 15 years after *C* was written. In *B*, however, Konungsmúli is said to be owned by the church in Breiðabólstaður, where *C* only writes half of Konungsmúli. This addition must have happened after 1397 when *C* was written and before 1412 when *B* was transcribed.

The charters reveal who gave the latter half of Konungsmúli to the church, Hafliði priest at Breiðabólstaður. In a ruling about the boundaries between the properties of the church in Holt in Eyjafjallasveit and the church in Breiðabólstaður from 1363, Hafliði Magnússon is named as priest in Breiðabólstaður, and it is probable that this is the same man.

⁶⁴ DI.II: 67676

⁶⁵ *Ný jarðabók*: 16-17; Bps.A.II.1: 14v-15r, 125r-125v; Bps.A.II.2: 21v-22v; DI.II.431: 687-689; DI.III.157, 182 & 223: 188-189, 214-219, 268-270; DI.IV.76: 81-83; DI.VI.314: 332; *Isl. Annaler*: 205, 346, 396.

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That leaves us with four medieval charters from perhaps 1327 to 1490 at the latest. As we can see not much has changed over a space of roughly 160 years. We can also be fairly sure that not much had changed from the 13th century or as far back in time as the latter half of the 12th century. The most interesting charter is *B* because we know what the original charter contained by the year 1397 by comparison to *C*.

The charter contains the following information:

1. Dedication of the church and land owned by the church.
2. Stock owned by the church, i.e. cattle, horses, and sheep.
3. Food owned by the church: butter, fish, *skyr*,⁶⁶ and meat.
4. Inventory.
5. Tolls from farms (some which had churches or chapels at least later if not then)
6. The armreliquary of St Jón.
7. Extra inventory.
8. The number of tithe paying farms; in the same paragraph.
9. The obligation to house three priests and two deacons at Breiðabólstaður.
10. The gift of Hafliði the priest.
11. Extra inventory.

Jóns saga ins helga mentions two occasions on which the hand of St Jón could have been translated. The first occurs in 1198 December 14th-16th when Bishop Brandr (1163-1201) had the bones of St Jón (1106-1121) and those of Bishop Björn (1147-1162) translated, washed, and laid down in a dome inside the church. According to *Jóns saga ins helga*, the head was washed separately and the water was saved for religious purposes. Barely a year and a half later, Bishop Brandr had the bones of St Jón translated again, this time on March 3rd 1200. Later in the same year his sanctity was accepted at the Alþing with a mass dedicated to him on the day of his transit, April 23rd.

The annals do not mention the translation in 1198, but in 1200 his acceptance as a saint in the Alþing and the translation are the first events that are noted by that year. *Lögmannsannáll* writes about St Jón's translation at the year 1199. Einar Hafliðason who is believed to be the writer of *Lögmannsannáll*, was a priest at Höskuldsstaðir and the *officialis* in Hólar diocese. It is not unlikely that older annals, chronicles and documents from Hólar existed in the see's archive which Einar would have had access to. He might have found the reference to the first translation there.

⁶⁶ Skyr is made from skimmed milk fermented with bacteria similar to the process of making yoghurt. It is rich in protein and calcium but contains nearly no fat and little carbohydrate. It is dry in consistency and keeps for a long time. Skyr is part of the traditional Icelandic kitchen.

In the introduction to *Jóns saga ins helga*, by Peter Foote, all four known relics are listed: 1) The head of St Jón encased in silver with gilded miter decorated with precious stones. 2) The arm from the elbow with the hand, likewise encased in a silver reliquary, which was decorated with gilded wire and precious stones. Both these relics were in the Hólar cathedral. 3) A piece of St Jón's bone that Bishop Lárentius (1324-1331) had inserted into a golden ring and referred to as his consecration gold. 4) The relic that was kept at Breiðabólstaður.

Foote says that it is unknown when the church in Breiðabólstaður received the relic, only that it is first mentioned in a charter from 1332.⁶⁷ The problem is that neither is the date of the charter exact nor is it written by only one bishop; it is a compilation as mentioned above. Given the fact that we know of two translations of St. Jón it is not unlikely that the church at Breiðabólstaður received the relic in AD 1200 when bishop Jón was accepted as a saint. Breiðabólstaður was after all his ancestral home and place of birth, the place where he lived and served as priest before he was elected as the first bishop of Hólar in 1106. It is understandable that the only known relic apart from those kept at Hólar had found its way to Breiðabólstaður.⁶⁸

If we then assert that the clause containing the information about the relic was added to the charter in 1200, everything listed before must be older. The implication is that the charter stems from the 11th century. Of special interest are the obligations on farms to pay tolls to the church in Breiðabólstaður. The explanation has been that those who held Breiðabólstaður in the 11th and 12th century were powerful. The church had been built early and had probably had a superior status to other churches in the area from the beginning. The only exception is the church at Oddi, which is near by.

I shall come back to the tolls in chapter 2.4.1 below.

2.3.2 The Reykholt charters and the number of clerics vs vestments

The *Reykholtsmáldagi* is the oldest preserved original document in Iceland, and invaluable when it comes to understanding how the charters were produced. It is written in 6 different hands, each adding another clause to the charter. Jón Sigurðsson argued that the first clause was written no later than during the episcopate of St Þorlákur (1178-1193), the second clause in 1206 when Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241) took control over the *staðir* in Reykholt, the third

⁶⁷ *Biskupa sögur Ia: cccxv.*

⁶⁸ *Biskupa sögur Ib: 255-256, 269-278; Biskupa sögur Ia: cccxiv-cccxv; Isl. Annaler: xxi-xxiv, 22, 62, 121, 181, 254, 269, 397-398; DI.III: 813; Biskupa sögur III: 440.*

clause in autumn 1224 when Snorri married Hallveig Ormsdóttir, and his daughter Ingibjörg married Gissur Þorvaldsson (1209-1268). The fourth clause, which contains the churches rights to whales and driftwood on different beaches, is undated by Jón but he believes the clause to be from the time of Bishop Árni Þorláksson (1269-1298). On the other side of the vellum there is the *dedicatio* of the church, which is said to be to the Apostle Peter, St Dionysius, and St Barbara, and a list of calfskins that have been given to the church by Snorri Sturluson, his daughter Ingibjörg, priest Þorarinn, and Vermundur deacon. Jón dates the latter clause to 1224 and the first to the episcopate of Árni Þorláksson (1269-1298).⁶⁹

Jón Sigurðsson and Árni Magnússon both agree that there is obvious age difference between clause 1 and 2. Comparing the two clauses, the language and orthography of the first clause are more archaic than the second, which has been dated to 1206, with good reason. I have difficulties with accepting that such a great difference could be seen in two clauses written just two decades apart. When the first clause is compared to other charters, like that of the church Undir Hrauni, which has been dated to 1120, there seems to be a striking likeness.⁷⁰ The charter needs to be studied further, and preferably compared to other charters from the early 12th century. I would suggest that the first part of the *Reykholtsmáldagi* was written during the episcopate of Bishop Þorlákur (1118-1130).

The charters of Reykholt do not disclose how many clerics there should be at the church so we have to use other methods. Benedikt Eyþórsson calculated the number of clergy at the church in Reykholt by using information about vestments owned by the church. He examined the charters of other churches where the number of clerics as well as the inventory of vestments are known.⁷¹

The charters of Reykholt mention complete vestments (*messuklæði*) and tunics (*sloppr*), as well as various parts of the vestments like chasubles (*kápr*), dalmatics (*dalmatík*), and amices (*hökull*). The *sloppr*, from the old English word *slop*, originated in North-Europe in the 11th century and is first mentioned in Iceland in 1179. As Eyþórsson points out, these were only part of the vestments for minor clerics but by the 15th century it looks as if the priests should use them as well for at that time a priest could be fined 2 *eyrir* for not owning a tunic.⁷²

⁶⁹ DI I: 279-280, 348-351, 466-480.

⁷⁰ DI I nr. 26.

⁷¹ Eyþórsson 2002: 32-36.

⁷² Bps.A.II.1: 44v-45v; Bps.A.II.2: 44v-45r; DI.IV.134: 119-120; Eyþórsson 2002: 33-36; Taranger 1890: 345-346.

The tunics from the charters are nondescript and might therefore both correspond to the *subtile*, and the surplice. A *subtile* is the sacerdotal upper vestment of the subdeacon corresponding to the dalmatic of the deacon. According to Catholic Encyclopedia, the tunic was called by various names in medieval times: *tunicella*, *dalmatica minor*; *tunica stricta*, *subdiaconale*, *alba*, and *subtile* which was mostly the name used in Germany. The name *subtil* is found in Icelandic charters although *sloppr* is more common. The surplice is a large-sleeved tunic of half-length, made of fine linen or cotton, and worn by all the clergy. The surplice is the vestment most used; as choir dress, a vestment for processions, for the lower clergy, as well as the vestment worn by the priest when administering the sacraments, giving blessings, etc.⁷³

Another item found in the charters are the *kantarakápur*, which are the copes worn by canons. Copes and Chasubles differ from each other only in one thing; in the chasuble the straight edges were sewn together in front while in the cope they were left open. Both are frequently listed in the charters probably because they were often of very exquisite material and expensive. It is, however, not always clear whether an item in the inventory is a cope or a chasuble.⁷⁴

Eyþórsson calculated that on average a church owned 1,1 tunics, copes and chasubles per cleric, also that the ratio between clerics and complete vestments used for mass was 1,6 vestments per cleric. His calculation suggested that there must have been three priests, one deacon, and one subdeacon at the church in Reykholt.⁷⁵

2.3.3 The charters of Oddi and the clergy at the church

By using the same reasoning as for Reykholt above, it is possible to calculate how many clerics there would have been at Oddi church. The oldest charter of Oddi, from 1270, does not contain an inventory so we must turn to younger sources. There are two charters from the 14th century and both contain an inventory. In the older charter there are 12 complete vestments, 3 amices, 2 dalmatics, 2 *subtiles*, 10 chasubles, and 4 tunics. The chasubles and tunics indicate between 12 and 13 clerics at the church. The vestments, however, indicate between 7 and 8 clerics. In the charter of Bishop Vilchin there are 11 vestments, 11 amices, 9

⁷³ Information about Tunic and Subtil found at <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15087a.htm>, information about Surplice found at <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14343d.htm>.

⁷⁴ Information about Chasubles found at <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03639a.htm>, information about Copes found at <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04351a.htm>.

⁷⁵ Eyþórsson 2002: 32-36.

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cofes, 3 chasubles, 4 dalmatics, 9 tunics, and 3 stoles with gloves, indicating that the number of clergy at the church had been around 18 which does not seem probable.

It is more probable that the true number is derived from the ratio of either vestment alone. 9 tunics suggest 8 members of the clergy, 11 chasubles and copes suggest the number 10, and finally 11 vestments suggest a number between 6 and 7. I have left the *subtiles* and the dalmatics out of these calculations but they are important all the same as they tell us that there were both deacons and subdeacons at the church in Oddi.

The largest church and the one with the highest number of clerics in Hólar diocese is Grenjaðarstaðir. A charter from 1318 gives both the number of clerics at the church and the inventory so it is interesting to compare the two *staðir*. Grenjaðarstaðir owned in total 11 vestments for mass, 2 dalmatics, 8 amices, and 8 chasubles and copes. When the ratio of 1,6 is applied to the vestments we get the number 6,87. The 8 chasubles and copes indicate a slightly higher number, or 7,2.

We know, however, how many members of the clergy there should be at the church, or 2 minor clerics, 1 sub deacon, 1 deacon, and 2-3 priests, bringing the total number of clergy at the church to 6-7. Whether there should be two or three priests at Grenjaðarstaðir depended on the annex church in Reykir according to the charter of Grenjaðarstaðir, for when there was no priest at Reykir three priests were needed at Grenjaðarstaðir. It would therefore be safe to assume that there were 8 members of the clergy in Oddi although the number might vary from 7 to 9. It is probable that there were 3-4 priests at the church, 2 deacons, 1 subdeacon, and 1-2 minor clerics.⁷⁶

2.4 Which were the major churches?

A major church (*ecclesia majores*) should have a large area to serve and a number of subordinate churches and chapels. Therefore we would expect to find many clerics in residence in a major church. We might also be expected to find a school for priests, teaching young boys to read and write in Latin as well as in the vernacular. It is here that we put the charters to good use as well as the narrative sources. It is from the charters that we get the information about the staff at each church.

According to Jón Viðar Sigurðsson there were probably 16 major churches in the diocese of Skálholt, some of which were layman churches. To determine which churches

⁷⁶ Eypórssón 2002: 32-36; **DI.II.34** & 252 & 434: 86-88, 431-434, 690-692; Bps.A.II.1: 16r-16v, 55r-55v; Bps.A.II.2: 17v-19v; Bps.B.III.3: 6r-8v; **DI.IV.67**: 69-76.

qualified Sigurðsson specified that a major church should have at least three clerics in residence, an idea I have borrowed from him in my research. The 16 churches that Sigurðsson listed were: Valþjófsstaðir, Rauðalækur, Svínafell, Holt, Breiðabólstaður in Fljótshlíð, Oddi, Haukadalur, Reykholt, Bær, Garðar, Gilsbakki, Stafholt, Staðastaður, Skarð on Skarðsströnd, Vatnsfjörður, and Breiðabólstaður in Steingrímsfjörður. Sigurðsson found no information on the number of clerics for four churches, Valþjófsstaðir, Oddi, Haukadalur and Svínafell. He says, however, that it is unlikely that they were not among the major churches.⁷⁷

Sigurðsson is not quite right, though, in claiming that no information about the number of clerics exists. For both Valþjófsstaðir and Haukadalur there are 14th century charters that clearly state how many clerics there should be at each church.⁷⁸

In my research I have followed two basic guidelines when finding the churches that qualified as major churches: 1) The church should be listed in the church register of Bishop Páll from 1202/3. 2) There should be at least two priests and a deacon at the church.

There was one *staðir* in Skálholt diocese at which there should be 8 clerics, namely Oddi. It has been argued here that at Oddi at least 3 and probably 4 priests were in residence, two deacons and a subdeacon and a minor cleric.

There were three *staðir* in Skálholt diocese at which there should be 5 clerics:

1. Breiðabólstaður in Fljótshlíð with 3 priests and 2 deacons.⁷⁹
2. Stafholt with 3 priests, 1 deacon, and 1 minor cleric at the church.⁸⁰
3. Reykholt with 3 priests, 1 deacon and 1 subdeacon.⁸¹

The older charter for Stafholt which has been dated to roughly 1143 adds that if there happened to be a priest at the annex church in Hjarðarholt there should be only two priests there. The younger charter, believed to be from Bishop Gyrðr (1350-1360) does not include the information about Hjarðarholt. Hjarðarholt became independent in the 15th century.⁸²

There were 13 *staðir* and 10 layman churches that had four members of the clergy in residence. These were:

⁷⁷ Sigurðsson 2005: 183-185.

⁷⁸ Bps.A.II.2: 83r-84v; **DI.II.408**

⁷⁹ Bps.A.II.2: 22r; DI.IV.76 & 315: 81, 333-334; DI.II.431: 688; Bps.A.II.1: 14v-15r, 125v; DI.III.223: 268-270.

⁸⁰ Júlíusdóttir 2002: 32.

⁸¹ Eyþórsson 2002: 32-36.

⁸² Bps.A.II.1: 44r, 66r; Júlíusdóttir 2002: 40-41.

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- Vallanes with 2 priests and 2 deacons.⁸³
- Staðastaður with 2 priests, 1 deacon, and 1 minor cleric.⁸⁴
- Breiðabólstaður in Steingrímsfjörður with 2 priests and 2 deacons, at least until the late 13th century. According to the charter of 1397, 1 priest and 1 deacon should be ‘fed’ at the church, which may mean that the other priest and deacon had become redundant.⁸⁵
- Valþjófstaður with 2 priests and 2 deacons. The church was established as *staðir* in 1306. It had former been a layman church, possessing only half of the farm.⁸⁶
- Höfðabrekka with 2 priests and 2 deacons until 1179 after which there were only required to be 1 priest and 1 deacon at the church. According to *Þorláks saga B* version, a storm had destroyed two churches, one of which had been at Höfðabrekka, so the owner Jón Loptsson had built a new church which should be dedicated during the visit of St Þorlákur.⁸⁷ Some time before 1180 a flood in the glacial river Höfðá, now Múlakvísl, had destroyed many of the farms which were subject to Höfðabrekka and two where there were churches. This meant both reduced tithe and income for the clerics at the church. This kind of catastrophe must have been a recurrent event as the flood is tied to the eruptions in the sub glacial volcano Katla⁸⁸ and in 1660 Höfðabrekka was utterly destroyed in such a flood never to be rebuilt.⁸⁹
- There were three priests and one deacon at the church in Bær, but in the charter from 1397 the number of clergy at the church has dropped down to two priests and a deacon.⁹⁰

The following 16 *staðir* and layman churches all had two priests and one deacon in residence: Kálfafell in Fellahverfi, Rauðilækur in Öraefi, Kálfafell in Síða, Holt in

⁸³ Bps.A.II.2: 82r.

⁸⁴ Bps.A.II.1: 67v-68r, 104v-105r; DI.II.45: 114.

⁸⁵ Bps.A.II.1: 60v, 105v-106r; DI.II.132: 261; Bps.A.II.2: 50v-51r; DI.IV.162: 130-131.

⁸⁶ *Isl. Annaler*: 226, 340; Stefánsson 2000: 46-51; Bps.A.II.2: 84r.

⁸⁷ Bps.A.II.1: 9r-9v; *Biskupa sögur* II: 166-168.

⁸⁸ Katla has erupted around 20 times since settlers came to Iceland, destroying settlements with both ash and water. Time between eruptions is everything from 13 years to 80 years. There have been 15 floods in the area of Höfðabrekka.

⁸⁹ *Biskupa sögur* II: 166-168.

⁹⁰ Bps.A.II.1: 45v-46r; Bps.A.II.2: 75r-75v.

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Eyjafjallasveit, Hrúni, Hrepphólar, Reynivellir, Gilsbakki, Heydalir, Bjarnarnes, Dalur, Skarð in Landsveit, Vellir, Garðar in Akranes, Skarð on Skarðsströnd, and Vatnsfjörður.⁹¹

I shall also discuss the church in Haukadalur, a layman church, even though the only charter that mentions the number of clergy at the church demands only one priest and one deacon in residence. The charter has been tentatively dated to 1331. However, in light of the many chapels and the two churches the priest was supposed to service in addition to the church in Haukadalur it is probable that this is not a complete account of the real situation.

Another indication that there might have been other priests at the church is the number of vestments owned by the church as the same charter lists 5 complete vestments for mass, 3 amices, 1 *messuserkur*, which is probably a surplice, 1 chasuble, 5 copes for canthers, 2 dalmatics and 4 tunics. As discussed above, one expects to find three to four clerics at the church judging from the number of vestments.⁹² In the table below the number of clerics for Haukadalur is set at 3.

⁹¹ Bps.A.II.1: 2v-3r, 4v-6r, 12r-12v, 13r-13v, 18r-18v, 21r-22r, 30v-31v, 53r-54v, 124v-125r, 129r-129v, 132v; Bps.A.II.2: 3r-5r, 14r-14v, 15r-15v, 43r-43v, 45v-46r, 52r-53r, 77r-77v, 79v-80r, 92-93r, 94v-96r; DI I nr. 44; DI II nr. 33, 384, 405, 423, 425, 441, 495, 500, and 505; DI IV nr. 23, 166, and 236.

⁹² DI.II. 408: 667-668; Bps.A.II.1: 22v-23r.

Table 2.1 – The most prestigious *staðir* and layman churches⁹³

Names	Church	Priests & clerics	Staðir
Oddi	c. 1080	8	Y
Breiðabólstaður in Fljótshlíð	c.1080	5	Y
Stafholt	c. 1140	5	Y
Reykholt	1082-1118	5	Y
Breiðabólstaður in Steingrímsfjörður	aq 1181-97	4	Y
Valbjófsstaðir	aq 1190's	4	1306
Staðastaður	c. 1140-70	4	Y
Bær	1030-1049	4	N
Höfðabrekka	aq 1178	4	N
Vallanes	aq 1202	4	Y
Rauðalækur	c.1070*	3	Y
Haukadalur	1082-1118	3	N
Vatnsfjörður	aq 1150	3	16 th cent.
Holt	aq 1170's	3	Y
Skarð in Landsveit	aq 1185	3	N
Vellir	aq 1185	3	N
Hruni	aq 1195	3	Y
Skarð on Skarðsströnd	1148-1201	3	N
Dalur	aq 1202	3	N
Gilsbakki	aq 1202	3	Y
Garðar	aq 1202	3	15 th cent.
Kálfafell in Fellahverfi	aq 1202	3	Y
Kálfafell in Síða	aq 1202	3	Y
Hrepphólar	aq 1202	3	Y
Bjarnarnes	aq 1202	3	16 th cent.
Reynivellir	aq 1202	3	Y
Heydalir	aq 1202	3	N
Svínafell	1011	3	Y

Svínafell was almost certainly among the major *staðir* in Iceland in the 12th century, but has no charter and was abandoned before 1300. That being said it is unlikely that there were fewer priests at Svínafell than two and almost certain that there would have been at least one deacon. I have therefore taken the liberty to list Svínafell with 3 members of the clergy in the table.

As we saw above, a total of 17 *staðir* and 11 layman churches might qualify as major churches. To better understand the status or the role they played in their vicinity and possibly

⁹³ Column 2, Church established, is based mostly on Vésteinsson 2000: 38-39, 96-98. Churches said to be established “bf 1202” are listed in the church register but not in Vésteinsson as built before 1200. Vésteinsson argues that evidence of a priest living at a farm is indirect evidence for a church already being built at that farm. He does not include Bær church in that table, which would suggest that a church had been built in Bær during the stay of Bishop Rúðólfr (see below) in 1030-1049.

