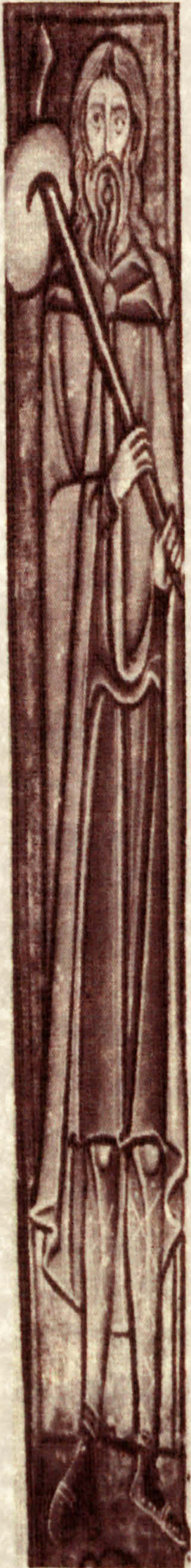


Orkney Pilgrimage

**Perspectives of
the Cult
of St Magnus**

Margareth Buer Søiland

For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Archaeology at
the University of Glasgow
2004



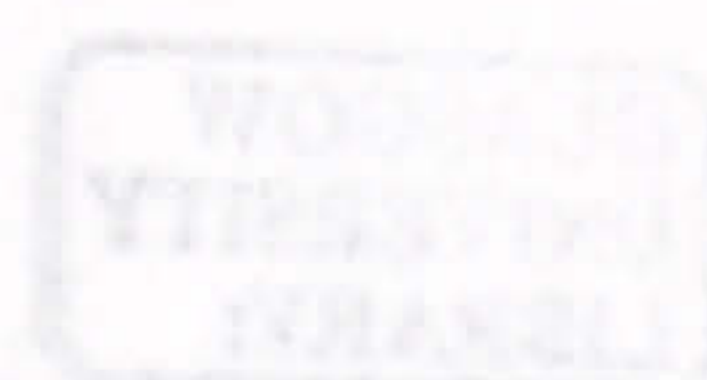
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Margareth Buer Søiland

*for my parents
and*

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**For my parents
and
for Walter**

Abstract

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Department of Archaeology, University of Glasgow.

The early Christian cults of saints and relics as well as the act and process of pilgrimage were central themes in the religious practice of the Middle Ages. The veneration of saints and relics, the belief in miracles, and the act of pilgrimage were aspects of Christianity rapidly adopted by the converted population of the North Atlantic. This thesis focuses on St Magnus, Earl of Orkney († c. 1116), the cult and pilgrimage process which emerged about a century after the conversion of the Northern Isles. The physical monuments and primary sources, are seen as defining the cult, the pilgrimage process, as well as outlining a trace of the route. St Magnus cult and pilgrimage are also discussed within a comparative context; of the Norse cultural sphere, and of the medieval Universal Church.

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Preface

This thesis has developed over a period of about seven years. It began during a departmental field-trip to Galloway, and ended up in Orkney. A gradual focus northwards proved to be a wise choice in the long run, and it is probably not quite unexpected for a Norwegian studying in Scotland to end up in the Northern Isles.

The project has proved more of a challenge than first imagined, for several reasons: One was the language-barrier, which first became a problem when getting down to the actual writing of the thesis. Another was my visits to Orkney and Shetland, on one and two occasions respectively. It would have been an advantage to my research to spend more than a week at a time in these islands. A third challenge has been the problem of defining the outer limits of the thesis. Where to end, but also where to begin!

The overall motive of research was to explore the nature of pilgrimage. It was first of all the *process* of medieval pilgrimage that drew my attention to the subject, and it soon became clear that it could not alone be approached from the sometimes empirical view of an archaeologist. Medieval pilgrimage contains several inter-linked dimensions which had to be explored to achieve a more complete picture of this process. One approach to pilgrimage is from the view-point of anthropology. Questions that may be asked concern the fundamental religious/Christian processes within any given society: Are there any common factors, how may these be interpreted, and are they universal? Another approach entails the historical references to medieval pilgrimage. These sources (documents, manuscripts, hagiology and sagas) may lead to the following questions: Are the references accurate or true, and where and when did this process take place? A third approach concerns the archaeological evidence of any physical remains and sites associated with the specific pilgrimage process (ecclesiastical buildings, monuments, shrines, reliquaries and significant places etc.). The presence of such evidence may lead to questions like: How do these buildings/monuments/objects/sites relate to the specific pilgrimage, and how should these be interpreted? A fourth approach may focus on the folkloric sources such as customs, traditions and legends related to a site, monument or object associated with a specific pilgrimage process. These sources may supplement archaeological and/or historical sources on issues concerning potential ritual use of a site/monument/object within a certain period. A fifth approach to the process of pilgrimage emerges from the history and philosophy of religion, and may ask questions concerning the perception of a religious vs. a physical dimension: Is there a religious dimension that exceeds the physical limits or boundaries of the specific buildings, monuments, objects or sites?

This thesis has tried to incorporate all these elements, to a greater or lesser degree, in order to illuminate most aspects of the act of pilgrimage in general, and specifically the medieval pilgrimage process in Orkney. But like all pilgrimages throughout time, the Orkney pilgrimage was founded in the presence of the miraculous – *the holy*. In this case, the holy was initially personified through Earl Magnus Erlendsson, his martyrdom and miracles, and came to embrace, at least, his shrine and the cathedral in Kirkwall. The question of *cultus* is consequently tied to the onset of pilgrimage in twelfth century Orkney. The cults of saints in early Christianity spread with the conversion and therefore became a central part of the pilgrimage process, so also in this thesis.

The conclusion of this research has in many ways become the point of departure. From the Orkney pilgrimage and the perspectives of the cult of St Magnus, new questions have risen concerning sacred ritual, space and monuments. These may hopefully be approached in the future – somewhere further down the road.

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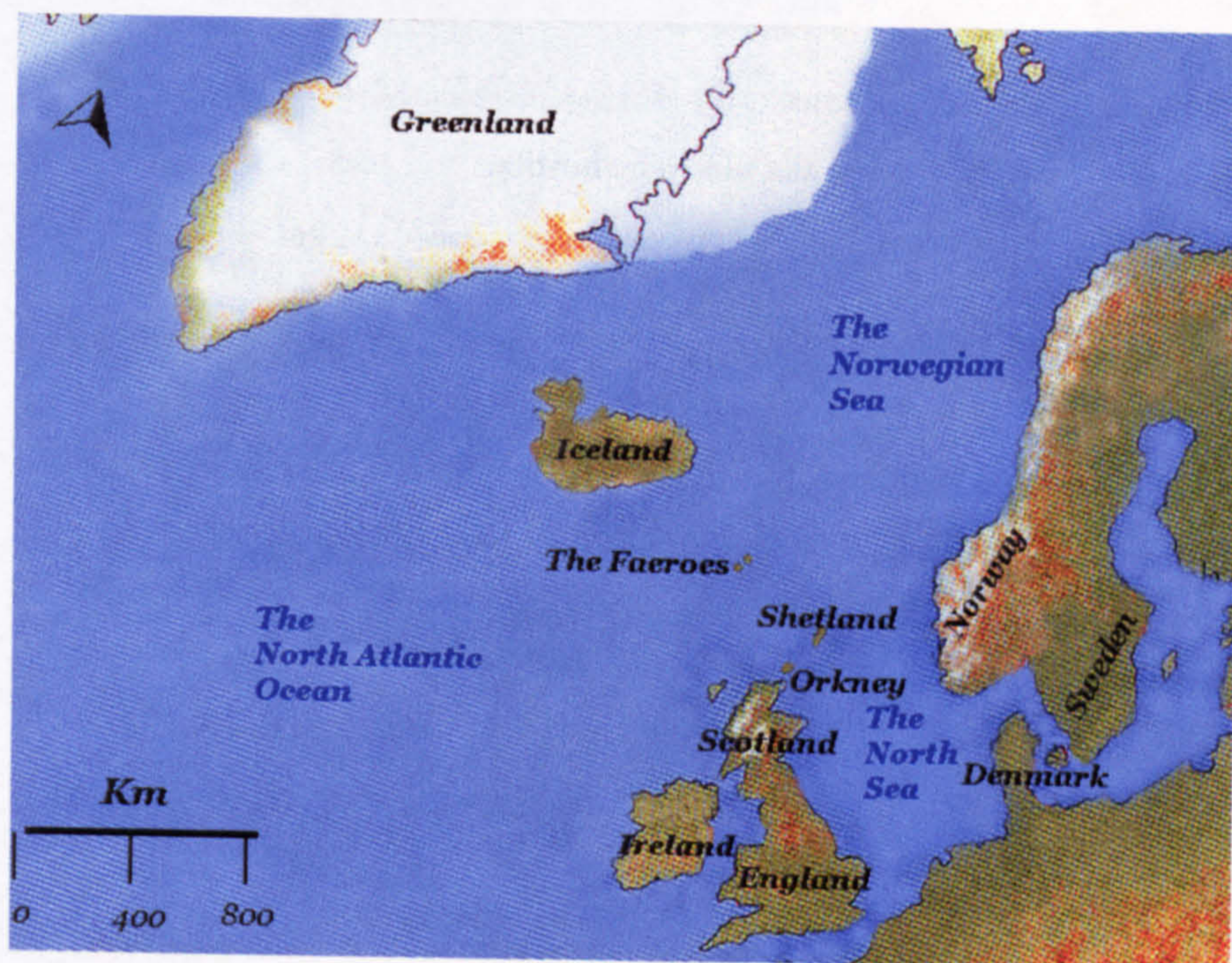
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Abbreviations

CE	:	The Catholic Encyclopedia.
DE	:	Diplomatarium Norvegicum.
KHLMN	:	Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for Nordisk Middelalder.
M1	:	Magnúss Saga Lengri.
M2	:	Magnúss Saga Skemmri.
ON	:	Old Norse.
OS	:	Orkneyinga Saga.
RCAHMS	:	Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland.



Map 1. The North Atlantic.



Map 2. The Archbishop's Seat and bishoprics of Norway after 1152.



Map 3. The Bishops' Seats of Iceland.



Map 4. The Bishop's Seat of the Faeroes.



Map 5. The Bishop's Seat of Greenland.



Map 6. The British Isles and the Bishopric of Sodor.



Map 7. The Bishop's Seat of Orkney.



Map 8. Shetland.

Chapter 1

Introduction

a) Motivation.

Pilgrimage has been a subject of investigation throughout the twentieth century. The fascination with Christian pilgrimage in the modern world is on the increase amongst the general public, perhaps as a reaction to a fast forward-moving technological society. The religious desire amongst non-Catholics to seek the old customs and practices of the Church such as pilgrimage, seems to be a romantic dream still anchored in the past. In contrast to this retrospective religious vision of the pilgrimage journey, the Catholic Church and her practices has developed somewhat since the Middle Ages.

This study approaches the process of medieval pilgrimage in the North Atlantic from various angles: The initial approach is based on the historical and archaeological sources that tell the story of the life, martyrdom, and cult of St Magnus, Earl of Orkney († c. 1116). But beyond these sources lies the religious motivation of the creation of a cult on the north-western fringe of the Old World: the origin of pilgrimage and the cult of saints are tied with the early Christian cults of the martyrs whose graves became the sacred places of Christianity. The act and process of pilgrimage was therefore closely connected with the notion of sacred places. Consequently pilgrimage was not *any* journey in early Christian and medieval societies, it was a religious journey with a religious motive. The journey and the motive led towards the *holy*, manifested in the sacred places of the saints' shrines, relics, buildings, and monuments. This study therefore seeks to place the North Atlantic pilgrimage to the shrine of St Magnus within that context.

The origin of pilgrimage as part of the Christian notion of the *holy* or the *sacred*, is explored within the history and philosophy of religion, as well as within anthropology. These approaches are complementary to the written sources, hagiology, as well as archaeology. Until Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner's studies on the interpretation of pilgrimage as a ritual process and a liminoid phenomenon¹ in the '60s and '70s, medieval pilgrimage was mainly seen as a relic of past Christian societies and its process that of seeking the miracles of saints, cures of illnesses, penance and absolution, as vividly portrayed by writers such as

Heath (1911) and Jusserand (1921). The medieval pilgrimage process has since proved to accommodate several overlying processes that reach far beyond a simple explanation of personal redemption: Its nature and structure is found on the border between theology, history, folklore, anthropology and archaeology, and cannot be studied without being accepted as a multitude of interacting components. The act of pilgrimage in early Christianity, during the Middle Ages, as well as in a modern setting, has a set of common basic traits. These have been explored by scholars such as van Gennep (1960) and Turner (1978), as mentioned above, Preston (1992), Coleman and Elsner (1995), to mention some. Their research and level of explanation within an anthropological and phenomenological context has created a fundament of knowledge and understanding of pilgrimage and saints cults.

Christian pilgrimage and saints cults are also surrounded by folklore and legendary tales, though generally based in hagiology, in the writings of the Church Fathers, as well as in the sagas; these sources have qualities of information about *how* pilgrimage was performed, usually on a local scale, and about pilgrimage traditions and customs. A central motive of this study is therefore to make use of these sources of information in order to explain the pilgrimage process in general as well as in the North Atlantic.

The motivation for exploring medieval pilgrimage in the North Atlantic, is mainly the lack of research within this field. The cult of St Magnus, the sagas, the Orkney earldom etc. have been extensively explored by others², but the pilgrimage process in connection with the cult of St Magnus has not been investigated outside the context of the earldom and Norse society. A main objective has been to analyse the cult of St Magnus and pilgrimage to Orkney as part of the universal pilgrimage process of the Church that originated in late antiquity. Although the rise of the cult of St Magnus must be seen in connection with political and ecclesiastical interests, the religious motive and tradition was an equally great part. The *cultus* of saints and relics, the belief in the intervention of miracles in everyday life, and the individual's decision to make a pilgrimage to a sometimes foreign and far-away place were aspects of medieval Christianity also present in the North Atlantic and reflected in the cult, shrine, and pilgrimage of St Magnus.

Pilgrimage is usually explained as a religious journey and a religious ritual involving a self- or superimposed travel from home along specific routes to a sacred place. This journey may sometimes be long and hazardous lasting for weeks or months. This is the traditional as well the general description of the act of pilgrimage. This study seeks, however, to further explore the pilgrimage process as similar to death, funeral-customs and the grave. Medieval pilgrimage involved preparation for the journey, the separation from the ordinary, profane life

that necessitated protection such as sanctuaries along the route, to the inclusion into the sacred sphere of the pilgrim's goal – shrine. This *was* the place where heaven met earth at the grave of the saint. In the Middle Ages, the death of the individual had similar characteristics: the corpse was separated from the profane world, but not immediately included into heaven. Death was a process, and not a dividing line between this and the other. Death was separation, and consequently careful preparations were made to ensure the soul's safe crossing into heaven. The shrine and the ordinary grave were part of the same idea, only that one served as a model for the other. The contents were the same, but the motives were different. The shrine was sacred, but the grave sought to be in proximity to the sacred: The conversion of the Norse did not only bring the cult of saints, relics, miracles, and pilgrimage. It also changed the perception of death.

The thesis is divided into nine chapters of which 2-8 are the main chapters. Chapters 2 and 3 form the basic discussion on pilgrimage as a religious process as well as the central themes that define the notion of the sacred. Chapters 4 and 5 explore the origin of saints' cults and pilgrimage in a general as well as a regional context relevant to the study of cultus and pilgrimage in the North Atlantic. Finally, chapters 6-8 concern the main object of this thesis; the cult of St Magnus and the pilgrimage process to the shrine in Orkney. Chapter 6 focuses on the making of the saint and the reasons for the rise of his cult. Chapter 7 concentrates on the pilgrimage goals, the shrine, and the archaeology of these important cultic places. Chapter 8 is, in turn, a survey of the evidence for *cultus* associated with St Magnus, to where it spread, and expressions of celebration.

b) Delimitation.

The geographical area of *the North Atlantic*, is applied in this thesis to the area of the Norse settlements between the North Atlantic Ocean and the Norwegian and North Seas. The realm of the Norse at the turn of the first millennium included, from a Norwegian perspective, Greenland, Iceland, and the Faeroes; the Isles of the Western Sea (Orkney and Shetland); Caithness and the Southern Isles (the Hebrides); Isle of Man and parts of eastern Ireland. The islands of Orkney and Shetland are sometimes termed *the Northern Isles*, a designation which reflects these islands' geographical position to Britain, and the isles' changed focus after their transfer to the Scottish Crown in 1468 (Orkney) and 1469 (Shetland).

The period of study stretches from late antiquity to the Reformation, i.e. a period of about 1500 years. The term *early Christian* is applied to the period of the Christian mission, c. 400 to 1000 AD when most parts of western Europe were converted. This period is otherwise referred to as the Migration Period (c. 400-600 AD) and the Dark Ages (c. 500-1000 AD). In Scandinavia this period is referred to as the Merovingian Period (c. 600-800 AD) and the Viking Period (c. 800-1000 AD). *The Middle Ages*, on the other hand, began with the end of the Viking Period (c. 1000 AD) and ended with the Reformation in c. 1530-60. The term *medieval* is the adjective of "the Middle Ages". Within the scope of this thesis the Middle Ages was marked by the completion of the Norse conversion to Christianity and ended with the Reformed and Protestant Churches that stigmatized the old rituals, customs, and traditions such as pilgrimage and the cult of saints and relics – aspects characterising the medieval Catholic Church.

In the history of Christianity, the North Atlantic was converted at a late stage (between c. 900 and 1000 AD). Christianity was a religion familiar to the Norse long before the official conversion, and both archaeological and historical sources reveal that some individuals and members of the traditional Norse pagan society had converted and were given pagan burials with clear Christian symbolism³. The pagan Norse polytheistic religion defined as an ethnic religion stands in sharp contrast to the monotheistic universality of Christianity⁴. Nevertheless, the notion of the sacred places, the cult of saints and relics were rapidly absorbed and adopted by the converted Norse.

For about 500 years, the people in the North Atlantic have been part of the Reformed and Protestant Churches which have shaped and changed their customs, traditions, culture, and ecclesiastical architecture. The pilgrimage process and cults of saints had been an integrated part of medieval religious life, but after the Reformation, their sacred places, holy wells, trees and stones ceased to contain and convey religious *meaning* like they had done in

the Middle Ages as well as before the conversion to Christianity. The Reformation led to the profanation of things, places, and customs formerly held sacred, except the church-buildings, the church- and graveyards. This change or development is, however, a discussion which belongs in a different context.

The sources of Christian pilgrimage in the North Atlantic are scarce. Indeed, the only references to pilgrimages made to the shrine of St Magnus in Orkney are the *Orkneyinga Saga* and the two *Magnus Sagas* (M1 and M2) that are all based on a common source, a lost Latin *vita*, or life, of St Magnus⁵. These references are again not reliable as historical facts, but the saga-material contributes to describing the veneration of a saint's cult in the North Atlantic during the twelfth century. Old Norse and Latin sources have been widely quoted. In most cases these are not provided with English translations because their contents and meaning are made evident in the context.

This thesis has many limitations, but these also represent the potentiality of future research. The fact that many of the pilgrimages referred to are still ongoing processes, has not been considered, such as the major, present pilgrimages to the Holy Land, Rome and Santiago de Compostela. Nor has the modern, reconstructed pilgrimage route to the famous shrine of St Olaf in Nidaros, Norway, been referred to. Only the early Christian or medieval processes have been considered to be of relevance to this thesis. Neither has it been an objective to compare or contrast different pilgrimages or cults of the Middle Ages, e.g. within a North European context. Less or no attention has consequently been given to other medieval pilgrimage processes or saints' cults within the Nordic area or the British Isles, such as the cults and shrines of e.g. Sweden, Denmark, Scotland or England. The objective has rather been to focus on the common factors of cults of saints and pilgrimage; *why* these religious traditions and customs were adopted, and *how* they were expressed within the North Atlantic and specifically in Orkney and Shetland.

The potentiality beyond the scope of this study could delve further into the topics of the cult of saints and relics⁶, sacred places, consecration, sanctuary⁷, death, and the grave⁸. The cult of saints and relics is a widely discussed theme, but further research and complete surveys of the saints venerated in Norway as well as in Orkney, Shetland, and the Faeroes during the Middle Ages would possibly highlight new aspects of medieval religious life in these areas. Similarly, the notions of sacred places, the consecration and dedication of sacred space, as well as the duality of medieval religious sanctuary within this area needs further analysis in a historical and archaeological context. Finally, the processual link between

pilgrimage and the holy dead on one hand, and the ordinary, medieval death and burial in proximity to the holy on the other, should be given further attention in the future.

Notes to chapter 1.

¹ Cf. Ch. 3b : 35-37.

² E.g. J. Storer Clouston, Barbara Crawford, Ingrid De Geer.

³ Cf. Ch. 5a : 81.

⁴ Cf. *Ibid.* : 82-83.

⁵ Cf. Ch. 6a : 114-115.

⁶ Cf. Ch. 4b : 54ff, and 4c : 61ff.

⁷ Cf. Ch. 2a : 8ff, 2b : 11ff, and 2c : 17ff.

⁸ Cf. Ch. 2d : 23ff. ¹ Cf. Ch. 3b : 35-37.

Chapter 2

Sacred Places

a) Introduction.

Medieval pilgrimage as an act of religious ritual incorporates a great number of single elements which as a whole create a process of movement from one place to another. Initially, pilgrimage is understood as a forward motion, continuing from start until finish. Pilgrimage may also be understood as a religious act and as a religious experience, in most cases a voluntarily undertaking, bringing the pilgrim gradually towards the goal. This gradual movement may be interpreted as a process of preparation, initiation, and transition before reaching that ultimate fulfilment at the shrine¹. The act of Christian pilgrimage incorporates, however, fundamental religious elements or dogmas concerning the belief in *the other* – something outside oneself and the profane world. Something that is of profound and basic importance to the religious system. In Christianity, this basic belief in *the other* is first and foremost *the Trinity* – Father, Son, and Spirit. But as a general dogma of the history, or rather the philosophy, of religion *the other* may collectively be explained and/or perceived as something *holy* or *sacred*, sometimes also associated with objects or monuments generally perceived as inanimate.

For the archaeologist, the early Christian and medieval pilgrimage process is first and foremost the identified physical route or path that cuts through a specific landscape or area leading to a specific goal of religious importance. Secondly, pilgrimage routes were often marked by religious or secular monuments that were directly associated with the pilgrimage process, such as churches, hospitals or guest-houses. These elements, considered by the archaeologist, represent only one part of the pilgrimage process: the physical manifestations of pilgrimage. The act of pilgrimage is, however, subjected to the physical manifestations of *the holy / the sacred*. These are the underlying elements of the pilgrimage process – what makes it an act of ritual movement.

In the major world religions, sacred places are first and foremost associated with the religious buildings such as churches, temples, synagogues and mosques. In Christianity, the church buildings and the churchyards are sacred places where human activity is synonymous

with religious activity. Religious activity is in turn symbolised by the liturgy of the church services, the mass and the offices. The ritual of the church liturgy is, however, only one aspect of the church as a sacred place.

Sacred places are commonly found in all world religions. Some places are dedicated to God and therefore set apart from ordinary and profane activities. They are sacred grounds, consecrated places in which the religious man behaves differently from what he does in profane places (Dhavamony 1973 : 94).

The physical building itself *is* sacred because of its consecration as a house of worship; it has been dedicated to God². The church with the churchyard is therefore often separated from the profane world or society by a physical boundary or wall marking the outer limit of the sacred space. In general terms, the church building represents the centre of the Christian faith, and its layout reflects degrees of “holiness” from the periphery of the church-wall to the most sacred centre of the building – the choir. Likewise, the orientation of the building along an east-west axis, is a medieval perception reflecting the idea of the coming of Christ on Judgement Day from the East (Sellevoid 1999 : 97). The centre of the church, the choir, is therefore usually located in the east with the church entrance in the west or south.

The sacred places of Christianity are not only associated with the church buildings alone. A sacred place may also be the physical centre of a cult; the shrine of a saint or a relic. What makes the act of pilgrimage an act of ritual movement is that it is set apart from ordinary, profane activities and e.g. commercial travel. Its purpose has a divine or supernatural origin, so also the road and the monuments. The definition, or various meanings, of *sacred places* (in all religions) is best summed-up by Dhavamony, and is therefore quoted in full:

First it is a place of divinity, sacredness, distinct from the profane place, because it is the dwelling place of the divine. The behaviour in such a place is noted for special purity and reverence, unlike that in any profane place. It is sacred not only because it has been connected in the past with some saint or god, not only because it contains some memorial but mainly because the divine dwells there. The sacred places derive their significance not only because they are donations or offerings made in honour of the divine but are objects of divine power endowed by a god or closely connected with a god, or they contain idols or images which represent god or the divine. More especially it is in sacred places that the divine manifests itself and enters in communion and communication with man and the world. By opening communication between the divine and man, it makes it possible for a man to pass from one mode of being (profane) to that of the sacred. This break in the heterogeneity of profane space creates a centre by means of which communication with the divine is established. Thus the sacred place becomes for the religious man the centre of the world (Dhavamony 1973 : 99).

The opening of communication between man and the divine, which enables man to pass from a profane mode of being to a sacred mode of being may further be exemplified by acts of ritual movement: By entering the sacred ground of the church, through prayer, by making a pilgrimage, or through death. The pilgrim, for example, passes from a state of the profane and the ordinary to a state of ritual behaviour of the initiated, within the system of the pilgrimage route. A similar symbolism is found in the christening of an infant in the medieval Church, where the baptism took place at the entrance of the church, a ritual of initiation, before it could be brought before the altar in the choir. The initiation-rite of the baptism before the infant is allowed to enter the church (a ritual movement) on one hand, and the pilgrimage process, a separation from the profane and an initiation to the sacred on the other, are two examples of communication between man and the divine which may be further paralleled in the state of death and the burial-customs of the medieval Church³. Sacred places are therefore the religious and physical monuments or buildings where there is a presence of *the holy* – a place for religious behaviour, action or ritual.

b) Consecration.