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also on a larger scale, it is important to look at how many churches and chapels they served and how large the tithe area was. This is best described in a table.⁹⁴

Table 2.2 - The major churches by number of churches and chapels served

Names	Churches served	Chapels served	Priests	Minor Clerics	Tithe from:
Reykholt	5	2	3	2	37
Stafholt	4	5	3	2	34 then 24
Höfðabrekka	4		2	2	Varied
Garðar	4		2	1	35
Skarð on Skarðsströnd	3	5	2	1	26 then 23
Kálfafell in Fellahverfi	3	4	2	1	15
Breiðabólstaður in Fljótshlíð	3	3	3	2	26
Dalur	3	3	2	1	4
Oddi	3		4	4	Region then 24
Vellir	3		2	1	11
Hruni	2	9	2	1	14
Valbjófsstaðir	2	6	2	2	11
Haukadalur	2	5	2	1	11
Rauðalækur	2	3	2	1	10
Gilsbakki	2	2	2	1	14 then 6
Bjarnarnes	2	1	2	1	5
Hreppólar	2	1	2	1	8
Heydalir	2		2	1	Region
Reynivellir	2		2	1	No information
Staðastaður	1	5	2	2	43 then 42
Kálfafell in Síða	1	4	2	1	7 then 6
Holt	1	3	2	1	9
Vallanes	1	3	2	2	Region
Skarð in Landsveit	1	2	2	1	7-6
Breiðabólstaður in Steingrímsfjörður	1	1	2	2	Region
Bær	1		3	1	8
Svínafell			2	1	No information
Vatnsfjörður		2	2	1	16

⁹⁴ Bps.A.II.1: 1v, 2v-3r, 4v-6r, 9r-9v, 12r-13v, 14v-15r, 18r-19r, 21r-23r, 26r, 30v-31v, 39r-39v, 45v-46r, 47r-48v, 50v-51r, 53r-54v, 67v-68r, 76v-77r, 104v-105r, 106r-107r, 115v, 124v-125r, 129r-129v, 132v; Bps.A.II.2: 1v-2r, 3r-5r, 14r-15v, 21v-22v, 50v-51r, 70r-70v, 75r-75v, 77r-77v, 79v-80r, 81v, 83r-84v, 92v-93r, 95r-96r; Biskupa sögur II: 166-168; Isl. Annaler: 118, 205, 206, 214, 226, 281, 340, 346, 359-360, 389, 408, 423; Jarðabók I; Jarðabók I: 247, 349, 365, 368; Jarðabók II: 233-250; Jarðabók II: 233-276; Jarðabók IV: 190-194, 321, 324-325, 347, 359; Jarðabók V: 97, 110, 120, 122, 127, 131; Jarðabók VII: 387; Ný jarðabók: 5-6, 12, 23-24, 42, 45, 145; Björn Lárusson 1967: 326-327, 332-333; DI.I.44, 46, 52, 56-57, 113, 148, 150: 244-250, 257, 266-267, 417-418, 594, 597; DI.II.32, 45, 49, 217, 223, 229, 398, 405, 408, 423, 425-426, 431, 441-442, 480, 494-496, 500, 502: 83, 114, 117, 396, 403-404, 407, 650-651, 664-668, 680, 682-684, 687-689, 695-697, 741, 770-772, 775-780; DI.III.29, 223: 70-71, 268-270; DI.IV.20, 23-26, 70-72, 76, 140-143, 161-163, 166, 198, 208, 215, 236-237: 39-40, 42-46, 78-79, 81-83, 116-118, 129-135, 157-159, 165-172, 175-177, 194-196; Nielsson 1950: 9, 14, 38, 40-42, 49, 55, 57, 59, 63, 67, 82, 86, 122-123, 125, 130, 133, 146, 166, 198, 208; Eyþórsson 2002: 50-51, 53-58; Júlíusdóttir 2002: 31-33, 39-41; Rafnsson 1993: 100-101, 104-117; Stefánsson 2000: 46-51, 129, 272; Vésteinsson 2000: 72 n. 17.

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It is a bit surprising to see that the church at Bær, with three priests and a deacon in residence, only seems to have had one church to serve and no chapels. But as with Svínafell church, just because we know of no other churches or chapels, it does not necessarily mean that there were none.

Hungr vaka mentions a certain Rúðólfr⁹⁵ bishop, “which name some said was Úlfr and originated from Rouen in England.”⁹⁶ He was the fourth missionary bishop who came to Iceland after the conversion in AD 999, and apparently spent 19 years in Iceland and lived at Bær.

In *Landnámabók* he is said to have left three monks behind in Bær when he went away,⁹⁷ but *Hungr vaka* does not mention them. Rúðólfr was in Bær between 1030 and 1049 and left to become the abbot of Abingdon in England, where he died in 1052.⁹⁸ This is the first mention of a religious life at Bær and is probably the reason behind the number of clerics at Bær 200 years later.

There is no known church and only two chapels that were served from Vatnsfjörður church. Vatnsfjörður church had three clerics in residence and as with Bær church, we must wonder why the other priests were necessary. We might explain the need for a second priest at the church in Vatnsfjörður by the long distance to the church from some of the farms which sought service to Vatnsfjörður. Even if we accept that all the farms were accessible from the see, it might still have been deemed prudent to house two priests at Vatnsfjörður so that one might travel to parishioners in need, while the other could provide service at home.

2.4.1 Tolls as indication of an early establishment

Six of the major churches received annual tolls from a number of farms, as can be seen below, four had been established no later than the second half of the 11th century. It is also probable that one or both of the others had been established before the 12th century although we have no evidence thereof, as it does not seem likely that a part of the country not easily accessible from other regions should be without a church for 150 years after the acceptance of the Christian faith in the Alþing.

⁹⁵ In *Íslendingabók*, by Ari the wise, he is named Hróðólfr, but Ari says nothing more than that he stayed for 19 years. In *Landnámabók* he is likewise called Hróðólfr. (*ÍF* I: 18, 65.)

⁹⁶ *Biskupa sögur III*: 12. ...er sumir kalla at Úlfr hétu ok væri kynjaðr af Rúðu ór Englandi. Úlfr is said to be from Rouen in England, which is logical when kept in mind that Normandy and England were the same kingdom from 1066.

⁹⁷ *ÍF*. I: 65. En er Hróðólfr byskup fór brott ór Bæ, þar er hann hafði búit, þá váru þar eptir munkar þrír. But when Hróðólfr left Bær, where he had lived, he left behind three monks.

⁹⁸ Vésteinsson 2000: 20; *Adam of Bremen*. II:lvii and II:lxiv

Þorláksson pointed out that Sæmundur the wise was one of the main architects of the organization of the Church in 12th century Iceland, what with the passing of the tithe laws and the Christian laws. Sæmundur also ran a school in Oddi by 12th century standards and there is reason to believe that he dedicated at least part of his time to support or perform pastoral work within a territory much larger than the later parish of Oddi. But Þorláksson hypothesis that Sæmundur had used his position to secure a large tithe area to Oddi doesn't fit with what we know of Sæmundur.⁹⁹

Vésteinsson argues that Sæmundur probably could not have secured the church in Oddi a large tithe area as the tithe laws were not the comprehensive piece of legislation that we know from the 13th century manuscripts. Furthermore, the reason behind the size of the tithe area might just as likely have been due to the seniority of Oddi church among the churches in the region.¹⁰⁰

Table 2.3 – *Staðir* and layman churches that received tolls¹⁰¹

Names	Church established	Staðir	Tithe
Rauðalækur	c.1070	Y	10
Breiðabólstaður in Fljótshlíð	c.1080	Y	26
Oddi	c. 1080	Y	Region - 24
Haukadalur	1082-1118	N	11
Vatnsfjörður	aq 1150	16 th cent.	16
Breiðabólstaður in Steingrímsfjörður	aq 1181-97	Y	Region

It is true that toll payments to churches could be seen as evidence of the strong position of those who 'owned' the churches, but there is also another way of looking at the tolls. Before there was a tithe system it is probable that the churches would have received some income from people who sought service from them on regular basis. This could also have been more common where the 'owner' could enforce his will upon others. But when we look at the farms that pay tolls to Oddi church and Breiðabólstaður church, we quickly see that not every farm in the 'parish' of the church paid a toll to the church. Furthermore there are a number of farms which later, if not in the 11th century, had churches, like that of Skarð in Landsveit.

If we focus on that which was paid for, we quickly see that it must have been some sort of religious service. Whether the service rendered was to sing mass for the souls of some

⁹⁹ Þorláksson 1983: 83.

¹⁰⁰ Vésteinsson 2000: 71-72 n.

¹⁰¹ Column 2, Church established, is based mostly on Vésteinsson 2000: 38-39, 96-98.

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persons on the anniversary of their deaths, or if it was a payment for a son of the household who was taught at the church to become a priest, or if it was simply a primitive version of the tithe system.

2.4.2 Ordained chieftains in the 11th and 12th centuries and their churches¹⁰²

I want to discuss the ordained chieftains that we find at some of the churches, not because I want to emphasize that there was a connection between the major churches and the upper echelons of society, as that goes without saying. I find such a connection of little surprise as churches did not get built by themselves, someone had to both set aside a piece of land where the church could be built, had to pay for both the food and lodgings of those who built the church, and if they were hired hands as opposed to people from the household, had to pay their wages as well. Once the church was built, wax for candles, wine for the Communion, and a number of other costly things were needed as well. This had to come out of someone's pockets and understandably those who had the means built the churches.

Whether the builders of churches did so out of the honest desire to celebrate the life of Jesus, the Apostles, the saints, and mostly the existence of God and the holy spirit, or whether they did so to further their advance within society has been much debated through the years.¹⁰³ Scholars within the Icelandic school of history have for the most part embraced the idea that economic reasons and political power were the main reasons behind their ancestors' eagerness to build churches and to send their sons to the continent to study to become priest. I want to try to show how once a family had devoted themselves to the Church, they had a tendency to stay with the church in much the same manner as we see that same tendencies within families today. One need only point to the current Bishop of Iceland, Karl Sigurbjörnsson, himself the son of a former Bishop of Iceland Sigurbjörn Einarsson.

According to *Kristni saga* chieftains were ordained during the episcopate of Bishop Gissur (1080-1118) one of whom was the priest Símon Jörundarson in Bær. It is not certain that Bær is the same farm as Bær in Borgarfjörður, but most scholars suppose that it probably is. In 1185 the priest Högni Þormóðsson lived at Bær but he is said to be of common birth.

¹⁰² Bps.A.II.1: 22r; **DI** I nr. 29; **DI** IV nr. 76; *Isl. Annaler*; *Biskupa sögur* I-III; *Sturlunga saga* I-II; *Sturlunga saga. Skýringar og fræði*; Rafnsson 1993: 100-101; Vésteinsson 2000; Eyþórsson 2002; Júlíusdóttir 2002.

¹⁰³ Sigurðsson 2005, 1989; Stefánsson 2002, 2000, 1978, and 1975; Hugason 2001; Vésteinsson 2000; Þorláksson 1989.

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He was also said to be wealthy so perhaps he had married the heir of Bær, a sister or the daughter of Símon. Högni had two daughters which married well, one married Eyjólfur in Stafholt and the other married priest Þórðr, son of Böðvar in Garðar. Bær has furthermore been connected with the earliest sprout of monastic life in Iceland.

At Oddi church there was first the priest Sæmundur the wise (1056-1133), that we know of. It is of course more than possible that a church had been built in Oddi prior to Sæmundur's return to Iceland. (See chapter 2.1 above.) His sons were Eyjólfur (d. 1158) who was ordained, lived in Oddi and taught among others St Þorlákur (born in 1133), and Loftur who was also a priest in Oddi. Loftur married Þóra who was the daughter of King Magnus barefoot of Norway (1093-1103). Their son was Jón in Oddi (d. 1197), father of Bishop Páll (1195-1211), Sæmundur (1154-1222) deacon in Oddi, and Ormur (d. 1218) deacon in Breiðabólstaður. Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241) was fostered in Oddi by Jón Loftsson, and later he married the daughter of Ormur in Breiðabólstaður.

Both Bishop Páll and deacon Ormur were the illegitimate sons of Jón in Oddi and Rannveig who was the sister of St Þorlákur (1178-1193). St Jón (1106-1121) from Breiðabólstaður was the second cousin of Sæmundur the wise in Oddi through Síðu-Hallur, which is probably why the deacon Ormur Jónsson lived at Breiðabólstaður. We can assume that both Ormur and Páll were taught at home in Oddi. Jón Loftsson had plans of becoming a monk at Keldur where he had had a church and a cloister house built, but died before he could realize his plans.

Bishop Páll lived at Skarð in Landsveit, where he must have served as priest, before he became bishop. His son was Loftur (d. 1261) who lived in Skarð until 1223, but ended his life as a monk.

Gissur the white who built the first church in Skálholt, was the father of Bishop Ísleifur (1056-1080). Ísleifur's sons were Bishop Gissur (1080-1118) in Skálholt and Teitur priest in Haukadalur. Gróa daughter of Bishop Ísleifur became a nun in Skálholt in her old age during the episcopate of Klængur (1152-1175). Teitur was fostered by Hallur (d. 1089) priest in Haukadalur. Both Hallur and Teitur fostered priest Ari the wise (1067-1148), and both taught priests at Haukadalur, among others Bishop Þorlákur (1118-1133). Teitur's son was Hallur electus (d. 1149), who died in Utrecht on his way to receive his consecration as bishop of Skálholt. Deacon Gissur (1181-1206) in Haukadalur, son of Hallur electus, was fostered by Bishop Þorlákur (1118-1133) in Skálholt.

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Magnús Einarsson Bishop in Skálholt (1134-1148) was the descendant of Síðu-Hallur and second cousin once removed to both Sæmundur the wise and St Jón. He was furthermore the third cousin of Hallur Teitsson in Haukadalur, whose mother was also a descendant of Síðu-Hallur.

The priests Steini Þorvarðarson in Stafholt and Ormur Koðránsón (d. 1179) in Gilsbakki were listed by Ari the wise in 1143 among the ordained chieftains in Vesturland. In 1118 Styrmir Hreinsson who lived at Gilsbakki, was one of the most powerful chieftains in Iceland. His only son Hreinn was a priest and later became an abbot at first Þingeyrar and then at Hítardalur. Hreinn and Ormur were 2nd cousins. There seems to have been both school activity at Stafholt by 12th and 13th century standards, as well as literary activity.

The son of Ari the wise, Þorgils (d. 1170) in Staðastaður, was a priest like his father.

In Reykholt there was first Þórður Sölvason priest, then his son Magnús, also priest in Reykholt. Magnús was father of Þórður priest in Reykholt and Sölvi (d. 1129) father of priest Páll in Reykholt (d. 1185) and priest Ólafur in Helgafell. Páll's son, priest Magnús was first at Helgafell and later in Reykholt (d. 1233). Later, the nephew of Snorri Sturluson and the second cousin of Magnús Pálsson twice removed, subdeacon Egill Sölmundarson (d. 1297), was in Reykholt. The presence of Snorri in Reykholt as well as the many hides he and others gave the church, as seen in the home charter (see chapter 2.3.2 above) suggests that at least in the 13th century there was literary activity at the church.

Priest Þórður Skúlason at Garðar was among ordained chieftains in 1143. His wife was the daughter of priest Þórður Magnússon in Reykholt, and their son was Böðvar who lived in Garðar. Böðvar was grandfather of Snorri Sturluson, and the father of Þórður priest in Garðar (d. 1220). Þórður's wife was Snælaug daughter of Högni priest in Bær. Her sister was married to Eyjólfur in Stafholt.

Oddur Gissurarson in Valþjófsstaður was among the ordained chieftains in 1143. He was the great grandfather of Bishop Brandur in Hólar (1263-1264).

Þórður Þorvaldsson in Vatnsfjörður is among ordained chieftains in 1143, he is said to be old in 1119. The descendants of Þórður credited him the donation of half of Vatnsfjörður farm to the church in Vatnsfjörður. Þórður is one of major chieftains in Iceland in the 12th century and his chieftaincy is the only major chieftaincy in Vestfirðir. The son of Þórður was Páll (d. 1171) in Vatnsfjörður, also a priest.

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Table 2.4 - Early churches and ordained chieftains

Names	Church	Aband.	Chieft.	Tolls	Tithe
Svínafell	1011	bf 1300	Ord.		No information
Breiðabólstaður in Fljótshlíð	c. 1080		Ord.	Y	26
Oddi	c. 1080		Ord.	Y	Region then 24
Haukadalur	1082-1118		Ord.	Y	11
Reykholt	1082-1118		Ord.		37
Bær	1080-1118		Ord.		8
Stafholt	aq. 1143		Ord.		34 then 24
Vatnsfjörður	aq. 1150		Ord.	Y	16
Staðastaður	c. 1140-70		Ord.		43 then 42
Skarð in Landsveit	aq 1185		Ord.		7-6
Valþjófsstaðir	aq. 1190's		Ord.		11
Garðar	aq. 1202		Ord.		35
Gilsbakki	aq. 1202		Ord.		14 then 6

3 NORWAY

I will discuss the main churches and quarter churches in the diocese of Bergen, formerly of Selja, with a special attention to the main churches. There is no doubt that these were the major churches within the diocese. I will, furthermore, discuss the quarter churches, although not thorough as the main churches, to help with the identification of the two main churches that have as yet not been identified. I will not discuss the churches within the town of Bergen or the Cathedrals in Selja and Bergen, except as in a passing. My main focus is on the rural *ecclesiae majores*, or the main churches and the quarter churches. In order to identify the main churches we have to understand their role in the hierarchy of churches and to do that we have to take a closer look at the priests at these churches and their titles and function within the diocese.

3.1 *The laws of Gulating and the Kristinrétr*

The oldest laws of Gulating preserved were published in 1846 by Keyser and Munch in *Norges gamle Love Indtil 1397* volume 1 (“The old laws of Norway” hence **NGL I**) using the nearly intact manuscript 137 4to, also known as *Codex Rantzovianus* (*CR*) and a manuscript containing only the Christian laws or *Kristinrétr*, *AM 309 folio*. In addition three fragmented manuscripts, *AM 315e folio*, *AM 315f folio* which is the oldest of the three, and *NRA I B* were used. The *CR*, which has been dated to before 1250, is written in a North-Norwegian dialect and Knut Helle suggests that it was written in Bergen. The three fragments are older than *CR*, and have been dated to the period between 1200 and 1250 by Magnus Rindal, but other scholars consider them to be even older. Keyser and Munch believed that *NRA I B* was the youngest of the fragments, perhaps a near contemporary of *CR*, but that the others were from the latter half of the 12th century. The fragments are all written in a dialect typical to the west coast of Norway, which in itself is not surprising, as the entire west coast belonged to Gulating. This indicates that the manuscripts were almost certainly made locally for local use. *AM 309 folio* is the youngest of the lot, from the beginning of the 14th century.¹⁰⁴

Helle argues that the *CR* was a result of King Håkon Håkonsson’s (1217-1263) law revision, which might well be true, but which again means that we cannot comfortably date the *Kristinrétr* further back than *CR* itself. The fragments, *AM 315e folio* and *AM 315f folio*, contain parts of the *Kristinrétr* that is of interest here, and they concur with *CR*. As the

¹⁰⁴ *NGL I*: 2; Helle 2001: 11-13.

fragments almost certainly predate the reign of King Håkon Håkonsson, or in any case his law revisions, it is likely that either King Håkon had no reason to change the *Kristinréttir* or that Helle is mistaken about the reason behind the writing of *CR*, as the manuscript may well predate his revisions. Another possibility is of course that the lacunas conceal changes that occurred between the creation of *AM 315 folio* and *CR*. It is likely though, that the *Kristinréttir* for Gulating is very close to the original text of King Magnus Erlingsson's (1161-1184) law revisions of the late 12th century.¹⁰⁵

The text of the *Kristinréttir* differentiates between the new and the old, i.e. between King Magnus' law revisions and the laws of King Olav Haraldsson (1015-1030), which he set at the assembly in Moster in 1024 with bishop Grimkell. We can't be certain that the older clauses are truly from St Olav because being a saint he was traditionally awarded the credit for any good old laws. Helle believes the older text to be from the reign of King Olav the still (1067-1093) which might be right, but we can not totally exclude the possibility that some may actually be from St Olav.¹⁰⁶ Let us look at the beginning of §10, which is very interesting in many ways (italics by me):

Both said this about churches.

We shall maintain all churches, and honour the Christian laws St Olav and Bishop Grimkell set in the *Monster* assembly, and all laws that have been added since. But there is *one* church in each fylki that we call a main church and which we, all the men of the fylki, shall maintain.¹⁰⁷

The headline leads us to believe that this is a clause set by King Olav, but we soon see that this is probably not the case, at least not in the manner it is now, as the clause itself states that the laws have been modified since the time of St Olav. The manuscript *AM 309 folio*, (see above) is identical almost to *CR* except for two things, the writer of *AM* has corrected the name *Monster* and writes *Moster*, and the word 'one' is omitted, whether by mistake or by intention. The implication is of course that by the middle of the 14th century, there might have been more than one main church in one or all of the *fylki* of Gulating. [I shall come back to this later](#). There is surprisingly little that differs in the two manuscripts, even though *CR* was

¹⁰⁵ *NGL I*: 2-13; Helle 2001: 11-13, 17.

¹⁰⁶ Helle 2001: 18-23.

¹⁰⁷ *NGL I*: 7. *Badar maelto þetta um kirkiur. Þat er nu því nest at ver skolom kirkium þeim ollom upphalda. oc kristnum dome er Olafr hinn helge oc Grimkell biscop sette a Monstrar þingi. oc þeim ollom er sidan varo gorvar. En kirkia er ein i fylki hveriu er ver kollom hofuðkirkiu er vér eigum aller fylkismenn gerð upp at hallda.*

written around 150 years before *AM 309 fol.*, suggesting that there might have been relatively little change from the days of King Magnus Erlingsson onward.

The men of Gulating would gather once a year in *Guli*, now called Gulen, from where the name Gulating is derived, and agree upon the laws that should apply for the whole region. Where exactly the assembly in Gulen was held, is not certain, but it was probably on the north side of Gulafjorden and Gulen was probably the name for the region around the fjord.¹⁰⁸ Gulafjorden is on the North border of Hordaland to Sogn, which makes it rather central when Hordaland, Sogn and Fjordane are concerned, and indeed these were the original districts of Gulating. The old *fylki* were called Hordafylke (south), Sygnafylke (middle), and Firdafylke (north). Of these Hordafylke was almost twice the size of the other two put together.

After the second half of the 10th century, Sunnmøre, Rogaland and Agder were added to Gulating and before 1274 Setesdalen, Valdres and Hallingdal had all been added as well.¹⁰⁹ The Moster assembly, mentioned above, is on the south border of Hordaland to Rogaland, which makes it a rather central assembly for the Gulating area, from the latter half of the 10th century onward. Apart from the assembly where St Olav set his *Kristinréttir* 1024, there is no evidence that Moster was used as a general assembly for Gulating, but it might have been an assembly on a lower level.

It was at Moster that King Olav Tryggvason landed in 995 and consequently had a church built at the site. He also had a church built in Selja at the site where he and his men discovered the relics of St Sunniva and the holy men of Selja. If religious reasons were behind the selection of a site for the assembly, one might suppose that Selja would have been the natural choice. This leads to the conclusion that convenience led to the choice of Moster and not the sanctity of the site.

Knut Robberstad and Knut Helle suggested that the church in Moster had been the first main church for Hordafylke, later to be replaced by one of the quarter churches, based on A. D. Jørgensen's theory from 1874-8 that Moster and Selja had been the sites of the first "mother churches" of Norway. Jørgensen even meant that it was likely that the first bishops in the south had had their see in Moster before Stavanger.¹¹⁰

It is true that Moster holds a special position in the history of Christianization of Norway, but it is unlikely that the church at Moster had ever been a main church. It is an ordinary parish church in the 14th century, and given the fact that the bishop refused to reduce

¹⁰⁸ Helle 2001: 49-51.

¹⁰⁹ Helle 2001: 27.