In the study of medieval Christian pilgrimage, the source of veneration, usually the destination of the pilgrimage, was often associated with the cults of saints. Christian cults were normally centred in an ecclesiastical building such as a church or a monastery. In most cases the ecclesiastical building would have been *dedicated* to the saint in question, i.e. the building received the name of the saint, and the spread of the cultus outside the cult-centre often involved the dedication of churches to the same saint and the distribution / translation of relics⁴. The dedication of objects, monuments or buildings is part of the act of consecration (Lat. *consecratio*): In Christian ritual, the process of someone or something passing from a state of the profane to a state of the sacred or holy is generally termed a solemn act of *consecration*, and may be explained as follows:

Consecration, in general, is an act by which a thing is separated from common and profane to a sacred use, or by which a person or thing is dedicated to the service and worship of God by prayers, rites, and ceremonies (Schulte 1908 : 1).

The act of consecration is of ancient origin, and rituals of consecration are found both in pagan and Christian societies. Rites of consecration are frequently described in the Old Testament in connection with people, objects and buildings, like the following example concerning Moses' consecration of Aaron and the tabernacle:

And Moses said unto the congregation, This *is* the thing which the Lord commanded to be done (Lev. 8 : 5).

And Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle and all that was therein, and sanctified them. And he sprinkled thereof upon the altar seven times, and anointed the altar and all his vessels, both the laver and his foot to sanctify them. And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him (Lev. 8 : 10-12).

The Roman Church distinguishes between consecration, dedication and blessing, but as a general rule such rituals involve a process of persons, objects or buildings passing from 'a common, or profane, order to a new state, and become the subjects or the instruments of Divine protection' (Schulte 1908 : 1). The distinction between consecration, dedication and blessing is thus that a blessing is repeatable and the profanation of a blessed person or thing is a sin, but not necessarily sacrilege. Dedication, on the other hand, is part of the act of consecration, and primarily concerns objects, monuments (e.g. ecclesiastical buildings and altars), or persons that are exclusively pertained to worship. The term 'is more properly

applied to the “setting aside” of places for a special and sacred purpose’ (Morrisroe 1908 : 1). The profanation of a consecrated (or dedicated) object, building or person involves sacrilege. The object, building or person consecrated or dedicated remains otherwise sacred *in perpetuum*.

In order to clarify the distinction between consecration and dedication one example is the uncompleted thirteenth century cathedral at Kirkjubøur⁵ in the Faeroes (P12 : 266). This building was for some reason never completed and never consecrated, but was dedicated to St Magnus, Earl of Orkney⁶. There are no records of the rite of dedication or when it may have taken place. There is no evidence of a high altar installed in the cathedral, and the building was therefore never consecrated for sacred use. The building was, however, intended to be consecrated since there are eight remaining consecration crosses on the walls of the nave and choir (Dahl 1968 : 188) (P13 : 266).

It is difficult to determine specifically what the act of consecration consisted of in early Christianity, but the general consecration of buildings for sacred use was at least known by the time of the Emperor Constantine’s conversion in the fourth century⁷. The rites of consecration consisted of the keeping of vigil before consecration, the translation of relics⁸, and the tracing of the Latin or the Greek alphabets on the pavement of the building. The consecration would have been performed by a bishop, who at the same time would consecrate a fixed altar for the church. According to Schulte, the essence of the consecration of a church etc. is the anointing of twelve crosses, either painted on the walls or, if made by stone or metal, attached to the inner walls of the building (Schulte 1908 : 9). In the case of the cathedral of Kirkjubøur, the building was certainly prepared for consecration, but the absence of a fixed altar makes it unlikely that this rite was ever performed. Another factor concerns the installation of a reliquary in the eastern *outer* wall of the cathedral. The reliquary⁹ was found to contain the supposed relics of the Virgin Mary, St Magnus of Orkney, St Þorlák of Iceland¹⁰ and a piece of the True Cross. The fact that the reliquary had been installed in the eastern outer wall of the choir, and not in the inner wall, similarly suggests that the cathedral was never consecrated. For some unknown reason, the process of consecrating the cathedral was interrupted, but the local clergy found it necessary to translate and install the relics. Because the cathedral had not been consecrated, the reliquary could not be installed inside the choir (preferably in or near the altar), but was placed on the outside wall in the most sacred part of the building.

The Christian altar – the *altare Dei* – the sacred centre of the church and its liturgy, where the sacrifice of the mass is offered, is closely connected with the tombs of the early

Christian martyrs¹¹. In early Christianity the Roman basilicas were erected over the graves of the martyrs, and the altars were placed directly over their graves – the *confessio*, and the practice of celebrating mass on the tombs of the martyrs can be traced back to the early second century (Hassett 1907 : 2). The consecration of churches necessitated the consecration of a fixed altar, the high altar, usually located in an elevated position on the steps of the sanctuary¹², and should stand free on all sides. The high altars of churches symbolise Christ and his sacrifice, but churches may also have additional altars – or altars of devotional sacrifice, placed near the high altar or in side chapels which were used for the celebration of private masses. The high altar in the sanctuary always remained the principal altar of the church (Schulte 1910 : 1). The consecration of at least one fixed altar was performed during the consecration of a church. These rites are known from as early as the sixth century, and essentially involve the same rites as for the consecration of churches, such as the keeping of vigil, translation and installation of relics into the sepulchre of the altar, application of holy oil, incensing etc. (Schulte 1908 : 5-6).

The consecration of churches and altars which involved the transfer of the building or monument from a profane to a sacred use and state, may further apply to other monuments or objects. In places where there were no immediate churches, portable altars could be consecrated and used as a replacement for a consecrated church building for the celebration of mass (Schulte 1907 : 1). In 1418 Pope Martin V gave a canon of Nidaros and a priest in Oslo, in Norway, permission to use portable altars for the celebration of mass at dawn:

A1 *Item quatenus Berweno(!) Nicolai presbytero canonico ecclesie Nidrosiensis altare portabile concedere dignemini per se et pro se ut supra ut in forma. Item quantenus eidem B. ut ante diem missas et alia diuina celebrare aut facere celebrari etca ut in forma.*

and

A2 *Item quatenus Olawo Andree presbytero Asloensis diocesis altare portabile etca ut supra in precedente. Item quantenus eidem Olawo ut ante diem missas etca ut supra ut in forma (DN XVII : 287-288, no. 374).*

About forty years later, Pope Nicolas V established King Christiern I of Denmark's right to use a portable altar for the celebration of mass at appropriate places with a priest:

A3 [], *hinc est quod nos tue celsitudinis deuotis supplicationibus inclinati ut liceat tibi habere altare ortatile cum debitis reuerentia et honore super quo in locis ad hoc congruentibus et honestis possis per proprium vel alium sacerdotem ydoneum missam at alia diuina officia sine juri alieni preiudicio in tua et aliorum quorumlibet presentia facere celebrari deuotioni tue tenore presentium indulgemus* (DN VIII : 362-363, no. 336).

As portable Christian altars were consecrated for use in places where there were no churches or chapels, so may also the cross have had a similar function in certain places before churches were built. Although the symbol of the cross is found in all aspects of Christianity; as the prime symbol of the passion of Christ, as processional crosses, altar-crosses, grave-markers, and crucifixes etc., they may have been erected as markers of sacred places where masses were celebrated and prayers were said (Birkeli 1973 : 29-31), like the example from the vicinity of Kirkjubøur in the Faeroes:

Entering Kirkjubøur on the way south from Thorshavn one's first sight of this ecclesiastical centre is by the Kyrjasteinur [Kyrie-stones?]; one of a number of rocks in the Faroes at which pious travellers blessed themselves and said a Kyrie (Dahl 1965 : 187).

In a statement by Bishop Eystein of Oslo in 1394, he announced that four old men (in their seventies and eighties) had informed him of an old and great cross near the church at Eidsskog, in the county of Hedmark, dedicated to St Olaf¹³:

[] *stoodh æin kross stoor væstan at Æidzskoogh kirkiu a æuangenom. ok var offrat til. at han skuldi vppi haldazt ok leto pelegrimar mæssor seghia þer* (DN I : 396, no. 545).

There was a great cross west of Eidsskog Church. Sacrifices were made to the cross. The cross should be maintained and pilgrims should celebrate masses there (translated).

At Tjora, in the county of Rogaland, Norway, there is a medieval (possibly twelfth century) churchyard where two great stone crosses are located, though not in situ (Ill. 1, page 15). The two crosses were part of a collection of four crosses, that may originally have been erected as consecration-crosses for pre-Christian burial mounds in the vicinity. Another interpretation for these crosses is that they may have functioned as prayer-crosses – consecrated places where services were held before the church was built (Birkeli 1973 : 142-149).

Praying crosses by the wayside were a familiar feature in old days, and particularly at spots where the traveller came into view or lost sight of a church or a holy place (Marwick 1924 : 19).



Ill. 1. The two 12th century crosses at Tjora (Rogaland County, Norway).

On the island of Rousay, Orkney, there were at least two such praying-sites that are commemorated in place-names: At Corse in Frotoft (*Corse* meaning *cross*) the cross was placed near an old Corsegate – the road to the church, possibly the parish church of Our Lady at Skail. It is also possible that on this spot people turned and looked to the monastery on Eynhallow (Marwick 1924 : 19). The second prayer-site on Rousay is situated on the western slope of Mansemass Hill^{14a} where there is a place called *Bonie Hole* that may be a local interpretation of ON *bænar-hóll*, or prayer-hill. The nearby church is also Our at Skail (Marwick 1924 : 20).

The consecration and/or dedication of buildings or monuments such as churches, altars, and crosses to sacred use and in the name of a Christian saint was, and still is, throughout Christianity the core in creating sacred places and sacred space. By performing the

solemn act of consecration, physical things or places could cease being part of the profane world and become sacred in nature and in use. Religious rites like the sacraments were reserved for these consecrated and dedicated places, and for the medieval pilgrim, the sacred places were protected space offering rest and sanctuary.

c) Sanctuary.

The medieval Christian *sanctuary* has two definitions that are both related to sacred space and objects. As an architectural term, the sanctuary is the *sanctum sanctorum* of the church building, the elevated space in the church reserved for the high altar, the shrine, and the clergy, i.e. the easternmost part of the choir (Cox 1911 : 2). The sanctuary has undergone a series of stylistic and architectural phases throughout early Christianity and the Middle Ages. In the early Christian period, the church-plans were rectangular or T-shaped (Roman) with one or more semicircular apses in the eastern wall. Throughout the Middle Ages the plans developed and the sanctuary became enlarged, either by enclosing a part of the middle nave or by introducing a square between the longitudinal aisle and the apse, thus leading to the development of the cruciform church-plan. A second major development of the sanctuary occurred during the Carlevingian Renaissance and consisted in creating a “double sanctuary” i.e. the construction of a west choir (in the eastern end of the church) opposite the original east choir^{14b}. This development became gradually universal in the case of larger churches in the West. A third architectural alteration of the sanctuary was mainly a product of the Gothic style. The sanctuary became accessible on all sides because of the improved vaulting technique, enabling the congregation and the faithful be closer to the high altar, if the sanctuary was not enclosed by a wall or a screen. The Renaissance restored the sanctuary to its original form. Emphasis was put on increasing the size of the nave, and side naves were often reduced to narrow aisles. The sanctuary during the Renaissance was opened up and widened, thus abolishing the idea of circular access. In this period the screen separating the sanctuary and the nave was abandoned and later replaced by the low communion bench and rail. In this later development of the sanctuary the congregation entering the church got free view of the sanctuary. The architectural development of the sanctuary therefore went through a development of the *sanctum sanctorum* being enclosed, shut off, and inaccessible for the congregation during the Middle Ages, to becoming an open space, visible and accessible to the congregation. The only remnant of the sanctuary wall or screen is the communion bench and rail partly enclosing the high altar (Kleinschmidt 1908 : 1-3).

The Christian sanctuary as a religious entity is first and foremost the notion of the *sanctum sanctorum* of the church, as described above, containing the elements of protection, immunity, and asylum for an individual which, within a religious context, translates as a holy or a sacred place where individuals can take refuge. The origin of the Christian sanctuary as a protected and sacred place can be traced to the six Levitical cities of refuge and the ancient Greek asylums amongst which Diana of Ephesus is the most famous. The Romans also

acknowledged the sacredness of particular places, altars, temples or statues of emperors. Their counterpart of the Jewish Temple became in turn reflected in the early Christian Church. The earliest known law concerning the privilege of church-asylum was confirmed by Theodosius the Great in 392 AD, but by this time the privilege of the sanctuary was already well established. In the early stages of the Christian sanctuary only the altar and the inner parts of the church held this privilege. In 450 AD, under Theodosius the Younger, the limits of immunity for people seeking refuge was extended to also include the entire church building, other ecclesiastical buildings in the precincts, the courts and the cemeteries. Theodosius the Younger's constitution was further confirmed by Pope Leo, who appointed advocates to investigate the individual cases of asylum-seekers (Cox 1911 : 2-3). In Christian terms the idea of the protected and sacred space of the sanctuary was further closely connected with mercy and compassion for the fellow being, but in early Christianity the privilege of sanctuary could not be enjoyed by 'Jews pretending to turn Christian to avoid their debts, nor by any heretics or apostates'. The law of the sanctuary similarly excluded 'murderers, adulterers, and ravishers of virgins' (Cox 1911 : 4).

The sanctuaries of the Middle Ages did not, however, only refer to holy or sacred places. Sanctuaries and protected space could also be related to royal and personal property as well as to individuals (Davies 1996 : 3). The privilege of sanctuary of the medieval Church normally corresponded with the church building itself, the architectural sanctuary or choir, or the high altar. The sanctuary may also have been confined to the extended property of the church, e.g. within the walls of the churchyard or indeed to separate spaces consecrated by the Church, the *locus sacer*. The idea of places or buildings being places of refuge protected by the Church was common throughout Christian medieval Europe. The common perception of the use of religious sanctuary was first and foremost connected with people violating the law and who could seek refuge within the boundaries of the church sanctuary. The sanctuary was therefore a space providing immunity for offenders, but breach of the sanctuary brought punishments like penance, excommunication and financial compensation to both the protector and the damaged (Nilsson 1987 : 146, Davies 1996 : 7-8). Christian sanctuary was therefore not only confined to the church building, the shrine or the churchyard:

It is well known that in ancient times the privilege of "sanctuary" was accorded to persons who broke the laws, and who were able to reach a church or other privileged place before they were apprehended. In some instances the protection extended to those who set foot within the cathedral or church precincts (Vaux 1894 : 22).

The earliest established law of the Christian sanctuary in England was established by King Ethelbert of Kent, soon after his conversion in 597, although it is probable that the sanctuary and immunity of sacred places was known in the British Isles during the Roman occupation. The Anglo-Saxon code of laws enforced the sanctuary of churches as well as the punishment of the church *frith* (the peace of the church). In the British Isles, the sanctuary became separated into a general sanctuary of the sacred places and the Chartered Sanctuary. The Chartered Sanctuaries were particular places that were given a permanent and extended immunity because of the special sanctity of the shrines of notable saints. This type of sanctuary was local in character and in administration, of which the most famous in England were the cathedral of Durham and the Beverley Minster (Cox 1911 : 5-6).

There are several examples from the British Isles where the sanctuary of the church could extend to a radius of up to one and a half mile from the church. The boundary of this extended area of sanctuary was in some cases marked by crosses (Davies 1996 : 5-6). The medieval hospital at Soutra in East-Lothian, Scotland, which was founded in 1164 by King Malcolm IV, held the privilege of sanctuary and its boundary was marked by crosses connected by chains (Barrett 1914 : 161). The circular tower of St Magnus Church at Tingwall¹⁵ in Shetland held the privilege of sanctuary, and according to local tradition the society often saw the use of this sanctuary in connection with sentences of death being exercised on the Law Ting Holm below the church (Ill. 2, page 20):

Ill. 2. View from Law Ting Holm to the site of St Magnus' Church (Tingwall, Shetland).



They [the Court] also report that when any person received Sentence of Death upon the Holm, if afterwards he could make his escape through the crowd of People standing on the side of the Loch, without being apprehended, and touch the Steeple of the Church of Tingwall, the Sentence of Death was Retrieved and the condemned obtained an Indemnity: For this Steeple in these days was held as an Asyl for Malefactours, Debitours Charged by their Creditors &c. to flee into (Brand 1883 : 184).

The twelfth to thirteenth century Old Church Laws of Norway contain paragraphs on Church Law, where regulations concerning the building of churches, church consecration, holy days, baptism and burial etc. are stipulated. Chapter II, § 10 of the Old Church Law of Frostathing concerns the sanctuary, or *grið*, of the church building and churchyard. If the sanctuary of the church and churchyard was violated through violence or murder, the consecrated building or area became profaned and the violator became an outlaw (Bøe 1960 : 463-464). Although the Old Church Laws of Norway did not specifically deal with the sanctuary of the sacred places, a general immunity of the Church in Norway was confirmed by Pope Gregory IX in 1237. This immunity, however, probably concerned the immunity from imposed “worldly demands”, perhaps taxes, by kings, sovereigns and other secular authority:

A4 *Cum irrefragabiliter sint servanda que per sedem apostolicam sunt statuta, nos tue fraternitatis precibus inclinati libertatis et immunitates a felicis recordationis Adriano et aliis Romanis pontificibus predecessores nostris, nec non libertates et exemptiones secularium exactionum a regibus et principibus et aliis Christifidelibus ecclesiis regni Norwagie tibi subiectis rationabiliter, ut in authenticis inde confectis dicitur plenius contineri, concessas auctoritate apostolica confirmamus et presentis scripti patrocinio communimus (DN I : 16, no. 20).*

In 1250 Pope Innocent IV extended this immunity from the “worldly demands” to the surrounding ecclesiastical houses of Christ Church in Nidaros. The same privilege of freedom and immunity as the cathedral was extended to a radius of forty feet:

A5 *Cum a nobis petitur [] assensu, domos et ambitum ecclesie vestre ab ea usque ad quadraginta passus illa libertate, ac immunitate, qua ecclesia ipsa gaudet, auctoritate presentium gaudere decernimus, maxime cum hoc ab antiquis temporibus fuerit, sicut asseritis, pacifice observatum (DN VIII : 9, no. 7).*

This immunity, although concerning the church grounds, is therefore different from the sanctuary of the sacred space. As late as 1525 the question of church immunity, as a sanctuary, was addressed in a letter from King Henry VIII to King Christiern II and Queen Elisabet of Denmark, where the king of England explains the situation concerning a courier who had sought sanctuary in a church because of a heavy debt:

A6 *Non multo postquam Nicolaus Tyrry noster subditus, [nec non uest]rarum serenitatum familiaris cum credite fidei litteris ad nos missus ipsarum litteras reddidisset, mandataque e... sset, nullo super expositis adhuc a nobis accepto responso, ad sanctuarium, ecclesieque immunitates, illum [] (DN XI : 421, no. 413).*

The privilege of sanctuary was also associated with the possession of relics during the Middle Ages. Portable objects which had belonged to, been touched by, or had been a part of a saint's body were thought to possess curative powers as well as being able to provide protection for the owner, whether alive or dead. Relics were sometimes buried with the dead, extending the notion of burial *ad sanctos*¹⁶ – near the saints (Ariès 1981 : 38-39).

d) Death and the Grave.

The universality of death is a very individual and personal matter. Although man dies in solitude, the dying or dead individual is often surrounded by family, relatives and friends who will mourn, and who in mourning will carry out rituals that will culminate at the burial, symbolising the final parting with the living. Rituals associated with the death and burial of an individual have always been present, although with varying expressions through time and different cultures. Although it may be difficult to establish the origin of some Christian burial customs, they appear to be static within a society, and changes occur over long periods of time with slow phases of transformation. In the Middle Ages as today, the death of a person would immediately be dealt with according to a set of customs or rituals. In general, the period from death until the burial would be conducted according to a set of customs that would have taken place in the immediate surroundings of the dead, attending to and protecting the corpse, preparations for the funeral, the burial, feasts etc. This period from death until burial was consequently a period of preparation for the final parting, and the grave marked the end of this "death-sequence".

As the sacred places of Christianity are places set aside from the ordinary, profane life, the Christian death is the final departure from profane life and entrance into divine reality. In early and medieval Christianity:

The graves of the saints – whether these were the solemn rock tombs of the Jewish patriarchs in the Holy Land or, in Christian circles, tombs, fragments of bodies or, even, physical objects that had made contact with these bodies – were privileged places, where the contrasted poles of Heaven and Earth met (Brown 1981 : 3).

Medieval European death rites were closely associated with the proximity of saints in burial, or burial *ad sanctos*. There are several examples in most medieval cathedrals of ecclesiastics as well as lay-men being buried within the consecrated building which also housed the shrine of a saint or a reliquary. It was thought that the proximity to the saints in life, exercised through prayers, church attendance and pilgrimage, could help to ensure a safe pass to heaven. A continued close link in death with the saints and the relics would aid this ultimate transition (Ariès 1981 : 33-34). The idea that the proximity to saints and relics could have an effect on the after-life came about as a result of the notion of the saint's shrine occupying a sacred or privileged space. The graves and shrines of saints were seen as the sacred meeting-places between heaven and earth in medieval Christian society, or an *axis mundi*. Like the church-building symbolising the distance and contact between death and resurrection; the graves and

shrines within the churches conveyed similarly the notion of the contact between earth and heaven. Within the context of the graves and shrines of saints being perceived as sacred places, they were also perceived as protected spaces – sanctuaries, where no harm could befall the persons in their presence, whether dead or alive. The protection of the grave within the consecrated ground of the graveyard held similarly the notion of sanctuary for the individual, but they could also be centres of social life. From the Middle Ages until the seventeenth century, the cemeteries together with the churches could both function as a public square as well as being an area reserved for the dead. Ariès explains the function of the cemetery as:

[] the privilege of the right of asylum, or sanctuary, which had the same motives as burial *ad sanctos*. The patron saint granted a temporal protection to the living who honored him, just as he gave a spiritual guarantee to the dead who entrusted their bodies to his safekeeping. The territory in which the authority of the lay powers could be exercised stopped at the wall of the church and its atrium. Inside those walls, the living were like the dead who rested in the peace of God: *omnio sunt [cimeteria] in pace Domini* (Ariès 1981 : 62-63).

The sanctuary of the grave, in the cemetery, in the church, sometimes *as sanctos*, was, during the Middle Ages, the end of the journey of the corpse. The soul passed to heaven, but the corpse remained in its grave, safe from danger and evil spirits. Throughout the Middle Ages there are several examples of the people arranging their funerals well in advance. People wrote testaments and donated their worldly goods to the Church in return for the singing of requiems or *sálutídir* (ON, prayers for the soul) (Nedkvitne 1997 : 68-69, 79). Although the dead corpse was safely entrusted into the sanctuary of the consecrated grave, the medieval perception of the soul's transfer to heaven was not necessarily a trouble-free process. The Bible was not clear: on one hand the New Testament spoke of the returning of Christ on Judgement Day and not until then would the unjust be condemned and the Christians saved. Christ, on the other hand, said to the repenting malefactor on the cross next to him:

To day shalt thou be with me in paradise (Luke 23 : 43).

The Bible's inconsistency in this matter led to numerous disputes and vague dogmatic practices of the Church. The medieval conception of death was still influenced by the problematic passing of the soul into heaven, which gave way for different interpretations by both leading theologians and laymen. If there ever was a consensus about what happened to the soul after death, it mainly consisted in the soul's longing for heaven and fear of hell; vivid descriptions of the nature of heaven and hell, but with vague defining contours (Nedkvitne

1997 : 48-53). But the problem of Judgement Day remained throughout the Middle Ages. A prevailing tradition was that the souls of the saints passed directly to heaven, but the souls of the ordinary man were kept in a resting-place, awaiting Judgement Day and the final resurrection. Within this context, clearer dogmas of heaven and hell arose during the thirteenth century. The Pope's increasing influence in the Christian West as well as the founding of universities led to theological debates concerning this question, culminating in the Church resolution of 1274 when it was agreed that all Christian souls immediately after death were cleansed free of sin in purgatory (Nilsson 1987 : 138-139, Nedkvitne 1997 : 67). This in turn gave rise to the notion of the freeing of the soul from purgatory by payments to the Church, and for the singing of the requiem and prayers of the soul (the psalms of King David) (Nedkvitne 1997 : 68-69, 79).

The Church's perception of the soul's passing to heaven was furthermore reflected in the many rituals of the funeral. As the medieval perceptions of purgatory, heaven, and hell belonged to the destiny of the soul in the afterlife, the funeral of the dead corpse was then left to the family of the deceased and to the society of *this* world. Although the immortal soul was released from the mortal body at death, careful rituals were undertaken before death occurred such as confession, repentance and penance (Daniell 1997 : 1) in order to ensure the soul's successful entry into the eternal afterlife. After death the body was but an empty container, left behind on earth to be buried. However, this empty container was the subject of rituals or traditional customs before burial could take place in the church or at the cemetery. Medieval customs concerning the wake and the burial were still being practised as late as the nineteenth century. Examples are found in the sagas, e.g. the Saga of Hákon Hákonsson: The king died on the 15 December, 1263, in Kirkwall, Orkney¹⁷. The corpse was made ready, cleaned, shaved, and dressed; the bishops present sung the requiem and the *hirð* (ON, the king's men) kept watch over the body, and people came to attend the wake. The next day the body was carried to St Magnus Cathedral¹⁸, and on the third day the body was placed in a coffin and buried in the choir in front of the shrine of St Magnus. The king's *hirð* decided to keep a constant wake at the grave until spring, when the coffin was to be sailed back to Norway (*Håkon Hákonssons saga* : 337-339).