¹¹⁰ Jørgensen 1874-1878: 334-339, also p. 100 in appendix; Robberstad 1981. P 325; Helle 2001: 177.

the quarter church in Vereid (Nordfjord, Firdafylke) to a regular parish church in the 14th century, we can assume that the bishops would have had qualms about reducing a main church to an ordinary parish church.¹¹¹

In Gulating the *fylki* was traditionally dealt in four or eight parts, called *fjordongr* and *attongr* respectively, and the churches for these districts were labelled accordingly. This can be seen in the laws, for instance in § 10 and §12 about the building and maintenance of the churches.¹¹² Other churches mentioned are the *herað* churches, the *høgendis* churches, which I shall only mention briefly, and the *fylki* churches or main churches. *Høgendi* means comfort and based on that we know these were private churches. When they were first erected they may have been simply a small chapel within the house of the owner. The *høgendi* churches were probably for the most part chapels, even if they were in a separate house built for the purpose of devotion, and then there are of course the private churches of the royal family and the aristocracy.¹¹³

The *herað* is a subdivision of the *fylki*, smaller than the eight part, *attongr*, according to the laws. In Borgartingslaws this is not so, but different law districts have different customs. Taranger argued that the *herað* was the same district as the later parish and that these churches became parish churches.¹¹⁴ There should be one main church in each *fylki*, one quarter church in each quarter, and presumably the same held true for the eighths and the *heraðs*. There is, however, no indication that a church could not be both a main church for the *fylki* and the quarter church for the quarter in which it was.

It is difficult to say when the different churches emerge, but it is reasonable that the *høgendi* churches and chapels were built and consecrated fairly early and probably throughout the 11th and at least the first half of the 12th century. The main churches are probably equally old as the *høgendi* churches and might have been part of St Olav's Christian laws. Whether the eighth and the *herað* churches were included from the start remains anyone's guess, but the quarter churches were probably a fairly early addition or part of the system from the start.

The hierarchy of churches as it appears in the laws has the main churches on top and each area is broken down into smaller areas with a church at the center so to speak. This is of

¹¹¹ Júlíusdóttir 2006b.

¹¹² NGL I: 8. *Nu ero kirkiur allar aðrar. er gerð scal upphallda. fjordongs kirkiur. oc attongs kirkiur. heraðrs[sic,] kirkiur oc høgendis kirkiur*

¹¹³ See appendix: Chapels. Also NGL V.332.

¹¹⁴ Taranger 1888: 338-339.

course not an idea completely new at the time, as there were assemblies assigned to the *fylki* and the quarters. To thus stipulate by law that there should be certain churches with certain rights or duties tied to them, was done with mutual interests in mind. On one hand there was the local population, whose duty was to provide for the church in question, to first build them and then maintain them, but which would receive much needed service there when the bishop visited.

The bishop on the other hand was duty bound to visit these churches to provide the flock with his invaluable service and in exchange he received his pay and later the annual tithe. While he stayed at the church, the bishop could visit other churches in the area and consecrate new churches among other things. It is precisely at the quarter churches that the bishop staid when he went on his visitations.¹¹⁵

Burial churches are not mentioned in the old laws of Gulating as a special type of church. A burial church was a church with a cemetery, a privilege not all churches had in the beginning. According to § 11 of the *kristinrétttr*, a wall should be built around the main church. In § 13, the duty to build a wall around the church is laid upon all those who are under obligation to build and maintain a church. A failure to build a wall is punishable by a fine for every tree that is needed.¹¹⁶ In Herzberg's glossarium the word "kirkjugarðr" is explained as the 1) the wall around the church and 2) the enclosed garden around a church used for the purpose of a cemetery.¹¹⁷

Although the laws say nothing about restrictions about what churches could or could not have a cemetery, it is very likely that the privilege was only meant for the main churches originally, as § 11 only refers to them, and later the quarter churches. Absalon Taranger and later Anne Marit Hamre tied the main churches, or *hovud* churches to the *tituli majores*, as they were burial churches.¹¹⁸

In 5th century Europe the *tituli majores* were the rural churches that had a resident priest, as opposed to the *tituli minores*. It was only at the former that the sacrament of baptism could be administrated and by the attachment of a resident priest they became the origin of the later parish churches.

The royal family and certain powerful families had almost certainly been allowed to bury their family members at their private chapels quite early. As time passed more and more

¹¹⁵ Tryti 1987: XXX; DN VII nr. 98.

¹¹⁶ NGL I: 8-9.

¹¹⁷ NGL V: 344.

¹¹⁸ Anne-Marit Hamre 1978: 35; Taranger 1890: 252.

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of the smaller churches and *høgend*i churches became parish churches in their own right and as such were given the right of cemetery.

3.2 The diocese of Bergen

Originally there was just one diocese in Gulating but with the establishment of Nidaros diocese ca. 1070 Sunnmøre was lost to the new see in the north. Half a century later all but the three original *fylki* of Gulating were put under the new bishop of Stavanger.

On the island of Selja, the ruins of the old monastery with the church of St. Alban and the ruined church of St. Sunniva remain as silent witnesses to the cult of St. Sunniva and the holy men of Selja. Legend has it that King Olav Tryggvason and his bishop Sigurd were led to Selja where they found the remains of St. Sunniva and the holy men of Selja. The relics were enshrined in 996 and a church dedicated to the holy men of Selja was built at the site.¹¹⁹

When the sees were established in Norway in the 11th century, Selja became the obvious choice for the western part of the country. Nidaros where St. Olav was buried and later enshrined became the see for the northern part and Oslo, where St. Hallvard was enshrined became the see for the east.

The bishops in Selja were as follows:¹²⁰

... The first bishop in Selja was bishop Biarnardus, then Magnus, then Sveinn, then Ottarr the Icelandic, then Sigurdr, then Nichulaas. The first bishop [in] Bergen was bishop Paall, then Marteinn...

Knut Helle¹²¹ argued that the only bishop ever to reside in Selja was Bjarnhard the Saxon, who in old age moved to Bergen where he died. He points out that Bjarnhard is the first bishop of Western Norway – Vestlandet – with his see in Selja, but he says that the fact that the see was set in Selja indicates that there was still no *natural* place for a see further south. I have to disagree with Helle on this point. Not only was Selja an important pilgrimage site because of its holy remains but the location was quite central in 11th century Norway.

As the see was the most important route for those who travelled between the north and south coastal districts, i.e. Vestlandet and Møre, Selja was located just south of Stadlandet, also known as Stad, a rather narrow peninsula that separated Vestlandet and Møre. As the see around Stad was often rough and the weather not suitable for sailing, ships

¹¹⁹ *Selja – heilag stad i 1000 år: 267-328.*

¹²⁰ **DI.III.11B:** 25-26. ... *J seliu var fyrstr Biarnardus biskup. þa magnus. þaa sveinn. þa ottar jslendingr. þa sigurdr. þa Nichulaas. [J] Þýorgýn uar fyrstr paall biskup. þa Marteinn. ...*

¹²¹ Helle 1995, 1997, and 2001.

waited both above and below the peninsula for better conditions before they continued on their journey. From Selja there was one weeks sailing to Iceland, and this was a common route between the two countries.¹²²

Like Arne Odd Johnsen, Helle argued that the cult of St Sunniva was a replacement of the more anonymous Men of Selja – Seljumenn – and that the cult of St Sunniva was advocated from Bergen to make Selja equal to the see in Nidaros (St Olav), and the see in Oslo (St Halvard).¹²³

Helle calculates that Bjarnhard must have been over 80 years old when King Olav the still died in 1093 and draws the conclusion that bishop Bjarnhard probably died before the king, but not before he had managed to become the first bishop of Bergen. Helle's main reason behind this argument is the dating of Bergen as a town. It was, Helle argues, King Olav the still (1066-1093) who laid the foundations of the town and since it had already been decreed by archbishop Lanfranc of Canterbury that all bishops should reside in towns and not out in the countryside, the see was moved to the town after the English fashion.

Snorri Sturluson, in his *Heimskringla*, tells the tale of King Olav the still and says among other things that King Olav founded the town and built the foundations to the bigger Christchurch which was made of stone, but that he had the smaller Christchurch, which was a stave church, completed.¹²⁴

The enigma connected to the time of the establishment of the bishop's see in Bergen is why the shrine was not simply transferred from Selja to Bergen immediately if the idea was to establish the see in Bergen in just a few years? Or at least when bishop Bjarnhard supposedly moved the see to Bergen?

The answer must be that Bishop Bjarnhard never moved his See to Bergen, that he died there is probably true but that he had moved there is not necessarily so and his whereabouts at the time of his death cannot be used as proof of earlier establishment of the see in Bergen.

Recent archaeological research has shown that the church of St. Alban in Selja was built with the purpose to function as a cathedral. Marit Nybø, who undertook the research,

¹²² Djupedal 1966: 19; Hommedal 1997a: 63-65.

¹²³ Helle 1997: 243.

¹²⁴ Sturluson 1991: 698. The underlined text is my quote, as translated above: *Ólafur konungur setti kaupstað í Björgyn. Gerðist þar brátt mikið setur auðigra manna og tilsiglingar kaupmanna af öðrum löndum. Hann lét reisa þar af grundvelli Kristskirkju, hina miklu steinkirkju, og var að henni lítið gert en hann lét algera trékirjkjuna.*

has shown that not only was the church built for a bishop, but as a regular basilica.¹²⁵ The work was begun around 1090.

The tower of the church was built in a style that was characteristic of the early 12th century, and Nybø suggests that stonemasons from Bergen travelled to Selja and built the tower sometime between 1120 and 1160. Only a few years before the relic of St. Sunniva was transferred to Bergen, stonemasons were still building the cathedral in Selja.¹²⁶ This does not seem likely if the bishop had already moved his see to Bergen.

Another archaeologist, Gitte Hansen, has further undermined the theory of Arne Odd Johnsen¹²⁷ and Knut Helle by showing that Bergen had indeed become a town before the time of King Olav the still. This means that the moving of the see to Bergen had nothing to do with the establishment of the town. Furthermore, the sees could at that time clearly be established outside towns.¹²⁸

3.2.1 The clergy at the churches as found in medieval sources

Tryti recognized that at some churches there were priests that were identified as *hofud* priests. She made the connection between these priests and the main churches but found that even so three of the quarter churches in Hordafylke had such priests as beneficiaries. Was this an evidence of elevated status when all, or at least three, quarter churches became main churches and Hordafylke being split up into four smaller *fylki*, the former quarters?¹²⁹ *Hofud-* is the same prefix we find in connection to the main churches, as we see in the laws of Gulating.¹³⁰ Might this then be interpreted as evidence that the churches these priests served were indeed the main churches we are looking for? What is a *hofud-* priest if not the priest at the *hofud* or main church?

Documents written in Latin do of course not name *hofud* priests, here we find the terms *rector*, *presbyter*, *plebanus*, *persona*, *vicarius*, *archidiaconus*, and *archipresbyter* as well as *dominus*, which is probably the Latin translation of *sira* (ON.), which again is a translation of *sire* from Old English.

¹²⁵ It had formerly been believed that it was a pseudo-basilica, an assumption that was based on incorrect measurements. See Marit Nybø 2000: 158-159.

¹²⁶ Nybø 2000, 2001(a), and 2001(b).

¹²⁷ Johnsen 1968: 26.

¹²⁸ Hansen 2003: 349-354.

¹²⁹ Tryti 1987: 422.

¹³⁰ NGL I: 7. *En kirkia er ein i fylki hveriu er ver kollom hofuðkirkiu...*

We should not forget that in Norway, as in the rest of the medieval Christian world, there were other qualified personnel at the churches. They were not frequently mentioned but once in a while we see a glimpse of them in the document material.

3.2.1.1 *Hofud churches, hofud priests, and rectores ecclesia*

The main part of the Norwegian documentary sources can be traced back to the archives of the dioceses from which they were borrowed by Árni Magnússon in 1689 and transferred to Copenhagen. Still only a few of the documents are narratives of the clergy or the churches. One important source group is of course the old regional laws and different statutes in **NGL**. Another source is the different documents we find in *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* volume I-XXI, hence **DN**. By analysing the evidence with an emphasis on Bergen diocese it should be possible to say more about the *hofud* priests and their relation to the main churches.

In the Old laws of Gulating there is no mention of a *hofud* priest, only a *hofud* church, i.e. main church. Moreover, there are five different statutes from four different archbishops that mention either *hofud* priests or churches. They are therefore of interest here. Two of them mention *hofud* priests while three mention *hofud* churches.

The older statute is the first statute of archbishop Jørund from 1290 AD. Here the term *hofud* priest is used to describe the priest who holds a church as benefice, as opposed to those who serve at the church under the command of the beneficiary. The churches described are called *heraðs* churches in the statute.¹³¹

Later in the same statute we find *hofud* priests at burial churches. They are gently advised to keep a *vicarius*. When one priest has to leave temporarily there will always be one priest at the church who can take care of the congregation, as these burial churches “usually have a populous and widespread parish.”¹³²

It is necessary to keep in mind that these statutes applied to the entire archdiocese of Nidaros and were as such not meant to mirror only the reality in any one of the dioceses, in our case Bergen diocese. We should therefore not understand the *heraðs* churches as the ones we find in the laws of Gulating and were only above the private churches and chapels in the hierarchy, but rather as the highest ranking churches in any given diocese.

¹³¹ **NGL** III: 242. ... *Sakir þess at heraðs kirkiurnar þarnaz víða sitt goðz ok tiundir... þa skal einginn sa sem til er ætlaðr at selia þann part tiunnar sem kirkiurnar eiga dirfaz heðan af nefnda kirkiu tiund at selia aan vitorði þeirrar kirkiu hæfuðprestz ok tueggia annarra skilrikra or þeirri kirkiu sokn...*

¹³² **NGL** III: 242-243. ... *hæfuðprestar at graftar kirkiu huerre hafa ser vicarium ef þat er vel mattuligt. at þa er annarr þeirra ferr til kaupstaðar at nauðsynligum eyrindum megi annarr heima wera at gera vices aa meðan með þui at þessháttar kirkiur hafa iafnan mikla sokn ok víða.*

Thirty years later (AD. 1320), in the third statute of archbishop Eilif we find *hofud* priests, parish priests, and the *vicarii* as well as *kapelluprestar*. The *kapelluprestar*, lit. priests at chapels, were probably auxiliary chaplains or assistant priests to the rector of the church. They might have served annexed chapels (Chapels of Ease) or *høgend*i churches. The *hofud* priests were under obligation to inform all priests, *vicarii*, and chaplains what had been discussed and/or passed in synod within a week after the meeting. Those who sat at home should take care of the parishioners during the absence of the parish priest but according to the statute, the parish priest had to inform the congregation which priest should care for the souls while he was away.¹³³

It is not clear from the context if it was common that the parish priest might have more than one *vicarius* to choose from when he went to the synods or whether the subordinate priests were beneficiaries at *høgend*i churches or at annexed churches. We may assume that the lower clergy with no benefices were not called to the synods.

It is furthermore demanded that all *hofud* priests as well as other beneficed priests with a parish should each Sunday preach to or teach their parishioners the correct faith. The *hofud* priest must sing mass to his parishioners on all Feast days as a minimum and listen to their confessions as frequently as his *vicarius* or be punished with a suspension from his office and benefice.¹³⁴ It suggests that the practice of leaving the curing of souls, or *cura animarum*, to the *vicarius*, or *vicarii*, at the church had been a rather common one.

The statutes that mention the main (*hofud*) churches are the statute of archbishop Jon from AD 1280, the fifth statute of archbishop Eilif from AD 1327, and the second statute of archbishop Paul from 1336. It is worth mentioning again that the statutes were written with the entire archdiocese of Nidaros in mind. Therefore we cannot apply the term main church to the *hofud* churches mentioned in the statute as churches in other dioceses were not necessarily named thus.

¹³³ NGL III: 265. *Lærdir menn allir er nefndir uerda til presta motz skolo koma naudsynialaust. enn huerr er æigi kemr gialldi biskupi .iij. merkr. ok þilikt sa sem kemr okalladr. utan saa eigi annathuart mat at ueriaedr sækia. Skolu ok hæfudprestar at tia kapellu prestum, er heima sitia i heradi. skylldugir huat gert var lægtekit aa presta moti innan fyrstu .vij. natta er þeir koma heim. Prestr huerr adr heiman fari skal skripta ok husla huern mann siukan i sinni kirkiusokn. Enn þeir lærdir menn sem heima ero skolo geyma kirkiusoknir allar til þess er hinir koma heim fra stefnu. felaust vid huern sem þionostu þarf. ok sva huern tima er soknarprestar þurfa. Lysa skolo prestar fyrir soknar folki sinu adr enn þeir fari heiman huerr þeim skal skylldu gera medan hann er i brottu.*

¹³⁴ NGL III: 266. *hofudprestar allir ok kapelluprestar er sokn hafa skolo telia trv fyrir soknarfolki sinu a huerium sunnudegi. Bydz ok hæfudprestum sub pena suspensionis officij & beneficij. at þeir syngi sealfir messur einkannliga aa aollum hatidis dægum ok heyri skriptamal soknarmanna sinna. æigi sidr en vicarij. i ollum stædum þeim sem þeir mega vid komaz. sealfir prestr sa er messo syngir blandi uatni vid uin i kaleck. enn æigi klerkr.*

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The interesting thing about these statutes that when the latter statute mentions *hofud* churches it does so in a paragraph that refers to the first statute. It is the wish of archbishop Eilíf that the statute of archbishop Jon about what constitutes as a capital sin should be read aloud at least once a year for the congregation “in the *hofud* church of each borough,¹³⁵ as well as in the greater *hofud* churches.”¹³⁶

In the statute of archbishop Jon the corresponding clause is slightly different. The congregation should be told what sins were regarded as capital sins at least once a year by having this statute read aloud to them “at every bishop see ... as well as in the greatest *herað* churches”.¹³⁷ This is according to manuscript A, while manuscript C reads: “in the greatest *hofud* churches”.¹³⁸

Manuscript C, AM. 347 fol., is an Icelandic parchment manuscript written with two hands. The statute of archbishop Jon is in the second hand, which Árni Magnússon dated to the late 14th century. Gustav Storm on the other hand dated the second hand to the early or mid 15th century.¹³⁹ Manuscript A, AM. 351 fol. is also an Icelandic parchment manuscript written ca. 1360.¹⁴⁰ The Old Norse text of the statutes is, according to the editors of **NGL III** almost certainly a translation from a Latin original.¹⁴¹ As both manuscripts were produced in Iceland we must assume that they were meant for the Icelandic public. The different terms *herað* and *hofud*, can therefore not be explained with the different names used in different regions and dioceses within Norway. It is, however, interesting to see that both *herað*

Both A and C version mention *hofud* churches a littler earlier, where the B version, AM. 354 4to from the second half of the 14th century, writes holy churches. This makes more sense in context since the paragraph has to do with pilgrimage.¹⁴²

In the second statute of archbishop Paul it is written that this statute and those of his predecessors should be written into a book at the church and read publicly in the *hofud*

¹³⁵ The word used in the statute is “kaupstadar” (pl.) and should be understood as a village, town, hamlet, or any densely populated area that has been granted merchant rights. The boroughs in England were towns that had been granted special privileges by a royal charter.

¹³⁶ **NGL III**: 275. ... *i hæfudkirkju huers kaupstadar. sua hit sama i hinum størrum hæfudkirkjum...*

¹³⁷ **NGL III**: 233. ... *at ollum biskups stolum ... slikt hit sama skal þeim lyst vera i hinum æzstum [stærstum B] heraðs [haufud C] kirkjum...*

¹³⁸

¹³⁹ **NGL IV**: 532.

¹⁴⁰ **NGL IV**: 536.

¹⁴¹ **NGL III**: VI, 229.

¹⁴² **NGL III**: 231. ...*wernð pilgrima er vitia hæfuðkirkna [heilagra kirkna B] ok vm þeirra maal.*

church of each borough by the bishop him-self and by the provost or his *vicarius* in the grander churches.¹⁴³

There does not seem to be any doubt that the quarter and main churches would qualify as the *grander* churches in Bergen diocese. Likewise is it interesting that at these churches we should find provosts and more than one priest at each church. Is it likely though, that at the main and quarter churches we would find just two priests, the provost and his vicar? Furthermore, is the provost the *head* priest at the church?

These sources are only normative so we should look at sources that might tell us how things were in practice.

In 1329 the people in Nordhordland, Hordafylke, received a letter from the bishop in Bergen who, as was his duty, chastised those who had committed capital sins and told them to give their confessions to the *hofud* priest at Hamre church, according to “old custom”.¹⁴⁴ Hamre church, situated in Osterøy just north of Bergen, is the quarter church for Nordhordland. There are no such letters to other congregations or districts within Hordafylke.

A similar letter had been sent to the population in Sogn or Sygnafylke the year before. The difference is that the priest at Stedje church, *hofud* priest Thore could not only listen to confessions after capital sins, he could also excommunicate all those who would not change their wicked ways. Another difference is that he could do so for all those who lived within the *fylki*, not just the quarter.¹⁴⁵ Stedje church has been seen as the main church for Sygnafylke, as well as one of the quarter churches, based on this document.

I have found several other documents in DN that mention *hofud* priests in Bergen diocese. There are two documents for Skåle church in Kvinnherad (Sunnhordland, Hordafylke),¹⁴⁶ one that refers to the priest at Askvoll church (Sunnfjord, Firdafylke)¹⁴⁷, one for Selja church (Firdafylke),¹⁴⁸ and eight for the church at Vangen in Voss (Voss, Hordafylke).¹⁴⁹

¹⁴³ NGL III: 283-284. *skrifiz inn i skipanar bækr ok lesiz vpp opinberliga af sialfum biskupinum ... i hæfuðkirkiu huers kaupstað... en af profæstum eðr þeirra vicariis i æðrum hinum stærrum kirkium...*

¹⁴⁴ DN.IV.187. *...koma til hofudprestens a Hamre at taka skript siina epter fornóm sidvana...*

¹⁴⁵ DN.I.197. *...allum monnum i Soghne þæim sem þetta bref sea eðr hæyra Q. G. ok sina. Ver hafum undir stædet at ymisir men her med ydr gera ok gort hafa gudi ok hæilaghre kirkiu mikla olydni i ymisum lifnadom ok vandom framfærdom ok vilia þo æighi scriptir a sik taka af þæim sem hæilaghrar kirkiu ok vaart valld hæfir af at læysa j allum opinbærom stormælom sem er hafudprestrenn a Stædiu um allt Soghn ... ver faam sira Thore i Stædiu vaart valld ok fullt um bod nidr at sætia oll þau mal sem her kunnu til at falla...*

¹⁴⁶ DN.III.63; DN.VII.178.

¹⁴⁷ DN.VII.30.

¹⁴⁸ DN.VII.156.

¹⁴⁹ DN.II.442; DN.II.484; DN.II.528; DN.V.144; DN.V.204; DN.VI.266; DN.XXI.117; DN.XXI.121.

In 1341 bishop Håkon gave the *hofud* priest at Skåle church a mandate to travel to Njardheim church, now called Årland church in Sunnhordland to read the bishop's letter for some parishioners who had retained a part of the bishop's tithes.¹⁵⁰ This case will be discussed in further detail in chapter 3.2.2 below.

A letter to the priest in Holmedal (Sunnfjord, Firdafylke), from the bishop in Bergen in 1305, mentions a *hofud* priest. In this case the bishop refers a case to the priest Arnsteinn at Holmedal church, instructing him to summon a man to the *hofud* priest.¹⁵¹

A year later the bishop writes again concerning that same case, only this time the letter is addressed to both Arnsteinn in Holmedal and the priest Eysteinn at Askvoll church, which was one of the quarter churches in Firdafylke. By context we must assume that the *hofud* priest is Eysteinn at Askvoll church.¹⁵²

In eight documents four different priests hold the title *hofud* priest at Vangen church, Eindrid Petursson in 1340 and in 1347-1348, Jon Thronardson between June 1365 and Mai 1366, Arne Askelsson in 1375 and 1384, and finally Håkon Gunnarsson in 1391.¹⁵³ Admittedly the timeframe is not a very large one, only 51 years or just over half a century. Both Jon Thronardson and Arne Askelsson were titled as provost (*profastr*), seemingly at the same time they held Vangen church as *hofud* priests.¹⁵⁴ The priests at Vangen church will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.2.1.3 below.

The priest Aslak in Selje is titled as *hofud* priest in a letter from Bishop Håkon in 1338.¹⁵⁵ Selje was not one of the quarter churches for Firdafylke and this is the only mention of a *hofud* priest at Selje. In another document from 1322 we see that there is a *vicarius* at the church as well as the beneficiary.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁰ DN.VII.178. (1341) *Hakon [etc.] sender sira Sighurdi hofudprest a Skala q. g. oc sina. os hefir til æyrna komet þat sem ver mykilega vndrum. med huerri dirfd eder vlydni vid heilagha kirkiu oc os er soknarmenn j Niardhæims kirkiusokn difuazst at hallda oss þar tiund þæiri er sira Hauar oc sira Olafr hafua sellt af varre væghna fru Jngigerdi oc verd j tekt. ...*

¹⁵¹ DN.VII.30. *Arne Sigurdarson etc. senndir sira Arnsteinni [i Holmudali q. g. ok sina]. ...stæmfj honom ok til hofudprestens, ok sva æim kononom er sokena bera vpp a sik, at taka skriftir ok yfirbot af sinum misverkom...*

¹⁵² DN.IV.62. (1306) *Arne med gudz miskunn biscup i Biorgwin sendir sira Esteini a Askvelli oc sira Arnstæini i Holmudali q. g. oc sina. Sidan er ver ritadom til þin i haust sira Arnstein um festarmal þess manz er Þorer hæiter oc mæyar þeirrar er Þora hæiter at þu skilder hafa haft þar a lysing i hæilaghre kirkiu...*

¹⁵³ DN.II.442, DN.II.484; DN.II.528; DN.V.144; DN.V.204; DN.VI.266; DN.XXI.117; DN.XXI.121.

¹⁵⁴ DN.I.383. (1364) ... *Jon Thronardson profastr á Wangenom a Voss ...; DN.XXI.154. (1379) ... Ek Winalder Hinriksson profaster at Postula kirkiu j samastadh med Gudhes kwediu ok minne skyldughre pionosto, kunnight gerande ydhrum herradom at ek war a Wangenum j Preststofvone a Wos ... i fullu ok loghlegho vmbodi Sira Arne profasts ydhar medhan han var j adhrum kirkiunnar ærindom...*

¹⁵⁵ DN.VII.156. [1338] ...*sira Aaslake hofudpreste j Seliu...*

¹⁵⁶ DN.II.130 (1322) ... *Martæin læighu prester j Selio ... sira Bærgh Kolbani er a Selio kirkiu...*

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There are a number of documents in Latin that concern the churches and the members of the clergy, but what would the *hofud* priests have been called in Latin? I considered the possibility that *hofud* could have been a translation of the Latin *archipresbyter* but the sources did not seem to support that theory. Another term that might be synonymous is *rector*. In *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* there are several definitions of the term *rector* that are relevant here:¹⁵⁷

- Those who are in charge of the churches, like bishops and abbots.
- Bishop.
- Abbot.
- Ecclesiastic in charge of a church inferior to a bishopric.
- Owner of a private church or monastery bishop or layman, or a person in charge of the material concerns of such a church.
- Plural. *rectores*: officials having the care of the material concerns of a church or monastery, managers of ecclesiastical estates.
- *Rector scholarum*: schoolmaster.

It is interesting to see if the sources support the theory.

The only quarter church in Hordafylke that has not been mentioned here with *hofud* priests is the church in Kinsarvik (Hardanger). Mostly because I have only found three documents written in the vernacular that are relevant. Two of these mention priests in Kinsarvik, the first a certain *sira* Eindrid Petersson priest in 1329, and the second the priest Vilhjalm Eiriksson in 1367.¹⁵⁸ There are, however, a number of documents in Latin that mention both Thorkillus (Thorkel) *rector ecclesia de Kinsarvik* in 1298-1299 and Bero (Bjørn/Bjarne) *rector ecclesia de Kinsarvik* in 1309.¹⁵⁹

Thorkel priest in Kinsarvik titled himself as “Thorkillus de Kinzar(uik) rector ecclesie Bergensis dyocesis executor mandatorum iudicum sedis apostolice...”¹⁶⁰ He was one of three priests that received the difficult task of mediating and executing mandates from the Bishop of Oslo, the Bishop of Hamar, and the Abbot in Hovdøy monastery in the conflict between the Bishop in Stavanger and the canons at the Cathedral in Stavanger.

¹⁵⁷ Niermeyer 2000: 1164-1165.

¹⁵⁸ **DN** XV nr. 14. (1329) Also in **BK**: 81 ... *Sira Eindrīði peters son præstr j kinsar viik...*; **DN** XXI nr. 122. (1367). ...*viliælmr eirikson præstr j Kinzarauikur...*

¹⁵⁹ **DN** II nr. 85; **DN** IV nr. 27-29, 34-35, 38, 40; **DN** IV nr. 42; **DN** V nr. 36-40.

¹⁶⁰ **DN** IV nr. 44. (1299)

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In 1314 a priest by name of Arne titled himself as *vicarius* in Kinsarvik, in other words, the rector in Kinsarvik was not the only priest at the church.¹⁶¹

The priest at Eid church (Nordfjord), one of the quarter churches in Firdafylke is also titled *rector* in a letter from Bishop Audfinn instructing him to read the Bishops letter to *rector* Berg Kolbeinsson who's benefice was Selje church (Nordfjord, Firdafylke).¹⁶²

The priest at Vinreid church (Nordfjord), Sigvarde who died in May 1310 is mentioned in two documents written in Latin. In the first he is commanded to send his concubine away and to renounce her publicly. The letter is written in a very harsh tone, the Bishop addresses him as “te Sigvarde de Vindræid”. Others mentioned in the letter, the priests at Re church, Austrheim church, Gimmestad church, and Hyen church are similarly addressed.¹⁶³

In the second letter, the Bishop writes to the priests in Austrheim, Hya, and Gimmestad, telling them that he has heard the news about the death of *dominus* (sire) Sigvard *presbyter* (priest). As a result of his death his church, Vindreid, of which he was *rector*, is now vacant.¹⁶⁴ It may be the benefice that is vacant, and not the church, as there might have been a *vicarius* at the church. This is however just a speculation.

The *hofud* priest at Hamre church (Nordhordland) was also titled as *rector* in a document from 1327,¹⁶⁵ but there are no such documents in Latin that I've come across, which mention a *rector* at either Vangen church in Voss or Skåle church in Sunnhordland. This has, however, more to do with the lack of Latin documents that mention these churches than a distinction between the terms *hofud* and *rector*.

In a document written in Nidaros in 1280 we find a number of men who are titled as rectors; the head priests at the churches of St. Clement in Oslo, *sancte Crucis*, st. Olav, St. Andrew, and the church of St. Michael, the last four presumably in Nidaros, are all titled “rector ecclesie” at said churches. Others mentioned in the document are titled as *plebanus* (pastor), *persona* or *vicarius*. Eyvind at the chapel of St. Martin is said to be the *presbyter*

¹⁶¹ DN.XXI.13. (1314). ... *sira arne vicarius I kinstævik...*

¹⁶² DN.III.128. (1322) *Littera monitoria ut dominus Bergho resideat in ecclesia sua de Selio. ... domino Gudlaco rectori ecclesie de Eyghi ... domino Berghone Kolbani rectore ecclesie de Selio ...*

¹⁶³ DN.III.74. (1308)

¹⁶⁴ DN.III.91. (1310) ... *ecclesia de Winreið nostre dyocesis, per mortem domini Sygwardi presbiteri, condam rectoris eiusdem, vacante, et ipsius obitu vijo. idus Maii sub anno domini mo. ccco. decimo nobis per certum nuncium intimato, Hallzstanus de Hya et Stenarus de Austerhæim et Eið, nec non et Kalbanus de Gemlistaðum parochiarum presbiteri...*

¹⁶⁵ DN.IV.172. (1327)

thereof, a distinction that is worth mentioning. Seven *vicarii* are mentioned by name in this document at the “maioris ecclesie”, which is presumably the Cathedral in Nidaros.¹⁶⁶

In a letter from pope Urban in 1263 the priest Edmund at Strandvik church in Sunnhordland was titled as “filius Admundus rector ecclesie de Stranwic presbiter Bergensis diocesis”.¹⁶⁷ It is almost certain that Edmund had a *vicarius* at the church in Strandvik as he was King Håkon’s nuncio to the pope. Pope Urban’s letter provides him with a prebend at the Cathedral in Oslo

Two other examples of rural parish churches in Bergen diocese, as opposed to the quarter churches, that have a priest titled as a *rector* rather than *presbyter*, are the churches at Ullingsvang (Hardanger) and Eyvindvik (Nordhordland). The priest at Eyvindvik church is titled *rector* once as far as I have found. He was asked, together with the *rector* at Hamre church (Nordhordland), to collect and then to send to Bergen all income off vacant benefices in the quarter.¹⁶⁸

At Ullingsvang church the *rector* was also the *scolasticus* or head administrator of the diocese school of Bergen and a canon at the Cathedral. In 1320 a canon at the Cathedral in Nidaros committed an act of violence against the priest at Ullingsvang who is addressed as *rector, magister, or scolasticus* indiscriminately.¹⁶⁹ The same is true for documents written in

¹⁶⁶ DN.III.16. (1280) ... *Actum Nidrosie in auditorio domini archiepiscopi. anno domini. mo. cco. lxxxo. die predicto. Hii erant presentes Hallo rector ecclesie sancti Clementis in ciuitate Osloensi et Hugo clericus nuncii venerabilis patris domini Andree episcopi Osloensis. Karus sacrista. magister Thorger rector ecclesie sancte Crucis. Thordus rector ecclesie sancti Olai. Erlendus rector ecclesie sancti Andree. dominus Arno senescallus persona ecclesie sancte Marie. Vigfusus plebanus ecclesie sancti Clementis. Lodoenus persona ecclesie omnium Sanctorum. Johannes Ouidius persona ecclesie de Aluishaug. Enindus uicarius ecclesie sancte Marie. Erlendus rector ecclesie sancti Michaelis. Ewindus presbiter capelle sancti Martini. Sigwardus de hospitali infirmorum. Renalldus uicarius ecclesie sancti Olai. Asgerus uicarius ecclesie omnium Sanctorum. Sigwardus digri. Skiggo. Ericus bast. Jobannes Uplendensis. Thorfinnus huorri. Enarus kinnus(?). Juarus Katrinu kollr. vicarii maioris ecclesie. Simon hiake. Erlendus lando. Thorfinnus disa. Andreas mercenarius. Endridus kepe qui in sabato proximo. iij. temporum fuerant in presbiteros ordinati. See also DN.II.162, DN.III.339, DN.IV.32, DN.IV.135, DN.IV.172, DN.IV.443, DN.VI.511, DN.VII.124, DN.VII.125, DN.VII.137, DN.VII.244, DN.VII.255, DN.VIII.51, and DN.VIII.65.*

¹⁶⁷ DN I nr. 58. (1263)

¹⁶⁸ DN.IV.172. ...*discretis viris dominis rectoribus ecclesiarum de Hamar et de Æyvindarviik, Bergensis dyocesis, salutem in domino. De vestra legalitate et peritia plenam fiduciam obtinentes, ad petendum, exigendum et recipiendum fructus beneficiorum ecclsiasticorum vacancium ad biennium in provincia Nordhardulandie dicte dyocesis ... reliqua vero pars debeat obtinentibus ipsa beneficia remanere, de qua parte ipsi habebunt omnia onera ecclesia subportare, nisi forte ipsi vellent omnes fructus et proventus vobis dimittere, quo casu habebitis ipsi beneficiis, quantum ad sacramentorum ecclesiasticorum ministracionem pertinet...*

¹⁶⁹ DN.I.105. ...*magister Arno rector ecclesie de Ullinsvang...*; DN.IV.130. ...*domino Arnoni, rectori ecclesie Ullinsvangh...*; DN.VIII.51. ...*ego Arno, rector ecclesie de Ullinsuang...*; DN.VIII.52. ...*dominus Arno scolasticus Bergensis...*; DN.VIII.53. ...*dominus Arno scolasticus Bergensis...*; DN.VIII.54. ...*domini Arnonis rectoris ecclesie de Wllinsvang nostre dyocesis...*

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ON for the priest is titled in letters written just days apart, as *sira* (sire, reverend), *meistare* (master), *persona* (person) of Ullinsvang, or *skulamæistare* (schoolmaster).¹⁷⁰

It is obvious that a person with such obligations in Bergen must be away from his benefice quite frequently and require another priest to take care of the cure of souls in his parish. It is therefore not surprising that we find evidence of just such a priest at Ullinsvang.

In 1309 there is a priest by the name of Bernard who is a *vicarius* at the church in Ullinsvang.¹⁷¹ A document from 1340 contains a list of gifts that were given to the church at Ullinsvang to provide for a *vicarius* at the church, he should receive 20 *månadsmat* (see Table 1.2) but his employer, the priest at Ullinsvang should receive 40 *mm* to pay for the priests food and lodgings. The gifts were parts of farms or the yielding thereof and were from farms in both the Voss and Hardanger quarters.¹⁷²

This suggests then that the term *rector* was used for the head priests at churches in the cities, the head priests at the grander rural churches in the diocese, e.g. main churches and quarter churches (Hamre, Kinsarvik, Eid, Vereid), and any parish church that housed more than one priest where one was the beneficiary at the church (Strandvik, Eyvindvik, Ullinsvang).

This further suggests that the terms *hofud* priest and *rector* could be the same. After all we have seen that the term *hofud* priest could apply to the head priest at other churches than the quarter and main churches (Selje), as the head priest at a quarter church (Hamre, Skåle, Askvoll), and main church (Stedje). Both terms also imply that this is the senior person at the church, or head priest.

Let us now take a look at the *fylki* priests and the *fylki* churches or main churches.

3.2.1.2 The *fylki* and the *fylki* priests

In 1951 the vicar at Hamre church (Nordhordland) published a book about his church where he says:¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ DN.VIII.66. ... *meistare* Arne *person[al] af Vllinswange* ... *meistare* Arne... *sira* Arna... *sira* Arna...; DN.VIII.67. ...*sira* Arna prest sem nu er *skulamæistare* .j. Berghwin..

¹⁷¹ DN.III.84. (1309) ...*Bernarde presbyter et vicarie ecclesie de Vllinswange*...

¹⁷² DN.XII.90. ... *sua marghar jarper sem gæfnar varo kirkiunni a Wllinswanghe till þess at læighu præstr skilldi væra æfenlægha at firsaghdre kirkiu ... skall læighu præstr sa er til er skipaðr taka xx j læighu sina, En sa er a kirkiuna skall hafa fioritighi firir borðhalld hans...*

¹⁷³ Bergo 1951: 14. *Hamre var tingstaden for Nordhordland, og her vart den fyrste kristne samlingsstaden og lagd. ... Som fylkeskyrkja måtte ho vera stor og stod i hgaste rangsklasse. Fylkes- eller hofudkyrkjane som vart bygde under Olav Trygvason og Olav den Heilage, var overalt ei lang tid dei einaste dåps- og gravferdskyrkjer. Hamrekyrkja var soleis i den fyrste kristne tid den einaste kyrkja i Nordhordland. Som prest ved fylkeskyrkja vart og Hamreprestene rekna som hofudprest eller prost over Hordhordland...*

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Hamre was the assembly place for Nordhordland, and it was here that the first Christian assembly site was established. ...

As a *fylki* church it had to be grand and was placed at the top of the hierarchy. The *fylki*- or main churches that were built during the reign of Olav Trygvason [sic.] and St. Olav, were everywhere for a long time the only churches with Christening- and burial rights. The church at Hamre was therefore in early Christianity the only church in Nordhordland. As a priest at a *fylki* church the priests at Hamre were *hofud* priests or provosts for Nordhordland...

It is obvious that the vicar at Hamre believed his church to have been the main church for the Nordhordland *fylki* in early Christianity but he has oversimplified the situation. Nordhordland was not a *fylki* in early Christianity in Norway, but a quarter of Hordafylke as were Sunnhordland, Voss and Hardanger. This is obvious from the laws of Gulating, which never mention any division of Hordafylke into smaller *fylki* units.

In an open letter from 1306 to the priests in Sunnhordland and the priest Steingrímur at Skåle, the duty of collecting the Cathedraticum was laid upon Steingrímur. All churches with the exception of the monasteries were obliged to pay the tax annually in appreciation of their maternal church where the bishop resides. He should send a reliable person to Bergen with the money enclosed in a letter to the bishop's agent. Steingrímur is reminded to achieve a receipt, which states what everybody has paid. Bishop Arne then warns all recipients of the letter that any priest who goes to Bergen must carry a receipt for having paid cathedraticum signed by his *fylki* priest, as the agent in Bergen will check all priests travelling to Bergen.¹⁷⁴

A number of questions arise when we take a look at this letter. Is Steingrímur the *fylki* priest mentioned in the document? If so, is the *fylki* priest for Sunnhordland or the entire Hordafylke? Was there such a thing as the *fylki* of Sunnhordland in 1306? Is there evidence that the old *fylkis* of Bergen diocese were split up into smaller *fylki* units?

In 1338 Bishop Hákon of Bergen (1332-1342) sent an open letter to the people in Firdafylke telling them that he had given two of his canons at Christchurch in Bergen the right to collect his tithe in both *fylkis*.¹⁷⁵ A year or two later he sent a similar letter about the

¹⁷⁴ DN.III.63. ...hefir þat ok sva verit optleggha skipat ok samþykkt i synodo at hver prester ok æin undantæknun vicariis skal luka fyrir cathedraticum half læypu smers ok hver æin kirkia sma eda stor half læypu. þa er þat bod vart ok vili til allra ydarra jamsaman at þer lukit þessa skuld græidulegha i hendr varom vmbodsmanne med ollum þæim eftirstodum er hæima hafa stædet med ydr ok kirkiunum sidan synodus var nest hofd i Biorgvin. Fam ver þetta umbod her um alt Sunhorduland þer i hendr sira Steingrimer, at hæimta ok samantaka sva sem fyrr er talat, ok send sva til Biorgvinar med æinum hverium skilrikum manne ok brefe þinu til vars vmbodsmans er ver fam þetta valld i hendr med varo opno brefe, ok tak bref af honom hvat þu hefvir af hondom græitt eda firir huæria. Hafum ver ok fengit þæim varom umbodsmanne er i Biorgvin er fult vald af varre hende at sækia þa presta er til Biorgvinar koma ok æighi hafva firir ser bref fylkisprestz sins at han se lidugher af þessare skuld. ...

¹⁷⁵ DN.X.32. (1338) Hakon med guðs miskun etc. I sendr allum monnum j. Fyrdafylki. læikom ok lærdom... j. hwara tweggia fylkinu...

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bishop's title but this time it was addressed only to the North *fylki* of Firdafylke.¹⁷⁶ In 1342 Bishop Håkon sent an open letter to all the clergy in both the north and the south part of Firdafylke.¹⁷⁷

In [1328] Bishop Audfinn (1314-1330) received a letter from the Archbishop in Nidaros, Eilif (1311-1332), about the Pope's subsidy among other things. There are lacunas in the document so it is difficult to decipher the correct meaning of the letter, but it seems as if the archbishop refers to two *fylkis* in Firdafylke:¹⁷⁸

... But concerning the Pope's subsidy we shall have from Firda[fylke] [...] [m]oney of each *fylki* in such a way that each *fylki* priest gives 1 *merkr* off his property and his church gives another *merkr* of her property...

The document is problematic, as we cannot see how much is missing from the text. Is it the reference to the two *fylki* within Firdafylke, the North *fylki* and the South *fylki*, today referred to as Nordfjord and Sunnfjord? Would not the Archbishop have wanted the subsidy paid from all of the *fylkis* in Bergen diocese? Should we then expect to have seen Sygnafylke and Hordafylke written where the lacuna is? But why write down the name of the three districts of Bergen diocese when he could have just written "your diocese" instead? That is precisely what he had done earlier in the letter when he asked for the Bishop's help to fund the extensive reparation of the Cathedral in Nidaros, which had burned down earlier.

The words *hveriu* (n.) and *hverr* (m.) suggest that there were more than two *fylki* and *fylki* priests addressed in the letter, because the pronouns are in plural form, rather than dual, which we would expect if he had only mentioned Firdafylke, the north and south part. This letter is written only a decade before the first two letters from Bishop Håkon mentioned above, at which time the Firdafylke has been split up into two *fylki*. When that happened is uncertain, but it seems to have been in the early 14th century. We have no evidence to suggest that a splitting into two parts took place at an earlier time.

It is therefore likely that the letter above addressed the three *fylkis* churches that we find in Firdafylke and Sygnafylke. The letter does not seem to apply to Hordafylke: if we take a look at Bishop's Audfinn's reply to the Archbishop's request we see that the churches in Skåle, Kinsarvik, and Hamre were expected to pay 12 *eyrir* each. Vangen church in Voss on the other hand should pay 3 *merkr*. When the total amount is calculated from the

¹⁷⁶ DN.IV.239. [1339] *Hakon etc. sender allum monnum i Nordfyrda fylki...*

¹⁷⁷ DN.VIII.150. (1342) ... *Fyrdafylki nærðra ok sydra lutunum...*

¹⁷⁸ DN.VII.127. [1328] *En um subsidium pape latum ver so utgræidazst jnnan Fiarda[fylke] [...] [pe]ninga af hveriu fylki med þeirri græin at fylkiss prester hverr lyker mork af sinu godze ok hans kirkia lyker adra mork af sinu godze...*

document it seems clear that the 3 *merkr* were the total both for the church and the priest, the same for Kinsarvik, and therefore every other church mentioned in the document.¹⁷⁹ That means that the church and priest at Voss were expected to pay half a *merkr* more than the amount asked from the *fylki* churches and priests in Firdafylke and probably Sygnafylke as well, providing that Sygnafylke had been included in the letter from Archbishop Eilif.¹⁸⁰

As the *fylki* churches should pay more than the other churches within each *fylki* it seems clear that Vangen church in Voss must be the *fylki* church for Hordafylke. That again means that the *fylki* priest in 1306, mentioned above in connection to Skåle church, must have been the priest in Vangen church in Voss.