Similar customs in connection with death and preparation for burial are found in the North Atlantic. In Orkney, prior to the funeral, the corpse was cleaned and dressed and laid on the bed, a table or in an open coffin. The family and neighbours kept a *leek-wak* (from ON *líkvaka*: *lík* = corpse, *vaka* = wake), which meant that people kept watch all night over the body (Dennison 1995 : 149-150). Similarly, death in Shetland was followed by three

ceremonies: *da kistin*, when the body was laid down in the coffin; *da condolin*, when the neighbours came to pay their condolences and finally the funeral itself (Nicolson 1978, 1990 : 166). In Orkney, the coffin was carried by seven men, three on each side and one at the head. The church-officer or “beadle” walked a few yards in front of the coffin ringing a hand-bell. The bell-ringing was thought to be a safeguard against evil spirits that would otherwise attack the corpse on its journey from the sanctuary of the home to consecrated ground. The corpse was in a state of chaos between death and the transfer to the consecrated ground of the graveyard:

Of old the bell-ringing was used as a safeguard against evil spirits, to whose attacks the corporeal remains of man were thought to be exposed, while being removed from under a Christian roof to Christian burial (Dennison 1995 : 151).

In Scotland the “mort bell” was until the Reformation used to ward off evil spirits which could otherwise attack the unprotected corpse in transition. Although this practice was made illegal by the reformed Church, the custom of ringing the mort bell in connection with funerals or announcing deaths in the community continued after the Reformation in some areas (Gordon 1994 : 18-19).

In Shetland, the coffin was lifted by teams of bearers who were stationed along the route to the graveyard. At these stations the family of the deceased had deposited whisky for the bearers as refreshment (Nicolson 1978, 1990 : 166-167). This was also the tradition in Orkney:

Districts at any distance from the church, had a fixed station at which the funeral party rested, drank a cog of ale or gin which had been previously placed at the resting place for the use of the company. The resting place was called “wheel-de-creus”, literally, rest the corpse (Dennison 1995 : 151).

On the island of Sanday, Orkney, there is a place called *Wheelie-krös* where funeral parties used to rest. If the coffin had to be carried over long distances, there were particular places where the funeral-party stopped and rested. It was also customary to serve refreshments at these places. At these *Wheelie-kröses* crosses were erected, the word *kröz* may be interpreted as *cross*, therefore meaning “the resting-cross” (Marwick 1923 : 28). There are several examples of funeral routes, or coffin roads in Scotland, particularly in the isolated areas of the West Highlands. In Invernesshire, as well as on the islands of Skye, Lewis and Harris in the Hebrides, there are several examples of *resting-cairns*, places where funeral processions used to rest on their way to the graveyard. These cairns were made by adding stones by each

procession resting at a common suitable place (Gordon 1994 : 62-63). Similar traditions of coffin-rests like the examples from the Northern Isles and Scotland are found in Norway. In many areas, the place of burial was located at some distance from the community, and bringing the corpse to the place of burial was therefore in many cases the subject of relatively long journeys, punctuated by rests (Hodne 1980 : 111-112). Sometimes the funeral route would be lined with spruce or juniper and in some areas *liksteiner*, “corpse-stones”, are still visible. These were particular stone-slabs on top of or near which the coffin was placed when the funeral-party rested (Hodne 1980 : 112, Hodne 1999 : 91), like the traditions recorded in the county of Vest Agder in Norway:

Lig skulde paa Veien til Kirkjegaarden kjøres hen paa visse bestemte Steder – paa et Sted en gammel Gravhaug – hvor der da skulde hviles og skjænkes en Dram til Enhver i Følget (Storaker 1935 : 77).

Corpses on their way to the churchyard should be brought to certain places, at one place a burial mound, where the processions would rest the corpse and have a drink (translated).

“Udenfor mit Hjem er der en Sten, som kaldes Ligstenen. Hen paa denne kjører man Ligene” Knud Ougland, Konnismo (Storaker 1935 : 77).

“There is a stone outside my house that is called the corpse-stone, on top of which the corpses are laid down” Knud Ougland, Konnismo (translated).

In the North Atlantic the medieval funeral customs and customs concerning the protection of the corpse until burial seem to have had many similar characteristics. Immediately after death had occurred, the corpse was thought to be under attack by demons, and if not properly protected it could cause the death of others. The protection of the corpse often involved blinding the windows of the house, the lighting of candles, the singing of psalms, and blessing the corpse with holy oil and sprinkling it with holy water. On the day of the funeral, the corpse was in some cases brought through a hole in the wall of the house that would immediately be boarded-up, rather than carried out through the main door. This custom was first and foremost a safe-guard for the household. In case the deceased returned as a ghost, it would not be able to enter the house (Birkeli 1943 : 62). In most places funeral processions could only proceed along the proper church-roads. In front of the corpse, a person, or a priest if one was present, would carry a cross. Sometimes the tolling of a hand-bell was used to protect the corpse. If the corpse was carried to church, the church-bells would chime on the arrival of the procession (Nilsson 1987 : 137). The tolling of hand-bells to

sanctify the soul in passing and to protect the corpse, like the example from Orkney, above, was common in the Nordic countries from the twelfth century, but was known in Germany and France as early as the eighth century. The ringing and tolling of bells was originally not meant as a protection of the corpse, but probably served to call for the attention of the community and invite them to intercede for the dead (Cressy 1997 : 421-422, Nilsson 1987 : 1936). In some places, a *benedictio sepulchri*, or blessing of the grave, was necessary before the corpse could be lowered into the grave. Although the whole cemetery was already consecrated, this blessing served as a final precaution to rid the grave of evil, before the corpse was given a final absolution and was safely buried in the sanctuary of the grave (Nilsson 1987 : 139-140, Houlbrooke 1998 : 256).

e) Concluding remarks.

The act of Christian pilgrimage is closely connected with the notion of sacred places and holy women and men, apart from being a religious experience as first and foremost emphasised by the Church. The religious perception of *the holy*, something separated from the profane world, was part of the medieval pilgrimage process and was reflected in the sacred buildings and monuments consecrated by the Church. The ritual movement of medieval pilgrimage was consequently directed and influenced by these consecrated buildings and monuments.

The act of consecration; of a building or an altar, and their dedication (e.g. to a saint) into a sacred use is consequently tied to the ritual movement of pilgrimage. The sanctification of buildings or objects served to separate these elements from the profane world. The early or medieval Christian pilgrimage process was similarly an active process of separation from the ordinary and profane world. Although pilgrimage was temporary, its physical movement from a profane sphere to a sacred sphere involved sacred acts – dedicated to the holy, e.g. to a saint. The *ritual* of pilgrimage consisted in the solemn act of travel or movement from one sacred place to another. The sacred places were set aside from ordinary activities and exclusively dedicated to religious activity. This was thoroughly demonstrated by Christ at the temple in Jerusalem:

And [Jesus] said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise (John 2 : 16).

The consecrated and sacred places of Christianity were, however, in some cases turned into places of social activity, commerce and asylum. The consecrated grounds of the Christian cemeteries were in particular subject to such activities. Sacred places were often established around the graves of martyrs and saints, and developed into sanctuaries attracting pilgrims and became permanent residences for the dead. This twofold function of the cemetery may be explained by the motive of burial *ad sanctos*. The patron saint to whom the cemetery, or church, was dedicated granted temporal protection to whomever sought it, whether living or dead.

The attraction of the sanctity and sanctuary of the saints and the sacred places was consequently one major driving force behind the ritual movement of Christian pilgrimage: To seek the holy places and be in close proximity to the holy. This attraction may be further exemplified by graves in contact with, and pilgrimages made to, holy water¹⁹: Relics of saints were sometimes used to sanctify water so that the saint's sanctity could reach further. Water was distributed or sold in small ampoules to the pilgrims a sacred remedy for illness or as

souvenirs (Webb 01 : 125). Holy wells, sometimes associated with legends of saints, were popular places of pilgrimage because of the cleansing and curative powers of the water. Likewise, the notion of burial *ad sanctos* inside a church was not always attainable for laymen and women. The second best place of burial was near the church wall, in the dripping from the roof of the church. It was believed that the rainwater absorbed the sanctity of the church building by running down the roof and walls of the sacred building, thus sanctifying the graves and the corpses (Ariès 1981 : 52, Skov 1960 : 438).



*Ill. 3. The second best place: Graves absorbing sanctity.
(St Mary's Chapel at Framgord, Unst, Shetland.)*

The medieval burial customs may therefore be compared with the act of pilgrimage, particularly regarding movement and sanctuary. The medieval pilgrimage process, whether on a small or a large scale, involved the individuals' state of *chaos during the physical movement* from one sacred place to another: From the sanctuary of the home to the sanctuary of the e.g. shrine at the final destination. The long-distance pilgrimage routes were often punctuated by rests at particular places; e.g. at pilgrimage hostels, churches and chapels, holy wells or prayer-sites. These places were places of shelter, protection and sanctuary. The medieval burial customs involved the movement of the corpse from one place of sanctuary to another; from the home to the grave. Like the pilgrim, the corpse was during this movement in a state of chaos and therefore needed protection during this process. Rites of protection sometimes involved the ringing of bells to ward off evil spirits, the singing of psalms and blessing the corpse with holy oil and water. These are rites that carry the same motives as the solemn act of consecration. The sacred places were thus for the medieval pilgrim, as for the dead, consecrated places of protection while on a journey – whether to the shrine of a dead saint or to one's own grave.

Notes to chapter 2.

¹ Cf. Ch. 3b : 35ff.

² Cf. 2b : 11ff, below.

³ Cf. 2d : 23ff, below.

⁴ Cf. Ch. 4b : 55.

⁵ Cf. Ch. 8b : 176.

⁶ Cf. Ch. 6b : 117ff.

⁷ Cf. Ch. 4c : 63.

⁸ Cf. Ch. 4b : 55.

⁹ Cf. Ch. 8d : 182-183.

¹⁰ Cf. Ch. 5b : 86.

¹¹ Cf. Ch. 4b : 59.

¹² Cf. 2c : 17, below.

¹³ Cf. Ch. 5b : 87, 5c : 96.

^{14a} Cf. Ch. 8c : 179.

^{14b} In the later Middle Ages the shrine in the sanctuary sometimes had a separate altar at the west end (of the sanctuary), and the high altar was located a few feet to its west (Cambridge 1988 : 121).

¹⁵ Cf. Ch. 8b : 173.

¹⁶ Cf. 2d : 23ff, below.

¹⁷ Cf. Ch. 7e : 159-160.

¹⁸ Cf. Ch. 7d : 152.

¹⁹ Cf. Ch. 5d : 105ff.

Chapter 3

Interpreting Pilgrimage

a) Introduction.

The following chapter seeks to explore the theories of Christian pilgrimage as mainly put forward by anthropologists studying the fields *ritual* and *society*. The study of medieval Christian pilgrimage has undergone a development from the traditional historical-antiquarian view of being a curiosity of medieval religious life, to being analysed by anthropologists and scholars of religious philosophy and science as a metaphysical and physical social ritual. Medieval pilgrimage is probably best described as relating to both; on the one hand an interesting part of medieval Christian societies, involving physical hardship as well as penance and miracles, and on the other hand, it holds the mental qualities of religious ritual and of constant experience through physical movement.

It will be argued in the following that the notion of pilgrimage involves the physical movement through a physical landscape by individuals with a conscious perception of the landscape in which movement took place, as well as the process of this movement. This implies that the individual pilgrim was conscious of the landscape through which he or she moved, i.e. that the movement was not undertaken in a random fashion, but directed according to a set pattern within the landscape. This pattern of movement would already have been decided before the pilgrimage commenced. Whether the route to a shrine was used by other travellers and wanderers with non-religious intentions, does not undermine the idea that the pilgrimage route is a representation of a ritual landscape for those who made the pilgrimage. In this context the first notion of the landscape as containing ritual, is both the mental and physical space in which movement took place by individuals on their way towards a common goal. The physical landscape may not, however, have been used with ritual and religious intentions only.

It is, however, superstition, tradition and religious beliefs that initially generate the second notion of the landscape as religious: e.g. a place has been regarded as sacred¹ because of its association with a holy person or a particular event. It may also be generated through the erection of buildings and monuments, or the creation of enclosures or even social gatherings

that become sacred when the presence of the supernatural is called upon. Examples of this may be churches and holy wells, churchyards and fairs or festivals. Such elements would have been present in the landscape of the pilgrimage routes, and these would have been visited either as an act of duty, as a result of human curiosity or because pilgrims traditionally visited these places or took part in social or religious events on their journeys.

The act of medieval pilgrimage consequently contains the notion of physical movement through both a ritual and religious landscape, created by patterns of movement in relation to sites and monuments of religious or practical significance. The pilgrims of the Middle Ages did not create the physical space they moved through, but they took part in a continuing religious tradition that did create ritual and religious landscapes. This religious tradition may still be visible in the modern landscape, through monuments as well as local traditions and customs, and in some cases the routes which the pilgrims walked are identifiable².

The process of recognising and identifying a pilgrimage route which time and change in religious customs have concealed, will also be discussed in the following. Almost without exception, the pilgrimage systems analysed mainly by anthropologists, are religious and ritual landscapes that are easily recognisable and initially there to be studied, usually as a result of continuing traditions. It does, however, represent a problem when the possible pilgrimage system is concealed by time and forgotten customs of the past.

b) Theoretical variations on the pilgrimage process.