As to the question whether the quarters of Hordafylke became *fylki* later on, there is a document that supports that theory. In 1400 the parish of Starnes is said to be in Voss *fylki* and not within Voss quarter.¹⁸¹

3.2.1.3 Vangen church in Voss; the main church for Hordafylke?

Tryti used the word “hovedkirke” or main church twice to describe Vangen church. This despite the fact that she never really discussed whether there was just one main church in Hordafylke by that time (14th century) or whether there were perhaps four main churches. A problem she addressed when she pointed out that there were *hofud* priests at three churches in Hordafylke, which might mean that the old quarter churches had been elevated to a main church status. She does not, however, use the term main church to describe Hamre church (Nordhordland), Kinsarvik church (Hardanger), or Skåle church (Sunnhordland), but rather the term quarter churches.¹⁸²

Not before the early 14th century do we find documents that name priests and other personnel at the church in Vangen. Sometime before December 6th 1303 a priest by the name of Peter had been priest in Vangen and presumably the *hofud* priest. He had by then already

¹⁷⁹ The total amount for Voss and Hardanger was 11 *merkr*. If we add all the amounts given in *merkr* for the churches in these two quarters, we get the amount 7,5 *merkr*. That must include the amount the priests or we'd get a total of 15 *merkr*. 11 *merkr* minus 7,5 *merkr* leaves 3,5 *merkr* but some churches should pay an amount measured in *eyrir*, the total amount of which was 54 *eyrir*. That amount divided by 3,5 *merkr* gives us 15,5 *eyrir* per *merkr*. The bishop asked that the amount be paid in weight money, an amount that varied according to how much silver there was in the coins. For more information see Brøgger, A. W. 1938 and Steinnes, Asgaut 1936.

¹⁸⁰ DN.I.206. [1329]

¹⁸¹ DN.I.571. (1400) ... *Stafnes kirkio sokn j Vosse fylki...*

¹⁸² Tryti 1987. 444, 451-455.

passed away probably as early as the year before.¹⁸³ There had been another priest at Vangen church whose name is not known, only that it begins with the letter J. It might have been Jon (ON), which was a common name. He is mentioned in a document dated to ca. 1300.¹⁸⁴

Next we find the priest Solfe, who sent a letter in ca. 1303 where he addressed himself as the priest in Vangen in Voss.¹⁸⁵ After him there were the priest Fredrik who was the priest in Vangen between 1315 and 1323¹⁸⁶ and the priest Gudleik in Vangen found in two documents from 1327 and 1330.¹⁸⁷

In several documents between 1315 and 1338 a certain Solfe (Saalfwe, Saulfi) Ivarsson is said to be both a canon in Christchurch in Bergen as well as the *subcollector* of the tithe to the Pope. He is in Vangen church in 1315 where he signed a document together with Symon Ivarsson canon in Christchurch and Fredrik priest in Vangen. Another thing worth mentioning is that in 1315, not only were the two canons and Fredrik priest present at the church to sign an ordinary document as witnesses to a transaction between two lay persons in Voss, but the head priests at the quarter churches Hamar in Sunnhordland (Hordafylke) and Tønjum in Lærdal (Sygnafylke), as well as the priests at both Lindås church (Sunnhordland) and Evanger (Voss).¹⁸⁸

Two years later both Solfe and Symon signed another document in Vangen church, but this time Fredrik priest is not present. There are, however, two men present that are titled *vicarii* at the church in Vangen. In 1338 Solfe has become old and fragile according to Bishop Håkon in Bergen.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸³ **DN.I.97.** (1303) ... *En þeir iattaðo þar imote at fylgia Suoluæigu til laga æftir kunnostu sinni æf hon hæfðe nokot rett til kall a ærfingium sira Petrs vm þat .iiij. manadar mata bol ær sægizt at han borgaðe Æinare pinnung frialst j Tæn firir Odde kægðu...*

¹⁸⁴ **DN.X.5.** [c. 1300]. ...*J. prestr a Vange...*

¹⁸⁵ **DN.II.71.** [ca. 1303] *Allu raðe mins herra Hakonar Norex konungs i Bergwin sendir Solfe prestr a Wange a Woss...*

¹⁸⁶ **DN.V.61.** (1315) ... *Fridrikr prestr a Vanga...*; **DN.II.141.** [ca. 1320] ...*Fredikr prestr a Vange...*; **DN.I.171.** (1323) *Friðikr prestr a Vange a Wors...*

¹⁸⁷ **DN.XXI.37.** (1327) ...*gudleikur prestr a vange...*; **DN.I.210.** (1330) ...*sira Gudeleyki presti a Wange a Woss...*

¹⁸⁸ **DN.V.61.** (1315).

¹⁸⁹ **DN.V.61.** (1315) ... *Symon Juars son ok Saulfi Juars son korsbræðr aat Cristkirkiu j Berghwin, Fridrikr prestur a Vanga...*; **DN.I.151.** (1317) ...*Symun Juars son ok Saulfi Juars son korsbræðr at Cristkirkiu j Biorgwin. Þorer prestr a Æwongum. Amundi ok Og mundr vicarii a Wange...*; **DN.IV.186.** (1329) ...*Saulfa Jvarssyni oc Jone Arnasyni korsbræðrom varom, er þa varo subcollectores pavatiundar um allan Noregh...*; **DN.VIII.105.** (1338) ...*skipaðom ver viðrtokumann ok gæymslumann yðars godz. sira Saalfwa varn korsbroðor. veenter oss med guðs vilia. at han skal þat væl gera. þar til er þer skipir einhwern annan til. er þer vilir at framleides skuli gæyma. so sem oss synist. Þynnist her bæðe vttan hus ok so innan. til godra vmboðs manna. þo er af sliku at kiosa. sem eftir er ef yðr likar so. sem gud gæymi alla þa. jkki traust er a þi. at sira Saalfwe meghi þat gera. bæde saker vanmaattar sins ok so elli.*

The name Solfe is not a common name and his presence in Vangen seems to suggest that Solfe Ivarsson canon at Christchurch in Bergen might be the priest Solfe in Vangen church. A canon does not have to be a priest, but he can hold both offices. Alternatively he might have been a prebendary receiving income from Vangen church.

Eindrid Peterson is the *hofud* priest at Vangen from at least 1339-1348,¹⁹⁰ which we know from the documents that name him as such. (See chapter 3.2.1.1 above.) But he is mentioned three times, in ca. 1339, 1346, and 1347 as simply the priest in Vangen. The first is a letter from Bishop Håkon to the assistant priest in Vangen, concerning a man who refuses to pay the tithe to the bishop, the church, and the priest, whom we from the context see is Eindrid Petersson. The other two letters concern a dispute between a layman and the priest in Vinje over a farm in Voss. The official in Bergen asked Eindrid priest at Vangen church and the priest in Evanger to summon the two men and settle the dispute. When their effort failed, they summoned the two men to a meeting with the official in Bergen a month later.¹⁹¹

A priest by the name of Eirik Andersson is said to be the priest at Vangen in 1352-1353.¹⁹² Whether he is the beneficiary or the assistant priest cannot be seen from the context. I have, however listed him among the head priests in the table below.

Jon Thronardson was the beneficiary, or *hofud* priest, at Vangen between June 1365 and Mai 1366 as we saw in chapter 3.2.1.1 above, but he had held the office longer. He is said to be the provost in Voss in a document from 1364, an office that was connected to the office of *hofud* priest at Vangen. In one document from 1365 he is titled only as *sira* (sire) Jon in Vangen.¹⁹³ There is no doubt, however, that he was both the provost and head priest at Vangen the entire time.

The priest Arne Askelsson is said to be the *hofud* priest in Vangen church in 1375 and 1384, he is also titled as the provost in Voss in 1379 when we are told that he had been away on other errands for the Church. In a fourth document, from 1376, he is only titled as the priest at Vangen church.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ DN.I.299. (1346) ... *sira Æindrida a Vange...*; DN.I.304. (1347) ... *Eindriði Petrs son ok Eirikr Vikings son prestar a Vaange ok Æfangom...*; DN.V.144. (1340) ... *sira Eindriði hofuðprestr a Vaange...*; DN.V.204. (1347-1348) ...*si[ra Ei]ndriða Petrsyni hofuðpreste a Vange...*; DN.X.36. [1339] ...*sira Æindrida...*

¹⁹¹ DN.X.36. [1339] ... *sira Æindrida...*; DN.I.299. (1346) ... *sira Æindrida a Vange...*; DN.I.304. (1347) ...*Eindriði Petrs son ... prestar a Vaange...*

¹⁹² DN.XV.19. (1352-1353) ... *sira Eirikr Andersson prestr a Wanghe a Wors ...*

¹⁹³ DN.VI.266. (1365); DN.XXI.117. [1365]; DN.XXI.121; DN.I.383. (1364) ... *Jon Thronardson profastr á Wangenom a Voss...*; DN.I.385. (1365) ... *sira Jone a Vanghe...*

¹⁹⁴ DN.II.442. (1375); DN.II.484. (1384); DN.XXI.154. (1379) ... *Sira Arne profasts...*; DN.V.298. (1376) ...*Arne Askelsson prester aa Vangenom aa Vos...*

The Major Churches in Norway and Iceland. A comparison.

A priest by the name of Nikolas is mentioned in a testimonial document tied to a conflict over the vicarage at Vangen. The document was written on February 14th 1548, and we are told that the predecessors of the current parish priest, Sone Eriksson, were first Håkon, who built the vicarage in question, and before him the priests Arne and Nikolas who had paid for the maintenance of the actual vicarage out of their own pockets.¹⁹⁵

Håkon was the *hofud* priest in Vangen in 1391¹⁹⁶ and Arne is the provost Arne Askelsson mentioned here above. Nikolas would then fit between provost Jon and provost Arne sometime between 1367 and 1374.

According to Gjert Milzow, who was the vicar at Vangen in the 17th century, Håkon was still the priest at Vangen church in 1423.¹⁹⁷ The vicar Milzow had access to many documents that have since been lost, as the documents concerning the properties, rights, and privileges of a church were traditionally kept at the church.

Two testimonials give an account of how certain honourable persons were present when Sir (*herra*) Nikolas Pedersen priest in Vangen asked that any old and honest persons who knew where the boundaries for the vicarage were would show them to him. This was a common practice when someone received some piece of land and was meant to diminish later conflicts. This was also done when conflict did arise and those who knew right from wrong in the matter described where the boundaries lay, or as in this case, went out with witnesses and showed them the markings, probably stones, that marked the boundaries. The testimonial documents are from 1457 and 1458, and in the latter we are told that the honourable man Sjur bell ringer had showed the markings to the witnesses.¹⁹⁸

In 1446 Sir Nikolas is said to be a canon at the Christchurch in Bergen as well as the priest in Vangen church. Sone Eriksson on the other hand is said to be the parish priest in Vangen church. A few years earlier, in 1439, Sir Nikolas was titled as the parish priest in

¹⁹⁵ DN.XXI.490. (1458) ... *sone eriksson sokna prestr a vors spordhe mek hvar som preststwffwna bygdhe a Wanghe, veth ek ey annat sannare for gwdhi en sire haqven bygdhe fornempda prest(st)wffw met sin eyghen kostnadh... oc hørdhe ek aldrek annath mina foreldra sigia en sire arne oc sire niclas som prester vore a Vangen fore Sire haqven ath the læta tekkia oc halla vppæ allum presthuhumen en einghin annar.*

¹⁹⁶ DN.II.528. (1391)

¹⁹⁷ Berg 1977: 179.

¹⁹⁸ DN.XXI.493. ... *Hæderlige Mand Her Niclas Pedersen, Sognepræst paa Woss ...; DN.XXI.486.... Her Niclas Pedersen Sogne-Præst paa Woss krævede og bad for Guds Skyld og St. Michels ...*

Voss and a canon in Bergen.¹⁹⁹ Sone Eriksson was also a canon at the Christchurch in Bergen, as two documents from 1454 and 1456 show.²⁰⁰

The *hofud* priests at Vangen had *leigu* priests (assistant priests) to help with the spiritual guidance in the vast and populous parish. It is not too often we find them in the documents but they surface every once in a while, the *vicarii* Ámund and Øgmund witnessed a transaction in 1315, to which they bore witness in 1317.²⁰¹ The *vicarius* Jon Botolfsson is mentioned in a document from 1324²⁰² and again in 1326 together with the *vicarius* Kolbeinn when they witnessed, in the vicars' loft (*leiguprestaloptenu*), Gudbrand Petersson receive a gift from another man.²⁰³ The *vicarius* Kolbeinn witnessed another transaction of Gudbrand in the vicars' loft in 1330.²⁰⁴

A man by the name of Jon is the *vicarius* in 1338,²⁰⁵ but whether it is the same Jon as mentioned in 1324 and 1326 or not, is not known. Jon was a common name. A man by the name of Thorsteinn is said to be a priest and *vicarius* at Vangen in [1339], it is obvious from the same letter that the *hofud* priest, Eindrid Petersson is in Bergen.²⁰⁶

Finally there is the priest Thorer Tholfson who in 1391 witnessed a transaction together with Håkon *hofud* priest in Vangen, to which they gave their written testament. Thorer is almost certainly the *vicarius* of Håkon.²⁰⁷

¹⁹⁹ DN.XXI.377. (9.maí.1439) ... herra Niclas pædherson cannuck I bergen oc sokne prest a Vos...; DN.XXI.433. (25.mai.1446) ... herra Nickles pædersson Cannick j berguen oc prest a Vos oc herra sona eriksson som nu er sokneprestr j sama stad...

²⁰⁰ DN.I.835. (1456) ...Sone Eriksson corsbroder at Cristkirkio j Bergwin...; DN.IX.322. (1454) ... Sone Erikson koorsbroder ath Kristhkirio i Berguen och prester a Vos...

²⁰¹ DN.V.61. (1315); DN.I.151. (1317) ... Amundi ok Ogmundr vicarii a Wange ...

²⁰² DN.I.178. (1324) ...Jon Botolfs sun leiguprestr a Wange...

²⁰³ DN.I.187. (1326) Ollum monnum þeim sem þetta bref sia eda hæyra senda Ion ok Kolbein uicarii a Uange... uaro mer j hia j leiguprestaloptenu a Uange er Haldor dukr gaf Gudbrande Petrssyni a Finnini buit suerd...

²⁰⁴ DN.III.157. (1330) ... Kolbæin læigu prestr a Vange a Vorss ... varo mer j hia ok sam a handabond þeirra Gudbrandz a Finnini Petors sunar ok Oddz Halla sunar j læigu presta lopteno a fyr næmdre Vorss ...; DN.I.100. ... þar varo þær j hia a Vange i præstofunni, ok sa handda tæke þeira sira Petrs ok Æinars...

²⁰⁵ DN.I.254. (1338) ... sira Ione leigupreste...

²⁰⁶ DN.X.36. [1339] Hakon etc. sendr Þorsteini preste vicario a Vanghe. q. g. ok sina. Oss hefir til æyrna komet af ymisra manna frasoghn. þriotzka ok vlydni. er Anfinner a Hwithæimi gerer mote hæilaghre kirkiu ok hennar þionostu monnum j. þui. at han vil æighi luka tiund sina eftir sinni skyldu kirkiunni oss. ok prestenom ok þess annars at han enzar hwarke soknom ne loghlegdom. stemfnom, Meghom ver þat med enghom hætte vmbæra. þui er þat sanner vili vaar ok fulkomet boð, at þu lesir þetta vaart bref firir honum, stemfnande honum æin tima. annan tima ok þriðia tima med alyktar dome, so at han se komenn til vaar, innan þess halfs manadar. sem han hefir þetta vaart bref hæyrt, kirkiunni, oss ok sira Æindrida at swara ok reet at gera. eftir hæilaghrar kirkiu loghum firir þessa sina framferd. ...

²⁰⁷ DN.II.528. (1391) Þat se ollum godom monnum kunnikt at ek sira Hakon Gunnarsson howd prester a Vos ok sira Þorer Þolfsson...

The Major Churches in Norway and Iceland. A comparison.

Gudbrand Petersson, mentioned above, is of interest as he is mentioned quite often in documents written more often than not in Vangen, and quite often he is said to have been in the vicars' loft in Vangen.²⁰⁸ In a document from 1330 he titles himself as a cleric. The document is a transaction between the cleric Gudbrand and the priest at Vangen, Gudleyk, witnessed by the *vicarius* Guttorm and the butler Sigurd.²⁰⁹ Gudbrand was the son of Peter in Finne²¹⁰ who was a prominent man in Voss. Peter had another son, Orm who seems to have inherited the position and the land at Finne after their father, and which, at the death of Orm, became Gudbrand's inheritance.²¹¹

It is very unlikely that Gudbrand had been a cleric at another church than Vangen, given both his position and his family connections, unless of course he had studied in Bergen and had a position as a cleric there. I have, however, listed him in the table below under "Other priests & clerics" at Vangen church as he seems to be present in the vicars' loft quite frequently. According to P. A. Munch Vangen church had been Gudbrand's second home, the first was of course the Finne estate.²¹²

In 1303 a number of men testified that they had witnessed a transaction between the priest in Vangen and another man that had taken place in the vicarage earlier. Among those who were present were Bjarne *klokkare* (bell ringer) and Erlend *gio maðr* (violin player).²¹³

A second bell ringer at the church is mentioned in a connection with the 15th century conflict over the vicarage, Sjur bell ringer.²¹⁴ He is not mentioned in the table below, as he was probably not at Vangen in the 14th century.

²⁰⁸ In the vicars' loft: **DN.III.175.** (1330); **DN.I.763.** (1330); **DN.I.187.** (1326). In Hallsteinsstofa in Vangen (?): **DN.III.164.**

²⁰⁹ **DN.I.210.** (1330) *Ollum monnum þeim sœm þetta bref sia æða heyra. sendir Guðbrandr klerkr sonn Petrs bonda a Finnini q. g. ok sina, ek vil yðr kunnikt gera, at ek hefir sælt sira Gudeleyki presti a Wange a Woss. matar bol jardar j Skemmo luta i leygu firir .v. kyrlog ku gylð. hefir han nu lokit mer .iij. kyrlog en tuau standa mer heimma, er ek atte hanum, ok eitt spann. jtem [friallsadi ek Gudbrandr sira Gudleyki firsagða jorð [með ollum lvnendom er til liggia waar i hia þærso kaupi sira Gudþormr leyghu prestr hans, ok Sigurðr briti ok vitnis menn ...*

²¹⁰ **DN.XV.5.** (1321); **DN.III.175.** (1333).

²¹¹ **DN.I.186.** (1326).

²¹² **BK:** P. 127. *De Gudbrando (Petri filio) in Finnin, prædium memorabile non procul ab ecclesia Vangensi, ceterisque huius, aliorumve prædiorum Vangensium incolis...*

²¹³ **DN.I.100.** [1303 ?] *Allum mannum þeim sœm þetta bref sia æða hæyra sændir Arne j Grasgarðe Jon notarius Thostæins son ok Ormr kafle q. g. ok sina. ... handsældo þæssir mæn vitni sit, Hollroðe Andrese mage hans, ok Halla a Rogne, Biarne klokkare, Ærlændr gio maðr ok Suæin Matz son, at þar varo þæir j hia a Vange i præstofunni, ok sa handda tæke þæira sira Petrs ok Æinars, at sira Petr sældi Æinare...*

²¹⁴ **DN XXI.493.** ... *Hæderlige Mand Siuur Klocher...*

Table 3.1 - The priests, minor clerics, and other personnel at Vangen in the 14th century²¹⁵

Head priest	Title	Year	Other clerics	Title	Year	Other personell	Year
J[on]	<i>sira</i> , priest	ca. 1300	Ámund and Øgmundr	<i>vicarii</i>	1317	Bjarne bell ringer Erland violin player	bf. 1303 bf. 1303
Peter	<i>sira</i> , priest	bf. 1303					
Solfe	priest	1303					
Fredrik	priest	1315	Jon Botolfsson Jon and Kolbeinn Gudbrand Petersson	<i>leigu</i> -priest <i>vicarii</i>	1324 1326		
	priest <i>sira</i> , priest	ca. 1320 1323					
Gudleik	priest	1327	ibid. Kolbeinn Guttorm	cleric <i>leigu</i> -priest <i>leigu</i> -priest	1330 1330 1330	Sigurd butler	1330
	<i>sira</i> , priest	1330					
Eindrid Petersson	<i>sira</i> , <i>hofud</i> priest	[1339]	Jon Thorsteinn	<i>leigu</i> -priest priest, <i>vicarius</i>	1338 [1339]		
	<i>sira</i> , <i>hofud</i> priest	1340					
	<i>sira</i> , priest	1346					
	<i>sira</i> , priest	1347					
	<i>sira</i> , <i>hofud</i> priest	1347-1348					
Eirik Andersson	<i>sira</i> , priest	1352-1353					
Jon Thronarson	provost	1364					
	<i>sira</i> , <i>hofud</i> -priest	[1365]					
	<i>sira</i> , <i>hofud</i> -priest <i>hofud</i> -priest	1365 1366					
Nikolas	<i>sira</i>	?					
Arne Askelsson	<i>sira</i> , <i>hofud</i> -priest	1375					
	priest	1376					
	<i>sira</i> , provost	1379					
	<i>sira</i> , <i>hofud</i> -priest	1384					
Håkon Gunnarsson	<i>sira</i> , <i>hofud</i> -priest	1391	Thorer Tholfson	<i>sira</i> , priest	1391		
	priest <i>sira</i> , priest	? 1423					

The building of the current church in Vangen had begun already in 1271, as a letter to the people of Voss from King Magnus Håkonson (1263-1280) shows. He thanks them for their decision to build a church of stone, rather than a timber church, just as his father King Håkon (1217-1263) had advised them. In his letter he reminds them of his former letter that he sent to them when the stone building had already been begun. The former letter is now only preserved in the reference of the latter. In it he thanked them for their act of grandeur and likewise asked them to provide both timber and stone for the new church.²¹⁶

²¹⁵ DN.I.97; DN.I.100; DN.I.151; DN.I.171; DN.I.178; DN.I.187; DN.I.210; DN.I.254; DN.I.299; DN.I.304; DN.I.383; DN.I.385; DN.II.71; DN.II.141; DN.II.442; DN.II.484; DN.II.528; DN.III.157; DN.IV.2; DN.V.61; DN.V.144; DN.V.204; DN.V.298; DN.VI.266; DN.VIII.50; DN.X.36; DN.XV.19; DN.XXI.37; DN.XXI.47; DN.XXI.117; DN.XXI.121; DN.XXI.154; DN.XXI.490; Berg 1977: 179.

²¹⁶ DN.IV.2. (1271) *Magnus Haconar sun Noregs konungr saendir ollum mannum i Vangs kirkiu sokn q. g. oc sina. Unið þer margfallæga oc sua vilium ver þacca yðr. at þer havet mannlæga tilraðet at gera yðr steinkirkiu i stað firir trekirkiu eptir rað oc firirsogn vars virðulex herra [Hakonar] Noregs konungs foður vars. manu þer þar firir hafa bæðe auusu af guði. oc sua skildu þer hafa vinatto af os [oc ollum goðom monnum. Nu] af þui [at yður tilstofnan] oc goðvili er væl til læiðar comenn. þa latet [þer oc þ]at [nu sua til] ændalycta fullgæra [sem i] vpphave var byriat. oc þessa biðium ver yður þacsamlæga. at þer [duget draengilæga] aller saman. þegar guð [gefr færi a]. oc reidit griot oc viðu til kirkiugærðarennar sæm mannlæg gata liggr. æptir þui sæm ver hauum*

The Major Churches in Norway and Iceland. A comparison.

When the new church at Vangen, the church of St Michael²¹⁷ was built, the old church had been destroyed, either by a catastrophe or by way of making room for the new church. When the vicar in Vangen Gjert Milzow wrote his history of the priests in Vangen in the late 17th century, he mentioned a legend about the church. It had taken many years to build the new church, some said as many as 7 years, and in the meantime mass was held in two large lofts, one which was in the vicarage and the other on the Finne manor.²¹⁸ The latter still stands and is commonly referred to as *Finnesloftet*.

The church was consecrated on the day of St Urban in 1277, according to Milzow. If the building process had already been started under the rule of King Håkon who had asked for a church of stone, it took at least 14 years to build the church.²¹⁹

For more information about the architecture, the building, or its interior see Muri, Sigurd (1971), Berg, Arne (1977), and Ekroll, Øystein and Morten Stige (2000).

3.2.1.4 Stedje church, the main church in Sygnafylke

Tryti identified the church in Stedje as the main church in Sygnafylke and pointed out that the chapel Åberge had probably been an annex from Stedje.²²⁰ Professor P. A. Munch had, however, done much the same in 1843. He pointed out that although the principal part of the parish of Stedje had been Sogndal, which in the 19th century was the entire parish of the church, it had been the church for all of Sygnafylke:²²¹

Ex his ecclesiis Steðjensis adhuc manet, & est principalis parochiæ *Sogndal*...
Ecclesiam Stedjensem principalem fuisse ex omnibus Sognensibus, concludi forte potest
ex litteris Audfinni episcopi editis die 25 Julii ann. 1328...

Munch based his conclusion on much the same evidence as Tryti did some 150 years later, namely the open letter from Bishop Audfinn to all the men in Sygnafylke where he tells them that Thore priest in Stedje is the *hofud* priest in all of Sogn, i.e. Sygnafylke,²²² which was discussed in chapter 3.2.1.1 above.

aðr skipat [með tillogum] oc [um mælt] i þui brefe varo er ver gærðum þegar at andverðu þa er upp var havet steinvirkit...

²¹⁷ DN.XXI.486.... *Her Niclas Pedersen Sogne-Præst paa Woss krævede og bad for Guds Skyld og St. Michels ...*; DN.XXI.493; Øystein Ekroll and Morten Stige: P. 150.

²¹⁸ Berg 1977: 177.

²¹⁹ Berg 1977: 13, 177.

²²⁰ Tryti 1987: 425, 435, 438.

²²¹ BK: P. 106.

²²² BK: Pp. 106-107. Munch prints the letter in the annotations.

The first priest we find in Stedje is Arne who in [1308] sent a letter to Bishop Arne in Bergen.²²³ He is mentioned again in a letter to King Hákon in 1315 where he has been appointed along with four other men to help divide the land of Kvåle between two people, in accordance to the King's demand. There was a church at Kvåle and one of the four men appointed with Arne priest in Stedje was Arnald priest in Kvåle. A cleric by the name of Einar was also present but whether he was a cleric at Stedje church or Kvåle church, located quite close to Stedje, is not certain.²²⁴

In *Björgynjar Kálfskinn*, hence **BK**, the income of Stedje church is listed as it was in the year 1316. There is also a small clause where it says that the priest Arne paid, or gave the church 8 cows.²²⁵ He is also mentioned in a document from 1322-1323 about the forthcoming visitation of the Bishop in Bergen. The document is interesting as it tells us how many nights the Bishop and his entourage should stay at each church and how much food and alcohol the priests at the quarter churches in Firdafylke and Sygnafylke should provide at the forthcoming visitation of the Bishop in Bergen. The bishop should stay 4 nights at Stedje church and Arne should provide beer, drinks, bread, wine, butter, and anything else that would suffice for two nights.²²⁶

Bishop Audfinn (1314-1330) visited Stedje church in 1329, at which time he gave the benefice Dale to his canon Arnfinn who was a student in Canterbury. The previous beneficiary, the canon Hákon Thorisson (Thorie), had given up the benefice some months ago.²²⁷ Audfinn had made this transaction while in Stedje, which suggests that when the bishop was on visit, the clergy in the surrounding area, as well as the parishioners met the bishop at the main and quarter churches, if there were no specific tasks that awaited him at the minor churches like the consecration of a new altar.

Thore Fredriksson, who was the *hofud* priest in Stedje in 1328, is mentioned in several documents between 1328 and 1361, although the last three of these, from 1358-1361 are testimonies of what had taken place in Bishop Gisbrikt's (1349-1369) first visit in Sogn

²²³ **DN**.IX.80. [1308]. ... *Arne prestr a Steðiv...*

²²⁴ **DN**.VI.84. (1315) ... *Siðan nemdom vitt mæd okkr sira Arna prest a Steðiu sira Arnald prest a Huale ... þar nest baro þeir vitne Æinar klærker...*

²²⁵ **BK**: P. 35.

²²⁶ **DN**.VII.98. [1332-1333] *I Soghne in primis a Stediu .iiij. neeter oc læggi ar til sira Arne, viij tunnur biors, læzst mungats, tvæggia punda baxter brauds oc umfram fluur half tunna viins, smör oc annan budarvörd sem ar till höyrer oc spiidz. ...; and BK: P. 89; Tryti 1987: 419-420.*

²²⁷ **DN**.V.81. (1329) ... *ecclesia [de Dal] domino Arnfinno clerico nostro Cantebryggis jam studenti diu ante collata per nos non fuisset, videlicet in festo sanctorum Cosme et Damiani proxime preterito, cum apud Stediū in Soghnia visitacionis officio fungebamur, maxime quia tempus semestre a resignacione domini Haquini Thorie canonici nostri...*

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after the Black Death. Bishop Thorstein of Bergen (1342-1349) had died in the plague mentioned, so Gisbrikt's visitation at Stedje probably took place no later than 1352.²²⁸

The priest Thore Fredriksson in Stedje was also a canon at the Christchurch in Bergen and perhaps identical with the Thore who was the Bishop's official in Bergen. In Bishop's Gisbrikt's first visit, Audfinn Sighvatsson priest at Stedje was present when the canon Thore Fredriksson gave another man a piece of land.²²⁹ In 1358 and 1364 Audfinn is titled as the provost in Stedje.²³⁰

Between 1328 and 1338, or at the same time as Thore was *hofud* priest at Stedje, a man by the name of Thorgeir Bjarnason, who was an administrator in Bergen, was referred to as Þorgeir in Stedje. He might have had a prebend in Stedje church, but as his order is never disclosed we cannot be sure if he was a priest or had only received one of the minor consecrations.²³¹

In 1396 Guttormr Eilifsson canon in Christchurch in Bergen was witness to a transaction at Stedje church, but whether he was tied to the church in Stedje is not disclosed.²³²

Finally *herra* (Sir) Peter Jonsson canon in Bergen had been the parish priest in Stedje and the provost in Sogn, i.e. Sygnafylke, in 1463. Whether he had resigned both offices at

²²⁸ **DN.I.197.** (1328); **DN.I.255.** (1333); **DN.I.299.** (1346); **DN.I.304.** (1347); **DN.I.353.** (1358); **DN.I.370.** (1361); **DN.I.371.** (1361); **DN.II.291.** (1348); **DN.XVI.8.** (1348).

²²⁹ **DN.I.299.** (1346) *Officialis j Biorghwin...*; **DN.I.304.** (1347) *Erlighom manne sira Thore officiali j Berghwinn...*, both documents are from the same man although his name is only mentioned in the latter. **DN.II.291.** (1348) ... *Porer Friðiks son korsbroðer at Christ kirkiv i Berghvin...*; **DN.XVI.8.** (1348) ... *Porer Friðiks son, korsbroðer at Christkirkiv i Berghvin...*; Also: **DN.I.353.** (1358) ... *Þar varum mit j hia a Stendio i Sokna dall j Sogne en herra Gisbrikt biskup j Borgun vittade heilagra kirkna j fyr nemdo Sogne nesta eptir man daudan en þeir heldo hondum saman sira Þorir Fridriks...*; **DN.I.370.** (1361) ... *a Stædiu j Soghna dall j Soghne er herra Gisbrikt biskup j Biorghwin vittade hæilaghra kirkna j fyrnefndo Soghne nest eftir mandaudan ... sira Þorer Fridriksson...*; **DN.I.371.** (1361) *Auðun prester a Stædiu q. g. ok sina. ek gerir yðr kunnigt at þar var ek hia ok hæyrði a a Stædiu a þi fyrsta are er min herra Gisbrikt með guðs naad biskup j Biorghwin visiteraðe Soghna at sira Þorer Fridriksson korsbroder aat Kristkirkiu j Biorghwin...*

²³⁰ **DN.VIII.169.** (1358) *discretis viris. domino Audmeno curato et preposito rurali in Stadhum.* In **RN.VI.500** he is identified as Audfinn provost in Stedje although the form Stadhum is a very unusual variation for Stedje. It is probably a mistake for Stadhia. Stadhum is usually the Latin version of Stad, Stað, or Staðr. **DN.III.339.** (1364) ...*discretis viris dominis Audweno Sighwati preposito de Stediu Bergensis diocesis...* Also in **DI.III.173.**

²³¹ **DN.II.165.** (1328) ... *Þorgeir a Stædiu...*; **DN.II.223.** (1337) ... *Þorgeir Biarnnar son ... radsmenn j þeim sama stað...*; **DN.I.253.** (1338) ... *Þorgeir a Stædiu. radismaðr i Biorghvin...*

²³² **DN.IV.665.** (1396) ... *Gudþormer Eilifsson korsbroðhir aat Kristkirkiu j Bergwin ... Ok til sannenda her vm setto mit okkor jncigle firir þetta bref er gort var a Stedhiu...*

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Stedje is not obvious but probable. His colleague Niclas Pedersen in Voss, resigned only the office of parish priest, which seems to be a more inferior office than the *hofud* priest office.²³³

3.2.1.5 The main church in Firdafylke

The main church for Firdafylke has not been identified, and as to a central location in the *fylki* none of the quarter churches seems to stand out. Knut Helle, among others, has suggested that Selja had been the location of the main church before it was established as the See.²³⁴ There were several churches on the island of Selja in the Middle Ages, as we were told by Oddr *munkr* (monk), the writer of the Saga of King Olav Tryggvason. Oddr said that there were 5 churches on the island, but then he named 6: the *fylki* church, Christchurch, the church of the Virgin Mary, the church of St Michael, the church of St Alban, and the church of St Sunniva.²³⁵

I shall not go into details about the churches in Selja, but Alf Tore Hommedal and Marit Nybø argued that the church of St Alban is that of the monastery ruins, but which Nybø has proved was begun and built as a Cathedral. The church of St Sunniva is a stone church built up in the mountain above the monastery and the church of St Michael is the one that is in the cave where the relics were discovered. A Christchurch is usually connected to the bishops, which leaves the church of the Virgin Mary and the *fylki* church. Hommedal believes that the church at Bø was dedicated to the Virgin Mary and that it was the *fylki* church as well.²³⁶

Tryti argued that it was not plausible that there had been a fifth church which was the main church in addition to the quarter churches in the *fylki*, as the existence of one main church and one quarter church within one of the four quarters was not a likely scenario.²³⁷

If the main church in Firdafylke should be sought among the quarter churches, is it possible to see which of the four could have been the main church? Looking at a map there does not seem to be an obvious candidate, although all four are located near the shore and as such easily accessible for the local population.

²³³ DN.IV.953. (1463) ... *her Pæder Jansson kannuc j Bergen sem soknaprester war i Stedio oc profaster i Sogn...* The word “war” is the past tens of the verb ‘to be’.

²³⁴ Helle 1997: 243;

²³⁵ Rindal 1997: 310; Also Nybø 2000: 165.

²³⁶ Nybø 2000; Hommedal 1997a; Hommedal 1997b; Hommedal 1996. Alf Tore Hommedal’s theory about the *fylki* church as the church at Bø in Selja – now situated in Selje on the mainland – is one that we have discussed and I find very interesting. He has, however, not published this theory to my knowledge. I shall therefore have to contend myself with saying that he is the author of said theory.

²³⁷ Tryti 1981: 422.

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A document I have mentioned above, in connection to the church in Stedje, might be of help here, namely the visitation document from 1322-1333. As in Sygnafylke, the bishop required accommodation for twelve nights that were divided between the quarter churches. It looks as though the bishop should begin his visit in Eid and continue from there southwards to Vereid, Brua, and Askvoll. He would then go to Sygnafylke, starting his visit at the main church in Stedje, continuing from there to Tønjum then Rygg to finish his visit in Hopperstad in Vik.²³⁸

All the churches in both Firdafylke and Sygnafylke were easily accessible from the sea so we can assume that the bishop sailed with his entourage from Bergen to Eid. In Sygnafylke the first church is the main church, although the bishop would have to sail past Hopperstad church on his way to Stedje, suggesting that it was natural to begin the visit at the main church. Admittedly he would also pass the church on his way back out of the narrow fjord so we should perhaps not read too much into the fact that the visit began in Eid in Firdafylke.

The twelve nights were divided between the four churches thus: 4 nights at Eid, 3 nights at Vereid, 2 nights at Brua, and 3 nights at Askvoll. In Sygnafylke the bishop should stay 4 nights at both Stedje and Tønjum, while the other churches should only provide accommodations for two nights each. This does not seem to be conclusive, although we might again suggest that Eid had been the main church based on the 4 nights the bishop should stay there.

If we take a look at the food, wine, and other beverages the priests at the quarter churches should provide for the bishop's visit, we see that the priest at Eid, Gudleik should provide all that was needed for one night's stay, as should Arne who was the priest in Stedje, but so should the four priests who were named in connection with Tønjum church and the priest Bardur in Re who should provide food for the visit at Vereid church. Again this does not seem conclusive.

In chapter 3.2.1.1 above, we saw that the priest in Askvoll was referred to as the *hofud* priest. In much the same manner the priest at Eid church was referred to as *rector ecclesie*. I have already suggested that the two terms were synonymous. If we keep in mind that in the 14th century, and perhaps earlier, there were two parts of Firdafylke, Nordfjord and Sunnfjord, which were referred to on several occasions as *fylki*, we might suggest that in the

²³⁸ DN VII nr. 98.

14th century these were the two main churches of the old Firdafylke, Eid in Nordfjord *fylki* and Askvoll in Sunnfjord *fylki*.

Let us take a further look at the church in Eid.

The priest Gudleik at Eid church is mentioned in two other documents, both from 1322. The first is a mandate from Bishop Audfinn (1314-1330) to Gudleik to read the bishop's letter to Berg Kolbeinsson priest in Selje where he is on account of his defect of birth, reminded that he had to remain at his church. If Berg refused to go to his church and stay there, Gudleik should release him from his benefice.²³⁹

Gudleik read the bishop's letter to Berg in his vicarage in the presence of the abbot in Selja, the priest at the church in Sund and the *vicarius* of Berg, priest Marteinn.²⁴⁰ In both letters, the priest Berg in Selje and the priest Gudleik are addressed in the same manner.

In 1331 there was a *vicarius* at Eid church, the priest Sigurd.²⁴¹ This is however the only *vicarius* I have found mentioned in connection to the church in Eid. That is also the case at Selje, as the priest Marteinn is also the only *vicarius* I have found mentioned in connection to the church in Selje.

In 1341 Bishop Håkon sent a letter to his canons at Christchurch informing them that he, providing they will give their consent, had given Eid church together with the chapel in Stårheim to his canon Torbjørn Snorreson after the sudden resignation thereof by the former priest, Arnfinn Thordsson.²⁴² That the chapter in Christchurch had to give its consent to the selection of the new priest at Eid suggests that it had been a long lasting practice of selecting the priest from among the canons.

In 1329 Bishop Audfinn (1314-1330) had come into conflict with Archbishop Eilif (1311-1332) over the benefice in Dale in Sygnafylke, after the archbishop elected one of his canons as priest at the church despite the fact that Audfinn had himself given the benefice to

²³⁹ **DN.III.128.** (1322) *Littera monitoria ut dominus Bergho resideat in ecclesia sua de Selio. ... domino Gudlaco rectori ecclesie de Eyghi ... domino Berghone Kolbani rectore ecclesie de Selio ... sub pena privacionis ipsius beneficii...*

²⁴⁰ **DN.III.130** (1322) ... *Wirduleghom herra sinum Audfinni med gudz miskunn biskupe i Bergwin sendir broder Hemminger med þeirri samre miskunn abote i Selio Arne prester i Sundi oc Martæin læighu prester j Selio ... hæyrðum a at sira Gudlæiker prester at Æighi las upp bref ydart oc bodskapp firir sira Bærgh Kolbani er a Selio kirkio...*

²⁴¹ **DN.VIII.92.** (1331). ... *Siugurði leighu preste j Æyghi...*

²⁴² **DN IV nr. 251.** (1341) *Universis Christi fidelibus, presentes litteras inspecturis... Noverint igitur universi, nos ecclesiam beate Marie de Æyghi cum capella sibi annexa de Stofreim per resignationem spontaneam discreti viri domini Anfinni Thordonis tunc vacantem, dilecto nobis in Christo filio, domino Thorberno Snorronis, cum omnibus suis pertinenciis habitis et habendis, preter porcionem ipsarum, cum consensu capituli nostri canonice con tulisse. In cuius rei testimonium sigillum nostrum presentibus est appensum. Datum Bergis jdibus Junii anno domini millesimo trecentesimo quadragesimo primo.*

a canon of his, Arnfinn Thordsson student at Canterbury.²⁴³ The archbishop apparently refused to yield as Bishop Audfinn sent an appeal to the Pope regarding his canon and the benefice in Dale.²⁴⁴

It is possible that this is the man who was priest at Eid some 12 years later. What happened to Dale benefice is not known, but perhaps Bishop Audfinn did not manage to convince the Pope that he had been trod upon by the archbishop and had to give his canon another benefice, or Eid church with Stårheim chapel.

In 1386 there is a priest by name of Aslak Sigurdsson in Eid, whom I have not found mentioned again.²⁴⁵

Tryti argued that Stårheim had been an independent church with a parish in 1324, with a tithing area in **BK**, referred to as a church in 1340, but in 1341 as a chapel or an annex to Eid church. She interpreted this to mean that Stårheim had been an annex from Eid although with an independent parish.²⁴⁶

As to the document from 1324 I am afraid that Tryti has misunderstood the document as there is nothing therein that suggests that there was anything such as a parish of Stårheim. On the contrary Stårheim is called the land of Stårheim, e.g. farm, and the manor of Stårheim, never is there any mention of a church or a parish.²⁴⁷

The income of Bø church in Selja, also called Selje church, and the church of St Sunniva in Selja, is written together in **BK** in such a way as to make it impossible to know

²⁴³ **DN V** nr. 81. (1329) ... *ecclesia [de Dal] domino Arnfinno clerico nostro Cantebryggis jam studenti diu ante collata per nos non fuisset, videlicet in festo sanctorum Cosme et Damiani proxime preterito, cum apud Stediu in Soghnia visitacionis officio fungebamur, maxime quia tempus semestre a resignacione domini Haquini Thorie canonici nostri...*

²⁴⁴ **DN V** nr. 82. (1329) ...*appellacionis interjectio sit largita, nos Audfinnus dei gracia episcopus Bergensis nos et ecclesiam nostram a vobis, venerabilis pater et domine Elave, miseracione divina archiepiscopo Nidrosiensis, contra deum et justiciam sentientes aggravatos in immensum, eo quod ecclesiam de Dal infra limites nostre dyocesis situatam, quam infra semestre tempus a resignacione discreti viri H[aquini] Thorie canonici nostri in manus nostras rite factam, discreto viro domino Arnfinno Thordonis clerico nostro, canonicorum nostrorum...*

²⁴⁵ **DN III** nr. 465. (1386) ...*Asslacr Sivurdr son prestr i Øyghi...*

²⁴⁶ Tryti 1987: 429.

²⁴⁷ **DN I** nr. 176. (1324) *Ollum monnum þeim sœm þetta bref sea æða hæyra senda Gunnar Thomas son, Aslacr Olafs son Endriði Symonar son, Þorbiorn raðsmaðr j biskups garðe, ok Hælge Symonar son, Q. G. ok sina, sunnodagæn nesta æftir Michials messo, a setta are rikis vars virðulægs herra Magnusar Norægs Suyia ok Gota konongs. bað oss herra Ærlingr Viðkunnar son drotsete vars herra konongsens fyrnæmfðz mæð samþykkt Arnfinz skækio ok Annondar imbu ærfingia fru Þorbiorgar. at iorðena Stofræimar, meta ok vyrða herra Ærlingi till afirlaustnar ok hans oðall ær, ok fyrnæmfndir Arnfinr ok Anondr hofðo teket j arf æftir fru Þorbiorgo, ok mæð sinum goðom vilia, honom laustn a gafo, matum ver hæna firir fim merkr forngildar huert manaðarmataboll, j fulri abuð ok bygging. En æf fyrnæmfð iorð virðizt æigi j fulri bygging sakar husa, þa minki þat j auralykt æftir firsogðo mate. ok till santz vitnisburðar settom ver fyrnæmfdir menn var insigli firir þetta bref ær gort var j Biorgvin a firsagðan dag ok tima.*

which church owned what. “The priest takes in Bø in Selja and at St Sunniva church...”²⁴⁸

The church of St Sunniva is generally believed to have been an annex from Bø church based on this clause in **BK**.

To further complex things, it is possible that the *fylki* church named in the Saga of King Olaf Tryggvason was the Christchurch. That the comma separating the *fylki* church and the Christchurch in the passage, was an error. That way we have five churches on the island; the *fylki* church which was dedicated to Christ, the church of St Alban, presumably both at the site of the monastery, the St Sunniva and St Michael churches up in the mountain and the Virgin Mary church at Bø on the other side of the island.

One thing that speaks for Eid church as the main church of Firdafylke, is the connection to the Christchurch in Bergen, a connection I have not been able to find to the church in Bø. It does not necessarily mean that there had been no connection between the church in Bø and the Christchurch in Bergen, however.

3.2.2 The provosts at the main and quarter churches

As we saw above, the office of provost seems to have been linked to the office of *hofud* priest at the main churches. Later we find also that the office of provost is tied to all the quarter churches in Hordafylke, which was probably the result of the apparent elevation of the quarters of the old Hordafylke to independent *fylkis*. There seems to have been only one provost for the whole *fylki* in Sygnafylke, titled the provost of Sogn, which further strengthens the assumption that the office of provost was tied to the office of *hofud* priest at the main church, e.g. the *fylki* priest. Furthermore, there seems to have been a connection to the Cathedral in Bergen, the Christchurch, as the *hofud* priests at the main churches seem to have been canons there.

There were provosts in Firdafylke as we see from an open letter written by Bishop Audfinn in 1328 to the population in Firdafylke. Therein he admonishes those who refuse to pay tithe off nuts and furthermore instructs all the clergy in Firdafylke to rebuke all the parishioners who might refuse to pay the tithe. He then instructs his provosts to punish all those who disobey.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁸ **BK**: 8. *Prest tekian. i. bø. i. seliu ok sunnifu kirkiu.*

²⁴⁹ **DN II** nr. 166. (1328) *Audfinnr etc. sender allum monnum i Fyrdafylki etc. ... þui biodom ver allum lærdom monnom hær medr yðr. at gera þeim monnum loghlægghar aminninghar i hæilaghre kirkiu. ær i fyrnæmfndre þriotsko ok olydni værda kændr. Biodande profostum vaarom at þær sæke þa eptir kristinsdomns reette ok hæilagghar kirkiu loghum. Ok till sannz vithnisburdar hær vm sættom ver vaart insighli firir þetta bref ær gort var a Stofræimi aa Mathei mæssu eptan anno domini. mo. ccco. xxviijo.*

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Firdafylke was from the first half of the 14th century, and possibly also earlier, divided into two *fylki*. As the provosts in the other districts of Bergen diocese seemed to be tied to the *fylki* or main churches, it seems logical that the bishop should refer to the provosts in plural. Based on the fact that provosts were found at Stedje main church and Vangen main church, two provosts in Firdafylke are to be expected.