As mentioned above, some scholars of anthropology have sought to analyse the act of pilgrimage in order to develop a general theory that seeks to explain the ritual and social processes of pilgrimage as experienced by a group of people or by the individual. Victor Turner's work on pilgrimage as a *liminoid phenomenon* is based on the theories by Arnold van Gennep in his groundbreaking book *Rites de Passage* (Gennep : 1960). Gennep defines the *rites of passage* as 'transitional rituals' explaining these in his own words as follows:

So great is the incompatibility between the profane and the sacred worlds that a man cannot pass from one to the other without going through an intermediate stage (Gennep : 1960 : 1).

To be able to transfer from one social group to another (e.g. via baptism and ordination) or from one phase of life to another (e.g. being born, giving birth), certain rituals or rites have to be performed in order to pass on to this new level (Gennep 1960 : 2). Gennep argues that such rituals are particularly evident amongst what he calls "semicivilized" peoples, as in such societies no act is entirely separated from the sacred. A change in a person's life will therefore involve

actions and reactions between the sacred and profane - actions and reactions to be regulated and guarded so that society as a whole will suffer no discomfort or injury.

A person's life is therefore made up of a succession of stages which will all be marked by ceremonies whose purpose is to enable the person

to pass from one defined position to another which is equally well defined (Gennep 1960 : 3).

Rites may also be classified according to their qualities and functions e.g. positive / negative rites and direct / indirect rites, but every rite may hold many functions and qualities simultaneously (Gennep 1960 : 9). Gennep sees the *rites of passage* as a particular category which contains transition from group to group but may also be subdivided into *preliminal rites* (rites of separation), *liminal rites* (rites of transition), and *postliminal rites* (rites of incorporation). This means that the *rites of passage* described as *transitional rituals* also contains the sub-group *liminal rites* which is also described as 'rites of transition'. Furthermore, all rites are not only *rites of passage*. They may also include e.g. fertility rites,

protection rites and ordination rites (Gennep 1960 : 10-12). Gennep did not further pursue the idea of pilgrimages as *rites of passage* other than identifying it as part of the collective assembly of rites or rituals involving transition.

The anthropologist Victor Turner, on the other hand, made use of Gennep's studies and developed fundamental theories explaining the pilgrimage phenomenon, describing Gennep's term *rites of passage* as

the transitional rituals accompanying changes of place, state, social position, and age in culture (Turner and Turner 1978 : 249),

that are marked by three phases: separation, limen or margin, and aggregation (Turner and Turner 1978 : 2). *Liminality*, has also been described as 'the state and process of mid-transition in a rite of passage' and it 'has frequently been linked to death; to being in the womb; to invisibility, darkness, bisexuality, and the wilderness' (Turner and Turner 1978 : 249). This liminal phase, that Victor Turner has studied particularly in African tribal societies, becomes a state, an action or a place which the person or the persons, who are about to go through the liminal phase, have to be in or take part in for a specific length of time.

When trying to identify transitional rituals within a medieval Christian tradition, liminality is no longer so obvious, except maybe for the life-long separation from the secular world that some monastic orders require in return for inclusion. Pilgrimage, on the other hand, should technically display clearer evidence of liminality if identified as a transitional rite. This is, however, where the Turners' question what may seem to be the obvious: Pilgrimage does contain many elements of liminality, but it differs from other transitional rites in relation to issues of *voluntariem* and *obligatorion*. Rites of passage are obligatory social mechanisms to change the state or status of one or more individuals. According to the Turners, pilgrimage is voluntary. They therefore choose to name the pilgrimage phenomenon *liminoid* or *quasi-liminal*, rather than liminal (Turner and Turner 1978 : 34-35).

The Turners explains the term *liminoid* as describing

the many genres found in modern industrial leisure that have features resembling those of liminality. These genres are akin to the ritually liminal, but not identical with it (Turner and Turner 1978 : 253).

Other examples of *liminoid* rituals are performance art and literature. These genres are *liminoid* and not liminal because they

develop most characteristically outside the central economic and political processes, ...

and are

consumed by identifiable individuals, in contrast to liminal phenomena which are often anonymous or divine in origin (Turner and Turner 1978 : 253).

In other words, *liminoid* phenomena exist on the margin of the society as well as within it. They are there to be experienced and used by everyone if the individual wishes to do so. The individual can choose his or her involvement with these genres, therefore they can never be made obligatory.

Is it possible to identify the idea of liminality or liminoid phenomena in the medieval Christian Church? For people in general, life was intimately localised through the attachment to a manor or a parish in feudal Europe. Christianity was similarly organised; the parish church became the local religious focal point which provided the local population with the possibility to undertake a pilgrimage to a holy shrine or a sacred site. These sites or shrines were often located some distance away from their daily habitat (Turner and Turner 1978 : 4).

But the Turners go further in saying that:

Liminality is now seen to apply to all phases of decisive cultural change, in which previous orderings of thought and behaviour are subject to revision and criticism, when hitherto unprecedented modes of ordering relations between ideas and people become possible and desirable (Turner and Turner 1978 : 2).

What the Turners have argued is that liminality not only should be seen as *transition* but also as *potentiality*, 'not only *going to be* but also *what may be*'. What may therefore be *invisible* or may lie within the unconsciousness in a society has also the potentiality of being studied objectively (Turner and Turner 1978 : 3).

Although the ultimate goal is to reach a level of complete understanding of the pilgrimage process, it becomes clear that this is practically impossible as

Pilgrimage is too varied in content to be analyzed as if there were a single, recurrent, common, manifest factor (Morinis 1992 : 9).

Theories like Victor and Edith Turner's are important as they can in general be transferred to any religion or tested on any pilgrimage system, although in many cases it seems that these studies have failed when put into practice (Morinis 1992 : 8). Although the most significant

theory of pilgrimage is that put forward by Victor Turner, other anthropologists and historians of religion have also played a significant role in building up a universal picture of the pilgrimage process.

Alan Morinis has argued that the pilgrimage process may take many forms in different cultures or eras, but focusing on the journey and not the shrine itself, it may be divided up into six different principal categories: devotional, instrumental, normative, obligatory, wandering and initiatory (Morinis 1992 : 10-14).

1. *Devotional* pilgrimage can be described as the journey to a place that has witnessed a holy person or god. Jerusalem may be one example, whither pilgrims flock to touch and experience the places where Jesus was physically present³.
2. The purpose of an *instrumental* pilgrimage is 'to accomplish finite, worldly goals'. The common example here is the pilgrim who seeks a cure for an illness.
3. The *normative* pilgrimage is represented by the journeys undertaken as part of a ritual cycle in life and death, or relating to calendrical celebrations.
4. *Obligatory* pilgrimage is the kind of pilgrimage that the devotee should or must undertake. The Muslim *hajj* is an obligatory pilgrimage since all Muslims should visit Mecca once in their life-time.
5. *Wandering* pilgrimage is of the type that has no goal or will not lead to a central shrine. 'The pilgrim sets out in the hope that his feet will be guided to a place that will satisfy his inner craving'.
6. *Initiatory* pilgrimage seeks to transform the pilgrim's state or status during the journey which again will lead to the transformation of the self.

To categorise pilgrimages in this way seems useful as one can more easily understand the purpose of a particular pilgrimage, but in the case of the pilgrimage of the Middle Ages, it can possibly be explained within more than one of these six categories. What seems to be universal, though, for all pilgrimages within all religions is *the journey*. A physical pilgrimage is impossible without a journey. Although the purpose of the journey may be categorised and metaphysically analysed, the journey also has a physical aspect involving *movement* (Morinis 1992 : 15). According to Morinis the common pilgrimage is of a linear type, i.e. from home to the shrine and home again. But some journeys may be spiral or circular. These journeys usually involve encircling a mountain, an island or a set of shrines within a territory that is considered sacred (Morinis 1992 : 16). Whether pilgrimage is linear or circular, it always

involves the movement between the *familiar* and the *other* which represents the two poles linked by a distance that has to be overcome⁴. The *familiar* is what one leaves behind and what is known, but the *other* represents the unknown and the mysterious, what the pilgrim wants to uncover or to be part of before returning to the familiar (Morinis 1992 : 26).

James J. Preston offers a different approach to the identification and conceptualisation of pilgrimage and sacred journeys. He defines the term *spiritual magnetism* as the pulling factor of the central shrine upon pilgrims. This definition should therefore imply that it is the shrine itself that holds a spiritual power to attract people, but Preston rather sees the spiritual magnetism as deriving from the 'human concepts and values, via historical, geographical, social, and other forces that coalesce in a sacred center', in other words: human curiosity is triggered by the spiritual pulling generated by a particular place. Preston does, however, emphasise, that this spiritual pulling does not undermine the mystery or the sacrality surrounding such a centre. Indeed, he offers a division of pilgrimage shrines that hold the spiritual magnetism by association with:

1. Miraculous cures.
2. Apparitions of supernatural beings.
3. Sacred geography.
4. Difficulty of access (Preston 1992 : 33).

The first category, miraculous cures, is exemplified by the healing of illnesses through water. The prospect of being cured or seeing others being cured through divine intervention is part of the spiritual magnetism which influences people to visit the shrine. The second category, apparitions of supernatural beings, are places where deities are said to have appeared and are therefore liable to appear again. The prospect of being in a place associated with a holy person or deity is therefore the spiritual magnetism, pulling the pilgrims to the site. The third category, sacred geography, implies the existence of areas in a landscape that are regarded as being holy, and is therefore the source of the spiritual magnetism. Such places may in many circumstances be found in a dramatic location, on mountain tops or on islands, in landscapes that have previously, in other pagan traditions, also been regarded as sacred. The fourth category, difficulty of access, concerns the factor of risk during a journey to the shrine. It is this risk and danger associated with the journey to remote locations that hold some of the spiritual magnetism (Preston 1992 : 33-36).

Preston also includes other factors that may enhance the spiritual magnetism of a shrine: an increased number of miracles being recorded may again increase the spiritual magnetism; a focus on intensified cultural activity at the shrine may also be a pulling factor; another factor that will in most instances increase the spiritual magnetism is the presence of relics at the shrine (Preston 1992 : 37-38).

c) The cultic impact-area and religious routes.

When studying medieval pilgrimage routes, the geographical aspect is unavoidable and probably offers a more realistic picture of the nature of the routes and of the pilgrimage journey. The wider aspect of pilgrimage defining the physical landscape of the pilgrimage route is first of all determined by the individuals making the journey and where they came from. Secondly, the impact of the central shrine, i.e. the pulling factor, upon the individual, is consequently contributing in shaping the physical lay-out of the route and defining an *approximate area* where the cult would have been considered strong. The cultic *impact-area* will, however, be discussed later in this section. The route as a physical entity will be considered in the following.

As discussed above, pilgrimage routes have a metaphysical side, but the routes as a physical entity give the pilgrimage phenomenon the visible element. It is therefore reasonable to suggest that the wandering pilgrims over the years chose to travel along the more practical routes (Febvre 1925 : 330-331), where the landscape allowed the most comfortable and straight-forward travelling. The metaphysical aspect of pilgrimage may also suggest that the journey was meant to represent the physical transformation of the soul. This could mean that the journey had to last for a set number of days, weeks or months with possibly frequent pauses and rituals in order to bring the individual gradually towards the goal. Regardless of the metaphysical side to pilgrimage, it is necessary to discuss the actual physical movement of the individual through the equally physical landscape in which the journey took place. According to Lucien Febvre:

This social phenomenon of pilgrimages has been constant throughout history. We know, moreover, how important it was in the Middle Ages, and how at that epoch it created, supported, and developed special roads known as pilgrim ways, marked by monasteries, hospitals, and almshouses, and described in special guides and route books (Febvre 1925 : 331).

We can [therefore] easily understand that the determining elements of the routes they made were the facilities for resting-places at convenient intervals all along the way, and the possibility of visiting on the road as many sanctuaries as possible (Febvre 1925 : 332).

According to Febvre, pilgrimage routes passed monasteries, hospitals and almshouses that obviously catered for pilgrims, to give them rest and food and the possibility to worship within a sanctuary with other pilgrims and Christians. Febvre also mentions that the routes were dependent on such places for rest and that they were *marked* by these establishments. Coleman and Elsner (1995) also see the description of the physical landscape of the route as

an important part of pilgrimage, as it obviously held the attention of both secular and religious institutions that provided legal protection and hospitality for pilgrims and many churches functioned as stopping points along the pilgrimage route and not unexpectedly, an organised system grew up around the pilgrimage routes in order to provide services such as road protection and hostelries or hospices that came to be located at important points of communication (Coleman and Elsner 1995 : 110)⁵. It may therefore be suggested that medieval pilgrimage routes were recognised by the continuous punctuation of places of rest, protection and worship.

As mentioned earlier, the pilgrimage route may represent and reflect the pilgrim's mental journey to the sacred shrine. But the shrine itself may be interpreted as only partly the goal. The goal may also be the progress of the journey on which one advances through stages to prepare for 'the holy climax at the central shrine':

A fully mature pilgrimage system, or "field", is comparable to a series of overlapping, interpenetrating ellipses whose common area of overlap is the shrine at its center. Each of these ellipses constitutes a pilgrimage route, or "way", with its own sociogeographical surrounds (Turner and Turner 1978 : 22).