In 1341 bishop Håkon gave the *hofud* priest at Skåle church a mandate to travel to Njardheim church, now called Årland church in Sunnhordland to read the bishop's letter for some parishioners who had retained a part of the bishop's tithe. Bishop Håkon had given two of his canons, the priests Håvar and Olav, a mandate to sell the bishop's tithe to a *Fru* Ingigerd,²⁵⁰ Håvar and Olav had received a similar mandate from Bishop Håkon in 1338, to go to Firdafylke where they should collect the tithe, cathedraticum, rent of the farms owned by the bishop and the *stadar*, i.e. the See in Bergen, look into matters of tenure and the tenants etc. They were also given the right to dispatch all those who refused to do their bidding in these matters, whether lay or clergy, to the bishop in Bergen.²⁵¹ The two canons act as provosts in these two cases, but their connection if any to a main church or a quarter church is not known. They might have been the provosts of Firdafylke.

The provosts are known from Oslo in late medieval times, where they were already an organized body. Their provost-dioceses were defined after a secular division of the diocese, similar to the Provost at the Apostle church in Bergen who in the late 14th century combined that office to the office of the King's bailiff in Voss. According to Lars Hamre, similar organization as that found in Oslo diocese is not found in other dioceses in Norway.²⁵²

²⁵⁰ DN VII nr. 178. (1341) *Hakon [etc.] sender sira Sighurdi hofudprest a Skala q. g. oc sina. os hefir til æyrna komet þat sem ver mykilega vndrum. med huerri dirfd eder vlydni vid heilagha kirkiu oc os er soknarmenn j Niardhæims kirkiusokn difuazst at hallda oss þar tiund þæiri er sira Hauar oc sira Olafur hafua sellt af varre væghna fru Ingigerdi oc verd j tekt. ...*

²⁵¹ DN X nr. 32. (1338) *...ver hofum gort ok skipat vaara fulla ok loghlegga vmbodsmenn her með yðr j. hwara tveggia fylkinu koorsbræðr vaara. sira Hauard Jonsson ok sira Olaf Symunarson. gefwande þæim fullt ok loghleght valld af vaarre væghna. fornar ok nyar. varar ok gardzens skuldir krefwia hæimfta ok sækia, ok til vaar at færa. hwart sem þat er hælðer, tiundar værd vaart eder landsskyldir. eda landskylda eftirstodur cathedraticum vaart eda aðrar hæimftingar. abuud eda abudarfall so ok at þæir með fullu vallde ok vmbode varo skulu læita ok eftirfretta vm jarðr varar ok stadarens hworsu þær hafwa bygdar verit eðr hwat ok j hwæriu hefuir af þæim j landskyllld loket verit sijdan ver komom vverdugir til þessar steettar. Skulu þæir ok fullt valld hafwa af vaarre væghna. kwitta ok lidugha gera þa eðr þan hwern er þæim luka firir so mykit sem þæir af þæim taka med fullri ræikningh ok godra manna vitorde, faam ver þæim ok fullt vmbod bæde læika ok lærda til vaar at stemfna þa er j mote þessom vaarom reette priotkast ok ulydnir finnast...*

²⁵² Lars Hamre 1968.

3.2.2.1 The origin of the office of the provost

As I mentioned above, both Taranger and Anne Marit Hamre tied the burial churches found in the statutes and the old laws in Norway to the *tituli majores* from the continent. As the main churches and the quarter churches, when they had been established, were burial churches and in these churches only could the sacrament of baptism be performed, they can be said to be *tituli majores*, or the rural major churches. When that is said, it is interesting to see that there were archdeacons who headed these churches, an innovation by Bishop Heddo of Strasburg, who in 774 divided his diocese into seven archdiaconates, *archidiaconatus rurales*. The archdeacon was the official supervisor of the subordinate clergy at his church and those churches that were subordinate to his church. He had disciplinary authority over them as well as surveillance over their discharge of their duties. Later the archdeacons were named provosts.

In *the Catholic Encyclopedia* the following passage is found:²⁵³

Henceforth the archdiaconus magnus of the cathedral (usually the provost or praepositus of the chapter), whose duties chiefly concerned the city clergy, is offset by the archidiaconi rurales placed over the deans (archipresbyteri rurales). These archdeacons were generally priests, either canons of the cathedral or provosts of the principal (collegiate) churches in small towns.

This seems to fit rather well with the provosts at the main churches in Bergen diocese and one has to wonder if the office of the provosts at the main churches may have been fashioned after the *archidiaconi rurales* mentioned above.

In Bergen diocese in the 15th century we find archdeacons at the Cathedral, not surprisingly as the archdeacon was the bishop's chief confidant, assistant, and representative when necessary. This is in effect the same office as the archdeacons had held before Bishop Heddo's time, or the *archidiaconi magni* after Heddo's time. The archdeacons are also found in Hamar and in Oslo in the 14th century, and in Trondheim (Nidaros) in the 15th century.²⁵⁴ These are but a few examples of archdeacons at the Cathedrals in Norway that I've come across and picked here at random.

This rather suggests that the main churches were based on continental ideas about the rural major churches elsewhere in Europe. We see also that these were both burial churches as well as the only churches at which one could receive baptism. It is also here that we find provosts, who incidentally are also canons at the Cathedral.

²⁵³ <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01693a.htm>

²⁵⁴ DN I nr. 790 and 813; DN II nr. 132 and 205; DN V nr. 833; DN XVII nr. 650; DN XXI nr 726.

4 CONCLUSION

To begin with it is evident that a significant number of clergy at the major churches is common to both dioceses, and I would argue, not only to the dioceses, but to both countries. We saw for example at the main church in Vangen that there had been a number of priests at the church, there was a cleric at one time, a bell ringer and other personnel. We should also expect that there had been both deacons and subdeacons at the church even though they are not named in the document material available to us. There have been at least two priests at the quarter churches as well, and as with the main churches, there must have been deacons at the churches as well even though we do not find them in the sources. That being said, it is quite possible that there exists a source that I have not yet seen, that would verify their presence at the churches. By the total lack of sources that mention deacons at the churches, one could almost conclude that there had been no deacons in the diocese of Bergen. We can therefore not use their silence as evidence.

In Iceland on the other hand, we find evidence of deacons, subdeacons, and clerics at the churches in addition to the two or more priests that should be at the church as well. At some of these churches we find that there have been schools after a fashion, most notably during the 11th and 12th centuries, although the reference to a school at Stafholt is from the 13th century. We can further argue that at Reykholt, Stafholt, Oddi, and Haukadalur, there has been literary activity.

Although I have not found any solid evidence that there had been school activity at the main churches or the quarter churches in Bergen diocese I find it very likely that there had been schools at the churches.

I would like to address the use of *staðir* as part of place names in Iceland and in Norway, the first is based on Magnús Stefánson's monograph *Staðir og staðamál*, but the latter is an observation I made when I was working on the old cadaster of the diocese of Bergen from c. 1360, *Björgynjar kálfskinn*, (abbreviated BK).

The term, or the word, *staðir* (*staður*, *staðar*) is common in place names in Iceland, either as the name or as a prefix or suffix. The first group consists of 11 farms with the name *Staður*, nine of which can be shown to have adopted the name *Staður* as a secondary name, like for example *Staður* in Reykjanes, later also called *Staðastaður*, but which originally was named *Breiðabólstaður*. As a prefix *Staðar-*, there are both farms with churches, and farms that were owned by *staðir*. Thus the prefix implies ownership, owned by *staðir*. The last

group is also the largest, with the suffix *–staður* or *–staðir*, in total 96 *staðir* and layman churches. All the layman churches are in Hólar diocese.²⁵⁵

When I read BK I saw to my surprise that the name and possibly also the term *staðir*, had been used in similar ways in Norway, or at least in Bergen diocese. I knew the names Hopperstad and Hestad in connection to churches but had not thought about the suffix *–stad* as a remnant of *–staðir* until I read the 14th century names in BK. There are five churches listed in the index with the suffix *–staðir*; Gemlisstaðir (Gimmestad) in Northern Fyrðafylke, Hestaðir (Hestad) and Hyllistaðir (Hyllestad) in Southern Fyrðafylke, Hópreksstaðir (Hopperstad) in Sygnafylke, and Geirastaðir (Gjerstad) in Northern Hordafylke. And additional two which are listed in the old index from 1408: Biugstadur and Kaldrexstaðir. Hyllestad is not only the name of the church, but of the parish, the commune, and the fjord, Hopperstad is one of the quarter churches in Sygnafylke, and Hestad church which had been reduced to a chapel in 1843.²⁵⁶ Gimmestad is opposite Vereide church, a quarter church in Fyrðafylke, across the narrow Gloppen fjordin Gimmestad parish; Gloppen is also the name of the municipality. Gjerstad is situated on the island of Østerøy not far from Hamre church, which was the quarter church in Nord-Hordland, Hordafylke.²⁵⁷

There are also a number of farms which carry the suffix *–staðir* (pl.) or *–staðr* (sing.) in BK. In one case, that of Brastadi, the suffix might be *–stæði* (place, lot) rather than *–staðir* as the names are usually written in dative and the suffix *–adi* is the dative of *stæði* but the accusative of *staðir*. The suffix *–staðr* (ON) is found in the name Vlgaldastaðr and Bolstaðr which literally means the place of ones home. Bolstaðr is also found in the nominal compounds Mikli (Grand/Great) Bolstaðr, Helgi (Holy) Bolstaðr, and Efsti (Highest/Uppermost) Bolstaðr. The suffix *–staðir* is by far the most common one, with 41 different names, one of which is Bolstaðir. Of the 40 names that are left, 13 are composed of a personal name and further 5 may possibly be composed like that. Examples are Arnastaðir and Gæirmundarstaðir, Other names are composed of attributes or descriptive prefixes like Yndistaðir (Pleasant), Brunnastaðir (Well), and Folkastaðir (People).²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ Stefánsson 2000: 171-182.

²⁵⁶ BK: 28, 101.

²⁵⁷ BK: 6-7, 16, 28, 50, 63.

²⁵⁸ BK: 9-12, 14-17, 19-21, 24, 26-31, 33-34, 37-38, 40, 42-43, 45-46, 50, 52-54, 61-62, 64, 67, 74-75, 77, 79.

Were these farms in the possession of local ecclesiastical bodies as was the case in Iceland? Or is this simply a case of altered meaning, from ‘the place of *my* home’ to *lot* or *place*? Is there evidence of similar use of the term *staðir* in Norway and Iceland?

Although names with the prefix *Stað-* or *Staðar-* were not found in BK, it does not mean that there are none to be found. Just north of Selja island, there is a peninsula which bears the name Stadlandet (gen. sing. of *staðir* + land with def. art.) meaning the land of the *staðir*. The see out from the peninsula is named Stadhavet (gen. sing. of *staðir* + see with def. art.) meaning the see of the *staðir*. The *staðir* that gave the name to the peninsula and the see must be Selja, the former see and the later monastery. Did the church, the see, or the monastery at Selja own the peninsula and the fishing right in the see? I have found two other examples of the prefix *Stað-*, one is Stadsbygd (gen. sing. of *staðir* + settlement) opposite Trondheim across the Trondheimsfjord, almost certainly previously owned by the see in Trondheim. The other is Stadsbuøyven in Dovre national park. I am not certain of the meaning of the name, it might be *staðir* + gen. + *bu* (small house or pantry) + *øyven*, which meaning escapes me.

As Stefánsson points out in his monograph, central ecclesiastical bodies like monasteries, convents, and sees were referred to as *staðir* in Norway, much as they were in Iceland.²⁵⁹ But he also found three examples of the use of the term *staðir* in Norway for local ecclesiastical bodies, one is a runic inscription in Tingvoll church in Nordmøre where the church is called *staðir*, the inscription reads: “ek biþ firi guþrs sakar yþr lærþa menn er varþuæta staþ þæenna”, roughly translated, I pray to God for you the clerics who take care of this *stað(ir)*. The other examples are taken from two letters written in Latin where the church in Trondenes is called *loci* or *staðir*. But this is simply not enough material says Stefánsson to conclude that “local ecclesiastical institutions, comparable to those at Tingvoll and Trondenes, were commonly referred to as *stadir*.”²⁶⁰ When we, however, add to this the churches and farms which carry names with the suffixes *-staðir* and *-staðr*, and the places with the prefix *Stads-* (ON *Staðar-*), there suddenly is more than enough material to merit a research of the use of the term *staðir* in Norway as well as in Iceland.

²⁵⁹ Stefánsson: 185-189. Also f. ex. DN.IV.182: 163.

²⁶⁰ Stefánsson 2000: 186. *Det kirkelige komplekset på Trondenes omfatter kirkestedet og prestegården som et felles anlegg, slik som på Tingvoll. Materialet er imidlertid for magert til å trekke den konklusjon at lokalkirkelige anlegg, tilsvarende dem på Tingvoll og Trondenes, ble vanlig omtalt som stader.*

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The *staðir* were in constant development from the time they started to emerge in the late 11th century until the late 13th century when the Church was recognized as their sole owner. The idea behind the *staðir* came from the continent and was almost certainly formed after the cosmopolitan ideas from Rome. Whether that happened via the education of the Bishops Gissur and Ísleifur, and Sæmundur the wise, or via the teachings of the foreign bishops who travelled around the country and stayed there in the 11th century, has not been the issue in this paper. Neither have I focused on whether continental ideas found their way to Norway via Germany, Denmark, or England. The point is they found their way to the dioceses of Skálholt and the diocese of Bergen just as they found their ways to every other diocese in the western world.

There are some churches that seem to set themselves apart by early evidence of ecclesiastical activity at the churches as well as literary activity and school activity after medieval standards. In the late 11th century at least there is evidence of school activity at Haukadalur which seems to have lasted for another century. One might even suggest that Haukadalur had been the unofficial diocese school for Skálholt see, certainly both Skálholt and Haukadalur had belonged to the same family, the *Mosfellingar* which were later known as *Haukdælir* after Haukadalur, which became the family manor in a sense. In the case of Haukadalur there are obvious reasons why the church was not established as a *staðir*, the family had already given Skálholt land and there were limits as to how much could legally be given away from the future heirs. In Haukadalur there were a number of clerics at any given time until the end of the 12th century at least, many of whom were in the family or with strong ties to the family. It is therefore safe to assume that even with the see of Skálholt close by, Haukadalur was a major church.

There is no question about the *staðir* in Oddi, which could almost be described as an ecclesiastical metropol compared to other churches in Iceland. There was a number of clerics in residence at the church, it received gifts and tolls from a wide area that had presumably sought service to Oddi in the first century after the adoption of the Christian faith, and which probably continued to seek service to Oddi even though other churches had been built closer to their homes. There may not have been cemeteris at all the smaller churches or chapels until the late 12th or early 13th century and the sacrament of Baptism may very well have been limited to the major churches as we see evidence of in Europe. There is also evidence of school activity at Oddi, as in Haukadalur, and it seems very likely that there was literary activity there as well.

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The same can be said about both *staðir*, Stafholt and Reykholt, even though we have not found any indication of a school activity at the church in Reykholt. The fact that Bishop Þorlákur was consecrated as Bishop with his Cathedral church in Reykholt while Bishop Gissur still lived does however suggest that there was something special about the church in Reykholt.

I have argued that there are a number of different things that we might use to help us in the search of the major churches in Iceland:

- Large number of clerics at the church, school or literary activity
- Tolls and large regions as an indication of early establishment of the church
- Ordained chieftains and families dedicated to the church
- Many annex churches and chapels served from the church

To narrow the list of churches to probable candidates, I applied the bulleted conditions listed directly above and to make the final list the churches had to meet at least two of the four above-mentioned conditions.

In the following table are the churches, both layman churches and *staðir* that I believe to fit the description of a major church, 16 churches in total. From West and East there are 10 churches, 5 in each quarter, and 6 churches for the South district. I did not set any conditions about the number of churches from each district. The fact that there are almost equally many churches in each of the three quarters seems to suggest that there might have been an organization behind their distribution. This factor might of course be the political structure of the country in the 11th and 12th centuries.

Of the churches in the table below there were 6 who were classified as layman churches, two of these became *staðir* around 1500. The layman churches were: Bær, Höfðabrekka (discontinued in 1660), Skarð on Skarðsströnd, Haukadalur, Garðar was a layman church in 1397 but had become a *staðir* by 1491, Vatnsfjörður became a *staðir* shortly after 1500.

Table 4.1 - The major churches in Iceland in the 11th -13th century

Names	Clergy	Litterary activity, schools or other	Ordained chieftains or families	Church established bf.:	Annex churches and chapels	Tithe from:	District
Oddi	8	Y	Y	1080	3	Region then 24	S
Stafholt	5	Y	Y	1140	9	34 then 24	W
Reykholt	5	Y	Y	1082-1118	7	37	S
Breiðabólstaður in Fljótshlíð	5	?	Y	1080	6	26	S
Bær	4	Y	Y	1080-1118	1	8	S
Vallanes	4			1202	4	Region	E
Valbjófsstaðir	4		Y	1190's	8	11	E
Höfðabrekka	4			1178	4	Varied	E
Breiðabólstaður in Steingrímsfjörður	4			1181-97	2	Region	W
Staðastaður	4		Y	1140-70	6	43 then 42	W
Garðar	3		Y	1202	4	35	S
Vatnsfjörður	3		Y	1150	2	16	W
Rauðalækur	3			1070	5	10	E
Skarð on Skarðsströnd	3			1148-1201	8	26 then 23	W
Haukadalur	2	Y	Y	1082-1118	7	11	S
Svínafell	?		Y	1011	?	No information	E

I have argued that the major churches in Bergen diocese were the quarter churches and the main churches, and that the main churches were probably of earlier origin than the former. The main churches were higher in the hierarchy of churches, and were set above the quarter churches in the *fylki*, as well as any other rural churches in the district. This, however, is practically common knowledge, but worth mentioning all the same.

I asked what were the roles of the *hofud* priests, whether they were the priests at the main churches or if there was a different meaning to the word. I suggested, furthermore, that the Latin term *rector* was the same term as *hofud* priest. I found that the *hofud* priest was the beneficiary in the 14th century, that he had a *vicarius* or *vicarii* at the church as well, and was therefore the head priest at the church. The same could be said about the term *rector* as it was used in the Latin documents. These were therefore synonymous. There was also a clear connection between the head priests at the quarter churches and the main churches and the terms *hofud* priest and *rector*.

I have also argued that the head priests at the main churches were not only provosts of the *fylkis*, but canons at the Christchurch in Bergen as well. As there are many parallels to the continental rural *tituli majores* and the *archidiaconi rurales* who were the heads of these churches, I have suggested that the main churches were based on the *tituli majores* and that the provosts we find at the main churches were meant to hold similar offices as the *archidiaconi rurales*.

I set out to identify the main churches of Hordafylke and Firdafylke, and although I have identified the main church in Hordafylke as that of Vangen church in Voss, I have not

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been able to find conclusive evidence to whether the main church of Firdafylke had been that of Eid (Øyghi) or that of Selje (Bø).

Finally I asked whether there was any evidence that the former quarters of Hordafylke had been elevated to a status of independent *fylki*, likewise if there was evidence of similar development in the other two *fylki* of Bergen diocese. I argued that there was indeed a clear division of Firdafylke into two minor *fylki* from the early 14th century, and that in Hordafylke there was some evidence of the same development in the early 15th century. I suggested that the main church of the southern part of the old Firdafylke, Sunnfjord, had been the church at Askvoll.

5 SOURCES

Sources are sorted by an alphabet that contains both Icelandic and Norwegian letters and is as follows: *AÁBCDÐEÉFGHIÍJKLMNOÓPQRSTUÚVWXYÝZÞÆÖØÅ*.

5.1 Abbreviations

BK = Björgynjar Kálfskinn.

Bps. = Biskupsskjalasafn

DI = Diplomatarium Islandicum.

DN = Diplomatarium Norwegicum.

Isl. Annaler = Islandske Annaler indtil 1578.

ÍF = Íslenzk fornrit.²⁶¹

Jarðabók I-XI = Jarðabók Árna Magnússonar og Páls Vídalíns. I-XI.

Jarðatal 1845 = Jarðatal á Íslandi, með brauðalýsingum, fólkstölu í hreppum og prestaköllum, ágripi úr búnaðartöflum 1835-1845, og skýrslum um sölu þjóðjarða á landinu.

KLNM = Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingtid til reformasjonstid.

NGL = Norges Gamle Love

Ný Jarðabók = Ný Jarðabók fyrir Ísland, samin eptir tilskipun 27. maímánaðar 1848 og allramildilegast staðfest með tilskipun 1. aprílmánaðar 1861.

RN = Regesta Norvegica.

5.2 Manuscripts in the National Archives of Icelandic

Bps. A.II.1. Kirksamáldagar í Skálholtsbiskupsdæmi með hendi Bjarna Marteinsonar 1601.

Bps. A.II.2. Máldaga bækr Biskupanna Vilchins og Gísla.

Bps. B.III.3.

Skjalasöfn presta. Stafholt í Stafholtstungum. AA1.

Skjalasöfn presta. Stafholt í Stafholtstungum. AA2.

Skrá yfir skjöl í Steinklefa. XXIV, 1.

Skrá yfir skjöl í Steinklefa. XXXIX. Handrit dr. Jóns Porkelssonar þjóskjalavarðar. Askja IV.

5.3 Printed

Aaraas, Margrethe Henden, Torkjell Djupedal, Sigurd Vengen and Finn Borgen Førsund 2000a, *På kyrkjeferd i Sogn og Fjordane. I. Nordfjord og Sunnfjord.* Førde.

Aaraas, Margrethe Henden, Torkjell Djupedal, Sigurd Vengen and Finn Borgen Førsund 2000b, *På kyrkjeferd i Sogn og Fjordane. II. Sogn.* Førde.

²⁶¹ The bishops chronicles, *Biskupa sögur* I-III, which are a part of **ÍF** are listed here, as they are commonly referred to as such and not as **ÍF**. XV-XVII.