This would indicate that there is not necessarily only *one* route to the central shrine, but several, corresponding to the different directions the pilgrims are coming from. It is therefore reasonable to suggest that the closer to the shrine, the more activity there will be and the more places for the pilgrims to pay their devotion. It should therefore be possible to identify an area within a certain radius of the central shrine where intensified activity related to the nearby shrine is indicating the end of the journey. According to the Turners, in certain older pilgrimage centres the central shrine is immediately surrounded by

a complex of sacred places and objects, which must often be visited in a fixed order, in some cases after the climactic visit to the central shrine (Turner and Turner 1978 : 23).

Coleman and Elsner generally agree with the Turners in this matter but conclude that the punctuation of the journey by visits to shrines of lesser importance may change the pilgrimage process into an extended ritual (Coleman and Elsner 1995 : 110). Their example is the pilgrimage process to the monastery of St Catherine by Mount Sinai, a site which is linked with important events in the Old Testament associated with Moses:

A series of prayer niches were built along the path which led up from the monastery to the summit. These marked significant spots, either places where the path joined another path, or places where pilgrims might glimpse a view of the distant mountain peak - their sacred goal. All such material marks on the local landscape not only recorded where previous believers had been, but also indicated a succession of mini-goals for the pilgrims on their way up to the summit of Sinai (Coleman and Elsnar 1995 : 211).

It therefore seems that the building up of expectations, as the pilgrims proceeded towards the central shrine, generated by places to stop before continuing the journey, is an expected part of the pilgrimage process whether this stop or pause is a result of necessity or not.

The investigation of religious routes through identification of objects and monuments associated with pilgrimage necessitates an investigation of its relationship with its extended religious landscape. The presence of a pilgrimage process and a central shrine usually implies the presence of a cult. In a Christian context, the object of the cult, usually associated with saints and relics, is the primary point of focus around which a cult developed. The cult of saints in the ritual landscape may be recognised through monument or site dedications which may give an indication of the spread and popularity of the cult. This “impact-area” may also be an indicator of where pilgrims originated from and whether the cult was concentrated locally or whether it spread throughout larger areas.

Finucane’s approach to the geographical establishment of the impact-area of a cult is by tracing the pilgrims back to their place of origin i.e. the place where their journey began. Finucane suggests that by

plotting these sites on maps we can obtain a rough picture of the region which included most of the people directly involved with a particular cult (Finucane 1977 : 160).

This method may be a helpful approach to identify the impact-area of a cult, but only in those circumstances where the geographical origins of the pilgrims are known. As expressed by Finucane, the development and spread of a cult’s popularity was dependent on the news about miracles, and as always, exciting news passes rapidly through circles of families and friends, and in the case of miracles and cults, each person who is coming in contact with such news is a potential enthusiast (Finucane 1977 : 152).

Impact-areas may be identified as the spread of cults, expressed through physical remains such as ecclesiastical monuments with an attached association with a cult or a specific saint through place-names or dedications. These components may represent a possible impact-area, indicating the spread and popularity of a cult within a geographical area⁶. It is, however, important to emphasise that the impact-area may not necessarily define

or describe the pilgrimage route. The route itself may, as described earlier, have been shaped by convenience for the traveller. It may also have been shaped by elements associated with the cult or the cult-centre, therefore influencing the course of the route. In contrast, the impact-area may describe the extent of the area most likely influenced by the cult. There are, however, several pit-falls when trying to identify this approximate area. Dedications to ecclesiastical monuments may have been forgotten, and therefore a more complete picture cannot be reached. Dedications may be the product of a much later revival of the cult, and sources describing cultic associations may be unreliable and imprecise.

In light of the above discussion it is important to emphasise the significance of the ritual landscape in which pilgrimage took place or in which the pilgrimage process was created. The network of auxiliary monuments and sites for devotion and rest are primarily associated with the religious route and are factors that may help define the route. It is, however, also useful to involve the notion of a religious landscape defined by a cultic impact-area which may be understood as the wider geographical context in which the process of the religious route would have originated.

d) Representations of the pilgrimage route.

As outlined above⁷, pilgrimage involves complex social processes that may be described in terms of liminality and transitional rituals as well as being classified in principal categories. The attraction of the pilgrimage shrine does also play an important part in terms of being the pulling factor that draws visitors to the site. Pilgrimage is therefore characterised by several linking processes involving both the individual, the internal transitional phase of liminality as well as the external magnetism of the central shrine that is being exercised upon pilgrims and potential pilgrims. The pilgrimage process does, however, hold another dimension which is that of the landscape in which the pilgrimage takes place. This landscape on which ritual and religious actions are dependent therefore adapts the implicit structure of the pilgrimage process as it provides the physical space which accommodates the physical and mental actions exercised along the route. The landscape in which pilgrimage takes place is therefore an interactive part in the process of pilgrimage and its physical route, but certain criteria need to be present that will provide the base for the establishment of a pilgrimage system:

- The existence of an active and continuous cult.
- A physical and central focal point, i.e. a cult-centre.
- A series of secondary sites and monuments associated with the cult.
- The presence of miracles that are associated with the saint: in life; after death; at the cult-centre or through physical objects.

Although these criteria may vary between and within religions as well as being altered through different periods and landscapes, it seems that most pilgrimage systems a) follow a common pattern of movement, which is b) marked by a series of monuments outlining the physical route and c) are decided by the presence of a cult with a cult-centre. Given that a pilgrimage system includes a cult-centre which is the ultimate goal of this process, the landscape in which pilgrimage takes place may therefore be understood through an equation of, on one hand, the common pattern of movement and, on the other hand, the series of constant monuments outlining or punctuating the route. The landscape in which pilgrimage is taking place can hence be defined by the variables of human *movement*, and *constants* as exemplified by monuments or specific sites.

The identification of a pilgrimage system or route associated with a particular shrine or cult-centre may, however, present a problem if the pilgrimage process is no longer active. Although many pilgrimages that originated in the Middle Ages or earlier may still be

continuing processes at present, the onset of the Reformation in the middle of the sixteenth century brought an end to the cultic veneration of saints, shrines and relics in many parts of the northern and western Christian Church. As a result, the act of pilgrimage was seen as heretical worship within the Protestant Church in which these customs had to be abandoned. In the areas where the Reformation became established, Christian religious customs like pilgrimage were actively oppressed by the Church, although minor-scale pilgrimages to e.g. holy wells did continue in some areas as late as the nineteenth century (Walker 1883 : 161). In the areas which adopted Protestantism there is consequently a situation where the pilgrimage process was disrupted and the ritual movement discontinued. What is left of the notion of movement in some areas which were affected by the Reformation is primarily the knowledge of its earlier existence conveyed through written sources and local tradition. In order to uncover the discontinued ritual movement in a landscape in which pilgrimage was previously an ongoing process, these sources of information *may* contribute in the identification of a lost pilgrimage system⁸.

The second contributing factor in identifying a discontinued pilgrimage system is also therefore the constants, the monuments and sites defining the common pattern of movement in the landscape. The constants would have served different functions according to their nature, form and location, but they may not necessarily be described in purely physical terms. Fairs and festivals celebrated in honour of a saint can also be recognised as a pilgrimage constant in terms of these events' association with e.g. the initial stage of a pilgrimage journey. More common, however, are the monuments which both follow and define the route. Buildings such as churches and chapels, hospitals and hostels are examples of pilgrimage constants which may have provided spiritual guidance and shelter along the route. There are numerous examples of such establishments which catered for pilgrims on their journeys through France to Santiago de Compostella in north-western Spain (Labarge 1982 : 83) and along pilgrimage routes to Rome (Krautheimer 1985 : 20)⁹. The establishment of churches and hospitals may, however, be particularly identified in connection with large-scale pilgrimage systems such as the two just mentioned. Pilgrimage systems which functioned in smaller defined areas where the object of the pilgrimage had a more local impact-area, holy wells, crosses and cairns may have played an equally important role as constants like churches and hospitals. There are numerous examples of the veneration of holy wells being regularly visited by pilgrims, as an isolated act or as part of a wider pilgrimage context¹⁰. Their frequent association with the saints as well as the notion of the water's curative powers may have been part of the attractions experienced along the way. Crosses and cairns may have

functioned as way-markers indicating the distance left to the final goal, as well as representing sites of particular importance along the route where rituals may have been performed¹¹ (Luthen 1995 : 13 and Walker 1883 : 155).

Concerning the possible identification of a pilgrimage route which has been associated with a shrine or a cult-centre, the equation involving movement and constants as the defining factors for the pilgrimage route may be applied. It is, however, not a rule without exceptions. In the case of smaller-scale pilgrimage to e.g. holy wells in the vicinity of the local church or settlement, the pilgrimage process may have been minimised to rituals taking place on the site of the well. In such cases less emphasis may have been put on the actual journey, as the distance from the starting-point to the site of importance was minimal and rests were not required. The religious ritual may rather have been performed at the site of veneration, e.g. circumvention of a sacred loch or holy well, application of water on the body, and/or simply drinking it¹². Different expressions of pilgrimage rituals do not, however, undermine the ultimate notion of the pilgrimage process as being determined by human movement from one place to another involving the constants of one beginning and one end.

In those cases, as mentioned earlier, where the human movement may have ceased to exist, a possible identification of the pilgrimage process or route may rely on archaeological and historical sources as well as local tradition if these are available. The existence of such material may provide enough information to establish that in past periods certain landscapes carried the extended notion of religious activity at a particular site, e.g. a shrine. In order to recreate the pilgrimage process to a religious site, i.e. the route which pilgrims used, the constant monuments within the landscape need to be identified. The nature and location of the constants may, however, have been established in relation to different criteria:

- Relationship with the central shrine.
- Relationship with the cult.
- Marking distance.
- Convenient location.

The established constants may therefore be classified as:

- a) sites and monuments whose establishment was directly associated with the shrine or cult.
- b) sites and monuments whose establishment came as a result of the pilgrimage process.

The recreation of a potential medieval pilgrimage route to a defined site or shrine is consequently dependent on a series of monuments which, linked up, should give an indication of the likely physical route used by the pilgrims. Whether the establishment of the monuments came about as a result of the pilgrimage process or whether they were factors providing the establishment of this process, may be irrelevant. The pilgrimage process, in terms of human movement, action and customs, may otherwise be difficult to uncover.

e) Concluding remarks.

The study of the Christian medieval pilgrimage process has gone through a development of theoretical interpretation from the traditional historical-antiquarian view of being a curiosity of medieval religious life, to being analysed by anthropologists as a metaphysical journey, a religious and social process. Gennep's theories of *rites of passage* should be seen as the fundamental framework of understanding of the pilgrimage ritual on a general level. The theories of Edith and Victor Turner do, on the other hand, stand out as one main interpretation concerning the processes of pilgrimage. However, as expressed by Morinis, the pilgrimage process is difficult to analyse as a single, recurrent, common and manifest factor, and does instead focus on a categorical interpretation of motives and types of the physical movement (Morinis 1992 : 9). Preston, on the other hand, emphasises the effect of the *spiritual magnetism* of the central shrine upon the pilgrims (Preston 1992 : 33-36). The theoretical discussions concerning the pilgrimage process are consequently centred around the central themes of pilgrimage; the physical and the metaphorical journey of the individual, the shrine which generates pilgrimage, motives of the pilgrimage process and the landscape in which the pilgrimage process takes place.

The geographical aspect of pilgrimage is unavoidable as it accommodates the ritual process. The pilgrimage process, regardless of its transitional nature, is inevitably linked to the actual human movement through a particular landscape. Whether the route to a shrine was used by other travellers and wanderers with non-religious intentions, does not undermine the idea of the pilgrims' way representing a ritual landscape generated by superstition, tradition and beliefs through place-association. In this context, the ritual landscape is both the mental and physical space in which movement takes place by individuals on their way towards a common goal. However, the physical landscape of the pilgrimage route and the central shrine does contain an extended area from which pilgrims were drawn. This area has been identified as the impact-area of a cult, recognised by the dedications and/or other associations to ecclesiastical monuments or sites. The impact-area may give an additional dimension to the pilgrimage process if used with caution, but an approximate area defined through dedications and associations with a cult may indicate its popularity and expansion.

The movement through the landscape will involve, willingly and unwillingly, stops or pauses. These would be places where nature itself forces a temporary halt, or where man has created sites or locations for spiritual uplift or simply for rest. Such stops or pauses would have been experienced differently depending on the travellers' intentions by undertaking the journey. The pilgrimage route may therefore be described through the equation of *movement*

and *constants*; the common pattern of movement which is defined by a series of monuments or constants punctuating the movement. The constants are hence identified as a group of monuments, which may vary, such as churches and chapels, hospitals, holy wells and other monuments like crosses and cairns. The possible identification of a pilgrimage system is hence explained as dependent on these two factors. An analysis of the archaeological and historical sources as well as the use of local traditions and place-names may lead to an identification of the constants of the pilgrimage route. It is consequently argued that the identification of a pilgrimage route is dependent on the several source-groups and conditions present in the cultural-historical landscape. The identification of a pilgrimage system in a given area is consequently seen as a process consisting of several factors which may be understood through different models of interpretation, which emphasise the importance of the religious and ritual landscape in which medieval pilgrimage at some time was a continuing process.