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6 GLOSSARY


Alþingi/Alþing, n.	The general assembly at Þingvellir, Iceland. It was the venue for the law court, the legislative council, and the courts.
Antependia	Antependium, n. A decorative cloth that hangs on the front of an altar or lectern.
Apse	A semicircular part of the east end of a church that contains the altar
Archdeacon	<p>(Lat. <i>archidiaconos</i>.) A person that holds a juridical ecclesiastical office dating back to antiquity and up to the fifteenth century of great importance in diocesan administration, particularly in the West.</p> <p>The archdeacon is the official supervisor of the subordinate clergy, has disciplinary authority over them in all cases of wrong doing, and exercises a certain surveillance over their discharge of the duties assigned them. It was also within the archdeacon's province to examine candidates for the priesthood; he had also the right of making visitation among the rural clergy. It was even his duty, in exceptional cases of episcopal neglect, to safeguard the interests of the Church; to his hands were entrusted the preservation of the Faith in its primitive purity, the custody of ecclesiastical discipline, and the prevention of damage to the property of the Church. The archdeacon was, moreover, the bishop's chief confidant, his assistant, and when it was necessary, his representative in the exercise of the manifold duties of the episcopal office. This was especially the case in the administration of ecclesiastical property, the care of the sick, the visitation of prisoners, and the training of the clergy.</p> <p>By virtue of his office the archdeacon became, next to the bishop, the regular organ of supervision and discipline in the diocese. In this respect he was assigned a proper and independent jurisdiction (<i>jurisdictio propria</i>) and even as late as the twelfth century there was a constant effort to increase the scope of this authority. The great amount of business to be transacted necessitated in large dioceses the appointment of several archdeacons. The first bishop to introduce this innovation was Heddo of Strasburg, who in 774 divided his diocese into seven archdiaconates (<i>archidiaconatus rurales</i>). His example was quickly followed throughout Western Christendom, except in Italy. Henceforth the <i>archidiaconus magnus</i> of the cathedral is offset by the <i>archidiaconi rurales</i> placed over the <i>archipresbyteri rurales</i>. These archdeacons were generally priests, either canons of the cathedral or provosts of the principal churches in small towns.</p> <p>The authority of the archdeacons culminated in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. At that time they exercised within the province of their archdiaconates a quasi-episcopal jurisdiction. They made visitations, during which they were empowered to levy certain assessments on the clergy; they conducted courts of first instance, and had the right to punish clerics guilty of lapses; they could also hold synodal courts.</p>
Archpriest	(Lat. <i>Archipresbyter</i> .) An archpriest was the head of the

	<p>college of presbyters, who aided and represented the bishop in the discharge of his liturgical and religious duties. As a rule the oldest of the presbyters was invested with this rank.</p> <p>In the West we meet with another kind of archpriest. The spiritual needs of the population scattered through the rural districts multiplied so rapidly that it became impossible for the clergy of the episcopal city to attend to all. Consequently, we soon find the larger rural centres equipped with their own churches, a permanent clergy, and their own sources of support. The inhabitants of the neighbouring hamlets, and of the widely scattered manors were, from the beginning, subject to these larger, or mother-churches in so far as it was there that they heard Mass and received the sacraments.</p> <p>The archpriest was the first in rank among priests attached to such mother-churches. He was at the head of the local clergy, had charge of Divine worship, and supervised the duties of the ecclesiastical ministry. He was, however, subject to the archdeacon; several such large rural communities constituted an archidiaconate.</p> <p>The archpriest of the mother-church was the head of all the clergy in his parish, and was responsible for the proper execution of their ecclesiastical duties and for their manner of life. Gradually many tituli minores became independent parish churches, where all religious ceremonies, including Sunday Mass and baptism, were performed; the number of parishes was thus notably increased. It came about also that when a diocese was very extensive, the entire diocese was subdivided into a number of districts (called archipresbyterates, decanates, or christianitates), over each of which a priest was placed as dean or archpriest. It was his duty, as representative to the bishop, to supervise the entire religious and ecclesiastical life of the entire territory.</p>
Baldurkinn. Also Baldakin.	<i>See Ciborium.</i>
Baptismal font	A basin or vase which serves as a receptacle for baptismal water, used in the Christian seremony of baptism.
Biskupsgisting, n.	The obligation to house the bishop and his men while the bishop was on his visitation in that area.
Canon	An ecclesiastical person, which is a member of a chapter or body of clerics living according to rule and presided over by one of their number.
Canonicus	Latin. <i>See Canon.</i>
Cantor	<p>The chief singer (and sometimes instructor) of the ecclesiastical choir. His duties and qualifications have varied considerably according to time and place; but generally he must be ready to lead all the singing in church, to start any chant, and be watchful to prevent or correct mistakes of singers placed under him.</p> <p>In medieval cathedrals the cantor was master of music and chant, but also commonly one of the dignitaries of the chapter. In the fourteenth century the cantor in many churches began to delegate his instruction of the singers to a master of music The cantor's place in church is on the right of the choir, and immediately on his left stands his assistant, formerly called the "Succentor". In ruling the choir the cantor very commonly</p>

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	carried a staff as the mark of his dignity.
Capital sin	A capital sin is that which has an exceedingly desirable end so that in his desire for it a man goes on to the commission of many other sins all of which are said to originate in that first sin as their chief source. It is not then the gravity of the vice in itself that makes it capital but rather the fact that it gives rise to many other sins. These are enumerated by St. Thomas (I-II:84:4) as vainglory (pride), avarice, gluttony, lust, sloth, envy, anger.
Cathedraticum	A certain sum of money to be contributed annually for the support of the bishop, as a mark of honour and in sign of subjection to the cathedral church, hence its name. The regular clergy are not obliged to pay the cathedraticum for their monasteries and conventual churches. The reason is found in the very idea of the cathedraticum, which is given by a church or benefice in sign of subjection to the jurisdiction of the bishop. <i>Cathedraticum</i> is first mentioned in the Norwegian sources in 1306 in a letter from the bishop of Bergen (DN.III.63).
Chapel, pl. chapels, n.	The earliest places of Christian worship may be called chapels, inasmuch as they were informal churches, i. e. a chamber in a house, or the atrium of the house adapted for the purpose. Thus we have chapels which structurally form part of a larger church, those which are included within other buildings not churches, and those which are entirely separate and detached. We have also papal, royal, episcopal, votive, wayside and mortuary chapels. Chapels within a church, such as Lady chapels, side-chapels, ante-chapels, etc., can be attached to or under the roof of the church. Chantry chapels differ from other interior chapels only in being erected and endowed for the celebration of Masses of requiem, in perpetuity, for some individual soul, generally that of the founder himself. Special priests were usually appointed to serve them, and were called "chantry priests". <i>See also Chapels of Ease.</i>
Chapels of Ease	These were separate buildings, churches in everything but name, built in remote portions of large parishes and so called because they were intended to ease the parish church and the parishioners living at a distance from it. Clergy appointed for the purpose served them as vicars of the parish priest. These chapels were not formerly allowed to contain a font or have a cemetery adjoining them, but in later times both these privileges were often conceded, and many such chapels have since become independent of the mother church. <i>See also Chapels.</i>
Chaplain	(Lat. <i>capellanus</i> , from <i>capella</i> , chapel.) There are a large number of clerics whose duty it is to say certain prescribed Masses or to procure their celebration, or to take part in various church services, such as choir service. Such persons received their support from a pious foundation erected for the purpose. Such chaplaincies are called either <u>ecclesiastical</u> or <u>lay</u> . Chaplaincies are ecclesiastical if the property donated by a founder has been formally erected into a benefice by a proper spiritual authority. If however, the property has not received

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	<p>ecclesiastical erection it is called a lay chaplaincy. When a founder erects a chaplaincy, he is of liberty to define the duties of the person who is to enjoy the benefit of his foundation.</p> <p>If the testator has left his goods to a layman with the obligation of procuring the celebration of certain Masses by any priest whom he shall choose, such chaplaincy is called <u>mercenary</u>. This does not partake of the nature of an ecclesiastical benefice, as it requires generally that the holder should be appointed for life.</p> <p>Hereditary or family chaplaincies are those to which, by the will of the founder, the holder of the benefice is to be nominated by the testator's heirs or assigns.</p> <p><u>Parochial or auxiliary chaplains</u>. This name is given in Europe to those priests who render assistance to a parish priest, who cannot care for his whole parish owing to the large number of the faithful within its confines. The position and duties of such parochial vicars are in many ways analogous to those of vicars (Lat. <i>vicarius</i>) and curates. <i>See Vicarius and Curates</i>.</p> <p><u>Domestic chaplains</u>. Benefices possessed by chaplains are often attached to the residence of distinguished families. Often such a priest takes on the duty of instructing the children of the house. Domestic chaplains can be either beneficed chaplains or auxiliary chaplains.</p> <p><u>Military chaplains</u>. Priests appointed to minister the needs of the military are commonly called military chaplains.</p>
Chasuble	<p>Called in Latin <i>casula planeta</i> or <i>pænula</i>, and in early Gallic sources <i>amphibalus</i>, the principal and most conspicuous Mass vestment, covering all the rest.</p> <p><i>See also Kápa and Sloppr.</i></p> 
Ciborium	A canopy that stands on four pillars over the altar.
Clergy	The clergy, in the strict sense, is everybody within the entire ecclesiastical hierarchy. <i>See Cleric</i> .
Cleric	Lat. clericus, pl. clerici, m. A cleric is a person which has been legitimately received into the ranks of the clergy. A cleric is one who belongs in some sense to the ecclesiastical hierarchy. For this it is necessary that he have received at least the tonsure. The word cleric (Lat., clericus from clerus) is derived from the Greek kleros, a "lot". The "Pontificale Romanum" refers to clerics as being those whose "lot" is the Lord Himself. <i>See also Clergy</i> .
Cura animarum	Latin. The cure of souls.
Curate	(Lat. <i>curatus</i> , from <i>cura</i> , care.) Litterally one who has the cure or charge of souls, in which sense it is yet used by the Church of England. <p>In English-speaking countries, however, the word curate has gradually become the title of those priests who are assistants to the rector, or parish priest, in the general parochial work of the parish or mission to which they are sent by the bishop of the diocese. The word curate corresponds in a general way to the <i>vicarius temporalis</i> (temporal vicar) and <i>axiliaris presbyter</i></p>

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	(assistant priest).
goði, pl. goðar, n.	Owner of a <i>goðorð</i> . <i>See goðorð</i> .
goðorð, pl. goðorð, n.	Chieftaincy. A <i>goðorð</i> was an inheritable and purchasable unit of power, a licence to take a seat in the law court. Some owners of <i>goðorð</i> wielded real political power outside of the Alþing, although some did not. Both women and children could own <i>goðorð</i> but could not act in them.
Dalmatíka, pl. dalmatíkur, f.	Dalmatic. The dalmatic is the outer liturgical vestment of the deacon. It is worn at Mass and at solemn processions and benedictions, except when they have a penitential character, as in Advent, etc.; this is because the dalmatic has been regarded from the earliest times as a festal garment.
Hjáleiga, pl. hjáleigur, f.	Tenant land
Hovedprest, pl. hovedprester, m.	Head priest. In Bergen diocese these were the heads of the main churches. They were provosts of the <i>fylki</i> and canons at the Cathedral
Höfuðlín, pl. höfuðlín, m.	<i>See Hökull</i> .
Hökull, pl. höklar, m.	Amice. A short linen cloth, square or oblong in shape and, like the other sacerdotal vestments, needing to be blessed before use. The purpose of this vestment, which is the first to be put on by the priest in vesting for the Mass, is to cover the shoulders, and originally also the head, of the wearer. Many of the older religious orders still wear the amice after the fashion which prevailed in the Middle Ages; that is to say, the amice is first laid over the head and the ends allowed to fall upon the shoulders, then the other vestments from the alb to the chasuble are put on, and finally, on reaching the altar, the priest folds back the amice from the head, so that it hangs around the neck and over the chasuble like a small cowl. In this way, as will be readily understood, the amice forms a sort of collar, effectively protecting the precious material of the chasuble from contact with the skin.
Irremovability	A quality of certain ecclesiastical offices and dignities. It implies that the incumbent's appointment is, under certain conditions, a perpetual one, or for the term of his natural life. This quality of irremovability, or perpetuity, is attached to the principal ecclesiastical offices, such as those of pope, cardinal, bishop, parish priest etc. A pope can resign his dignity; cardinals, bishops, and parish priests can either resign or be removed only for cause.
í eyði, lögð niður	abandoned (property), or deserted
Ítak, pl. ítök, n.	Specific rights of usage, usually in another persons land. Thus the right to gather wood or fish from rivers owned by others was calle <i>ítak</i> .
Kantarakápa	A cope worn by canters. <i>See Kápa</i>
Kápa, kápur, f.	Cope. Known in Latin as <i>pluviale</i> or <i>cappa</i> , a vestment which may most conveniently be described as a long liturgical mantle, open in front and fastened at the breast with a band or clasp. It was made of a piece of silk or cloth of semicircular <div data-bbox="901 1747 1300 1982" data-label="Image"> </div>

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	<p>shape, and, as it is important to note, it differed from the earlier form of <i>chasuble</i> only in this, that in the <i>chasuble</i> the straight edges were sewn together in front while in the <i>cope</i> they were left open.</p> <p>It was not until the twelfth century that the cope, made of rich material, was in general use in the ceremonies of the Church, at which time it had come to be regarded as the special vestment of cantors. Still, an ornamental cope was even then considered a vestment that might be used by any member of the clergy from the highest to the lowest, in fact even by one who was only about to be tonsured.</p>
Kápa af pelli	A cope made of <i>pellis</i> , or fur, <i>pelliceoe</i> .
Klerkr, pl. klerkar, m.	<i>See Cleric</i> .
Leiguprest, pl. leiguprestar, m.	Assistant priests. <i>See also vicarius</i> .
Lögbýli, pl. lögbýli.	“Independent farmstead. A political and geographical rather than a strictly agricultural unit. More than one householder could own and farm a l., and parts could be rented out as crofts or cottages, but in the Middle Ages land was bought and sold in units of l. which tended to have fixed value assessments.” (Vésteinsson 2000: 293)
Kleberstein/klebersten, pl. klebersteiner, m.	Soapstone.
Messuklæði pl. n.	Vestments for the use in mass.
Nave	The long central hall of a cross shaped church, where the congregation sits.
Narthex	In early Christian churches the narthex was an area separated by a screen or a railing, behind which women, catechumens, or penitents were admitted. An entrance hall at the west end of the church, between the porch and the nave.
Official	Lat. <i>Officialis</i> . Derived from <i>Officium</i> , office. The titel <i>officialis</i> in Norway is first seen in archbishops Jørundr provincialstatutt from 1290 (see NGL III). The first <i>officialis</i> we find in Bergen is mentioned in 1302 (DN.III.51). The office dates from the thirteenth century. The <i>officials</i> should reside in the towns and there should be one at each See. Their duty was to both examin and decide punishment in all cases where the church had jurisdiction and were after the bishop the principal authority in a diocese. Later they were called vicar-general. <i>See also Officium and vicar-general</i> .
Officium	Service, duty, office. The bishops office was named <i>officium episcopale</i> or <i>o. pontificale</i> . The priests office was named <i>o. sacerdotale</i> . <i>Officia ecclesiastica</i> was the name used for all church offices. <i>Officia divina</i> is the name for all sermons and ecclesiastical actions. <i>Officium altaris</i> is the mass. For further explanation of the therm see KLNM XII .
Ómagi, pl. ómagar, n.	Incapable person. Any person who was not capable of sustaining him- or herself, and was therefore put in charge of the nearest relative capable of providing mainenance.
Pastor	This term denotes a priest who has the cure of souls (<i>cura animarum</i>), that is, who is bound in virtue of his office to promote the spiritual welfare of the faithful by preaching, administering the sacraments, and exercising certain powers of

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	<p>external government, e.g., the right of supervision, giving precepts, imposing light. A pastor is properly called a parish priest (<i>parochus</i>) when he exercises the cure of souls in his own name with regard to a determined number of subjects who are obliged to apply to him for the reception of certain sacraments specified in the law.</p> <p>An irremovable pastor or rector is one whose office gives him the right of perpetuity of tenure; that is, he cannot be removed or transferred except for a canonical reason. <i>See Irremovability.</i></p> <p>A movable pastor or rector is one whose office does not give him this right; but the bishop must have some just and proportionate reason for dismissing or transferring him against his will.</p>
Prestr, pl. prestar, m.	Priest. <i>See also Leieprest, hovedprest.</i>
Presbiter	<i>See Presbyter</i>
Presbyter	Priest. <i>See also Archprest.</i>
Presbytery	A part of the church which is for the use of the clergy only.
Provost	<p>Lat. <i>praepositus</i>. Ger. <i>Probst</i>. Anciently every chapter had an <i>archpriest</i> and an <i>archdeacon</i>. The former officiated in the absence of the bishop and had general supervision of the choir, while the latter was the head of the chapter and administered its temporal affairs. <u>Later the archpriest was called decanus (dean) and the archdeacon praepositus (provost).</u></p> <p>The provost's duty is to see that all capitular statutes are observed. To be authentic, all acts of the chapter, in addition to the seal of the chapter, require his signature.</p> <p>In the absence of the bishop, or in case the see is vacant, the provost conducts episcopal ceremonial functions. He must be present, however, personally, not being allowed a substitute. When the bishop pontificates, the provost is assistant priest. <i>See also archdeacon.</i></p>
Rector, pl. rectores, m.	Priests who preside over missions or quasi-parishes are called rectors. In Bergen diocese these were synonymous with <i>hofud</i> priests
Sanctuary	The area around the altar.
Sloppr	<p>Tunic or tunic. By tunic is understood in general a vestment shaped like a sack, which has in the closed upper part only a slit for putting the garment over the head, and, on the sides, either sleeves or mere slits through which the arms can be passed. The expressions under-tunic or over-tunic are used accordingly as the tunic is employed as an outer vestment or under another.</p> <p><i>See also Subtil and Surplice.</i></p>

<p>Stóla, n.</p>	<p>Stole, n. A liturgical vestment composed of a strip of material from two to four inches wide and about eighty inches long. It has either a uniform width throughout, or is somewhat narrower towards the middle, widening at the ends in the shape of a trapezium or spade. A small cross is generally sewed or embroidered on the stole at both ends and in the middle; the cross, how ever, is prescribed only for the middle, where the priest kisses the stole before putting it on. There are no express precepts concerning the material of the stole, but silk, or at least a halfsilk fabric, is most appropriate.</p> 
<p>Subtil, n.</p>	<p>By tunic (<i>tunicella</i>) is understood in liturgical language that sacerdotal upper vestment of the subdeacon which corresponds to the <i>dalmatic</i> of the deacon. According to present usage the <i>dalmatic</i> and <i>tunic</i> are alike both as regards form and ornamentation. They also agree in the manner of use as well as in the fact that the tunic, like the dalmatic, is one of the essential vestments worn at the pontifical Mass by the bishop. About the close of the year one thousand the tunic was so universally worn by subdeacons as a liturgical upper vestment that it was briefly called <i>vestis subdiaconalis</i> or <i>subdiaconale</i>. As early as the first Roman Ordo the tunic is found as one of the papal pontifical vestments under the name of <i>dalmatica minor</i>, <i>dalmatica linea</i>. The Roman deacons also wore it under the dalmatic. In the medieval period the tunic was called by various names. Besides <i>tunica</i>, it also bore the name of <i>tunicella</i>; <i>dalmatica minor</i>; <i>dalmatica linea</i>, or simply <i>linea</i>; <i>tunica stricta</i>, or merely <i>stricta</i>; <i>subdiaconale</i>; <i>roccus</i>; <i>alba</i>; and, especially in Germany <i>subtile</i>.</p>
<p>Surplice, n.</p>	<p>Surplice. A large-sleeved <i>tunic</i> of half-length, made of fine linen or cotton, and worn by all the clergy. The wide sleeves distinguish it from the rochet and the alb; it differs from the alb inasmuch as it is shorter and is never girded. It is ornamented at the hem and the sleeves either with embroidery, with lace-like insertions, or with lace. The surplice belongs to the liturgical vestment in the strict sense, and is the vestment most used. It is the choir dress, the vestment for processions, the official priestly dress of the lower clergy, the vestment worn by the priest in administering the sacraments, when giving blessings, at Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, etc.; in the last-mentioned cases it is the substitute for the alb, which, according to present custom, is worn only at Mass and a few other functions.</p> <p>As a liturgical dress in this sense it is found in England and France as early as the eleventh century, but it is not found in Italy until the twelfth century. The surplice may have been used in isolated cases during the twelfth century instead of the alb in administering the sacraments and at blessings, but this</p>

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	<p>use did not become general until the thirteenth century. Towards the close of the twelfth century the surplice was already the distinctive dress of the lower clergy, even though this was not the case everywhere. The name of the surplice arises from the fact that it was worn by the clergy, especially in northern Europe, over (super) the universally customary fur clothing (pelliceo). This is stated by Durandus and by the English grammarian Gerlandus, both of whom lived to the thirteenth century.</p>
Tituli majores	<p>Originated in the rural areas of Europe. That churches existed in rural districts as early as the fourth century is undeniable. Priests went thither periodically to administer the sacraments. In the fifth century, however, on account of the increase in the number of the faithful, it became necessary to station resident priests in such districts. This was the origin of parish churches, which were established by the bishops in the most populous districts.</p> <p>Because in these churches only could the Sacrament of Baptism be administered; they were also termed tituli majores to distinguish them from the private churches, or tituli minores</p>
tíðir, tíðasöngur	<p>Canonical Hours, also called Divine Office, or simply Office; certain prayers to be recited at fixed hours of the day or night by priests, religious, or clerics, and, in general, by all those obliged by their vocation to fulfil this duty. The Divine Office comprises only the recitation of certain prayers in the Breviary, and does not include the Mass and other liturgical ceremonies.</p>
Tonsure	<p>A sacred rite instituted by the Church by which a baptized and confirmed Christian is received into the clerical order by the shearing of his hair and the investment with the surplice. The person thus tonsured becomes a partaker of the common privileges and obligations of the clerical state and is prepared for the reception of orders.</p> <p><i>See Surplice.</i></p>
Vicar-general	<p>After the bishop, the principal authority in a diocese is the vicar-general (Lat. <i>vicarius generalis in spiritualibus</i>); he is the bishop's substitute in the administration of the diocese. The office dates from the thirteenth century and was originally called the "official" (<i>officialis</i>). <i>Officialis</i> and <i>vicarius generalis in spiritualibus</i> are synonymous.</p> <p>The wide powers of administration now enjoyed by the vicar-general belonged formerly to the archdeacon.</p> <p>The cleric appointed as vicar-general should be of legitimate birth, tonsured, and celibate. He should have attained his twenty-fifth year and be commendable for the probity of his life, his prudence, and his knowledge of canon law, in which he should be a doctor or licentiate, or at least equivalently qualified. Statutes of particular councils and rescripts of Roman Congregations declare that the vicar-general should not have the cure of souls, but this is nowhere prescribed in common law, and though an urban parish, or a capitular office, or the rectorship of a seminary are hindrances to the liberty of a vicar-general, yet they are not strictly incompatible with it.</p> <p><i>See Official, Tonsure, and Archdeacon.</i></p>

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Vicarius, pl. vicarii, m.	(Latin, from <i>vice</i> , instead of.) The jurisdiction of a <i>vicarius</i> is generally ordinary, but sometimes only delegated. The former archdeacons and archpriests and some others have ordinary power in consequence of their office. (The Catholic Encyclopedia). In Bergen diocese in Medieval times, it is clear that the <i>vicarius</i> works for the priest who holds the benefice, the <i>rector</i> . In this sense the <i>vicarius</i> corresponds to the <i>curate</i> in the common meaning of the word. <i>See Rector; Curate.</i>
Vikar, pl. vikarer, m.	<i>See Vicarius.</i>