Notes to chapter 3.

¹ Cf. Ch. 2a : 9-10.

² Cf. Ch. 4c : 63-64, for the "sacred geography" of the Holy Land and Jerusalem, and ch. 5c : 93-97 for the Nidaros pilgrimage routes in Norway.

³ Cf. Ibid. : 64.

⁴ Cf. Ch. 2a : 8.

⁵ Cf. Ch. 4d : 69-70.

⁶ Cf. Ch. 7b-d and ch. 8b-d, for elements particularly defining the impact-area of the cult of St Magnus.

⁷ Cf. Ch. 3b : 35ff, above.

⁸ Cf. Ch. 6, concerning the cult of St Magnus. The OS, M1 and M2 are the primary sources to our knowledge of the cult and pilgrimage of St Magnus.

⁹ Cf. Note 5, above.

¹⁰ Cf. Ch. 4d : 71ff.

¹¹ Cf. Ch. 5c : 94-96.

¹² Cf. Ch. 5d : 105-109, concerning 'sacred water' around the North Atlantic.

Chapter 4

Saints and Pilgrimage

a) Introduction.

The idea of physical travel to a sacred place to achieve some kind of religious relief has never been exclusive to Christianity. In most religions, pilgrimage exists or has been an important part of religious life. Although pilgrimage is still an ongoing process within a Christian Catholic context, the perception of the physical surroundings and mental processes of life has gone through a radical change since the Middle Ages. The medieval perception of Hell was explicit through the belief in the manifestation of demons and the devil, but God acted and existed through the Church and through sacred objects, rituals and holy men and women.

There has always been a belief, within any religion, that God favours certain places where people would come and worship (Hall 1966 : 2). These places could be where holy people had lived and died, where miracles had taken place or where important religious houses had been built. When miracles occurred at the graves of martyrs or holy persons, it was thought that saints had a special connection with God, and the saints were consequently seen as mediators of prayers. The idea that God acted and existed through sacred objects or relics such as the physical remains of saints, carried the notion that the shrine would give the soul some kind of divine relief upon visitation and penance. In Christian pilgrimage it was common for pilgrims to walk all the way to the shrine barefoot or barely clothed, or go through certain rituals before being able to enter the shrine. But most importantly, pilgrimages were repeatable, they could be undertaken as often as one desired, particularly if one lived within a reasonable distance from a shrine (Jusserand 1921 : 339).

Pilgrimage was not only seen as a journey undertaken on foot as a religious act of devotion or as a means of bringing peaceful messages between nations. Pilgrimage also generated commercial interests in trade between the East and the West after the Crusades (Heath 1911 : 19). The connection had already been established and western demand for eastern art and luxury goods had therefore to be met. It is likely that pilgrimage to eastern parts of the Christendom was stimulated not only by the urge to visit the Holy Land, but also by the demand for goods.

The pilgrims were consequently not alone. They were in company with wanderers, beggars, and thieves as well as commercial travellers. The Church did not approve of the many uncontrollable wandering bands, not knowing whether or not their intentions were 'pure'. The solution was to make pilgrimage into a regulated profession directed by the Church. The devoted pilgrim could in some cases enjoy certain privileges such as being exempted from paying taxes or to have the wages paid out for a certain period. A pilgrim's property was secured while he was away and he could not be arrested or put in front of a civil court. The would-be pilgrims had to be provided with regular passports and got pilgrim-badges sewn on to their clothing. They were blessed by the Holy Church and were protected by St Peter and the Pope (Heath 1911 : 25). This meant that the pilgrims were recognised throughout Christendom and could wander freely across nations' borders to the chosen shrines. According to Jusserand 'the majority of these pilgrims were sincere and in good faith', but the prospect of wandering freely would have attracted the so-called 'false pilgrims', people disguised as pilgrims, who were able to pass freely between nations under the protection of the Church (1921 : 357).

In the previous chapter theoretical models concerning the act of pilgrimage were explored. Such models are both necessary and useful in understanding the pilgrimage process whether on a specific or a general level, in past or present societies and in any religion. In the following, the origin of cultic devotion of saints, relics and places, and the pilgrimage process, as well as superstition in relation to pilgrimage will be investigated.

b) The cult of saints.

In order to understand the origin of Christian pilgrimage, one has to take a step back and investigate the situation behind the process of collective or individual movement to a place of special religious significance or worship. Cultic devotion may be found in many religions throughout history, but the Christian cult of saints should first of all not be considered a convenient continuation of beliefs in the process of conversion from pagan to Christian societies (Brown 1981 : 5-6). In his book *The Cult of the Saints. Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (1981), Peter Brown makes a thorough study of the cult of saints in Christianity, bringing its origin back to the late antiquity and to the centres of Roman power, between the third and the sixth centuries AD (Brown 1981 : 1), placing its development in the great cemeteries that were located on the outskirts of cities of the Roman world (Brown 1981 : 4).

It is, however, necessary to establish how the cult of saints in the Roman world came to develop and influence Christian belief and traditions. Brown argues that the Christian cults of saints should not be regarded as a *continuation* of pagan belief in the process of conversion to Christianity. There seems to be a relationship between the ancient cult of heroes and the Christian cult of martyrs: Although the relationship between the living and the dead in Hellenistic and Roman times sometimes meant a “heroization” of certain dead members of families or societies, and their places of burial were of special significance to the relatives, the analogy to the Christian cult of martyrs may be broken down. The analogy is broken down in the notion that the dead heroes, who had died as human beings, and the immortal gods, were not of the same form. The boundary between the gods and the living humans should remain firm. The Christian cult of martyrs, on the other hand, embraced precisely this point; the martyrs had died as human beings, therefore they enjoyed close intimacy with God. Because of this closeness with God, the martyrs were able to protect the living (Brown 1981 : 5-6). The key to understanding the development of the cult of martyrs in Christianity lies therefore in the relationship between God, the dead and the living on the one hand, and the importance of the grave¹, the memory of the dead and the religious ceremonies surrounding the memory of the dead, on the other (Brown 1981 : 6).

The Christian cult of saints ultimately meant that at the graves of saints and martyrs, heaven and earth were joined. This joining of heaven and earth, the living and the dead, was physically expressed at the graves of saints; *the shrine*, and in the fragments of the body of saints or even objects associated with the saints in life; *the relics*. The shrine or the relics were not representations of the divine bond between man and God, but were places or objects

where the saints were *present*. As Christianity expanded, officially as late as the turn of the first millennium, and reached the Norse areas of the North Atlantic, it brought with it the *presence* of the saints. In late antiquity, Christianity was synonymous with saints and relics (Brown 1981 : 10-12). As Christianity spread north and west, the notion of saints, relics and shrines followed, and by the end of the sixth century, graves of saints were located in cemeteries outside the walls of most cities in the Western Empire, and these cemeteries became centres of ecclesiastical life (Brown 1981 : 3). Especially in western Europe the rise of the cult of saints is easily traceable, as the power of the shrines and relics merged with the Christian leadership (Brown 1981 : 10). The belief in the power of the physical *presence* of the holy, is the key factor in the rise of the cult of saints in Christianity. The trade in and theft of relics are two aspects implying that possession of the holy was important in gaining control and power in Christian areas. The power of the holy would therefore give the possessors control through sharing of the holy, as pointed out:

Those who possessed the holy, in the form of portable relics, could show *gratia* by sharing these good things with others, and by bringing them from the places where they had once been exclusively available to communities scattered throughout the Roman world (Brown 1981 : 89).

The movement of relics to people - *the translation*, contributed therefore to the spread of the cult of saints, but the implications of translations were many; the most important factors of relic translations were the *arrival*, the *installation*, and the annual *celebration* of relics. The arrival of relics meant that God had privileged the community; the installation of relics within the community conveyed a sense of amnesty to the people; and the celebration of the relics after installation led to social interaction within the community (Brown 1981 : 93). From the late fourth century, a new Christian elite was formed, consisting of bishops and noble pilgrims. The cult of saints and the importance of the translation of relics reached wider areas of the Christian world. Relics were transported to new Christian communities by bishops and pilgrims who travelled under the protection of the saints. This protection was transferred to the places of the relics' arrival, bringing concord and unity between places far apart, between the Christian centres of the Holy Land or Rome and more peripheral areas of Christendom. The importance of accumulating relics in one place or claiming the patronage and protection of saints was further established through the celebration of the saints and relics. During saints' festivals the power of the saints was manifested in the world, which in turn would strengthen the community as a whole. The success of the rise and spread of the cult of saints and relics in

early Christianity may therefore partly be explained by the celebrations of the holy dead; the festivals in honour of saints were not only an instrument to emphasise the power of the emperor, but a carefully orchestrated event of concord between emperor and community united in the presence of the holy (Brown 1981 : 93-98).

Cazelles has pointed out, however, that the physical presence of the holy was consequently the more important aspect of the cult of saints i.e. the proximity and distance to the saints:

Distance is thus, on one hand, an integral component of the medieval portrayal of sainthood: closeness to God is here the result of a merit attained only by a select few. On the other hand, the saints' exceptional contact with the Deity is also what places them in a privileged position to act as intercessors (Cazelles 1991 : 2).

Not only were the saints placed in a privileged position in relation to God, but the possessor of the holy (the shrine or the relic) came to *be* the blessed one. The opportunity to be in contact with the holy was made available through *gratia* by the possessor, and the possessors came to be those who had power, the emperor and the Christian leadership. It was, on the other hand, possible for lay-persons to be in possession of the holy through relics and particularly the *brandea* or "contact relics", i.e. objects that had been in contact with the saints' remains. It was thought that the "contact relics" were as full of the holy as the relics or the bodily remains (Brown 1981 : 88). The possession of relics was consequently a key-factor in the spread of the cult of saints through time and space. The presence of and contact with the holy needed to be established throughout Christendom during the age of the cult of saints. These factors were first and foremost established through the permanent location of the shrine in a particular place, a church or monastery, but also further establishment through the written word. As defined by Cazelles:

A typical hagiologic document thus comprises two distinct and complementary types of mediation: the aim is, first, to evoke, at the biographical level, the facts and events accounting for the sanctification of an individual; and, second, to inspire the believer to respond actively to such exemplary stories (Cazelles 1991 : 1).

The establishment of cults of saints throughout Christianity were continually confirmed through hagiography – the literature on the lives and miracles of the saints, assembled in documents or books – the *vitae*, the functions of which was as described above by Cazelles. Taking a closer look at the first aim of hagiographic writing – the biographical accounts of saints' lives – it may be found that such accounts often reduce the saints to stereotypes,

imitating Christ's acts and miracles. With Christ as the ultimate being, the saints were shaped into perfection by their hagiographers who emphasised the saints' miracles, their pure lives and noble background. There are therefore often similarities between the written *vitae*; elements such as miracles and deeds portrayed by the individual hagiographer as being exceptional or unique to one particular saint, are to be found characterising another saint in another *vita*. However, the style of writing clearly reveals the hagiographers' intentions...

...to present the saints not just as exceptional beings but also as repetitious figures whose lives varied only in their spatial and temporal framework, which in itself was defined schematically simply to provide a scenic background to highlight the heroic perfection of the saint (Vauchez 1990 : 313).

During the course of the medieval period, hagiography went through different changes in style and function. There are, however, two mayor styles of hagiography serving different functions; works composed in *Latin* and works composed in the *vernacular*. Latin works were generally written for a liturgical purpose, for inspiration in an ecclesiastical context, in the Mass, or in the liturgy of the Hours. The vernacular texts, on the other hand, were generally composed for an illiterate or non-religious audience, and often performed by jongleurs, hence containing a strong element of entertainment. The Latin hagiography was consequently composed for an audience who already had a religious motivation, and who, through the Latin texts, only needed to be reminded of their calling. The vernacular hagiography was, in contrast, written for laypeople with no pre-perceived and defined religious motivation, which rhetoric style and public performance was meant to inspire people to turn to God (Vitz 1991 : 98-100).

As described above, hagiographic writing was multifunctional, serving many purposes, written and presented according to common patterns. As Christianity spread to areas on the periphery of western Europe, the cult of saints, relics and hagiographic writing followed. However, late medieval cults of saints in northern and western Europe did not emphasise the sanctity of ecclesiastics, ascetics or eremitic individuals only. A different kind of sanctity emerged, a secular type of sanctity, glorifying the heroic deeds and deaths of royal individuals. One such example is the national cult of King Olaf Haraldsson in Norway, who was killed at the battle of Stiklestad in AD 1030². His death was soon perceived as a martyrdom for the successful conversion of his people, and miracles and cures began to take place at his grave. Christ Church in Nidaros (P3 : 258), to where his relics were translated, became an important place of pilgrimage throughout the Middle Ages. Other examples are the cults of Edward the Confessor (d. 1066), the Anglo-Saxon king and Queen Margaret of

Scotland (d. 1093). Two Lives were written in honour of Queen Matilda (d. 968), the wife of Henry I of Germany; and the widow of Otto I, Empress Adelaide (d. 999), was canonised in AD 1097, to mention a few. In the many cases of sanctity being linked with royal families, the cults were established at the height of royal power, celebrated and supported in gratitude by the nuns and monks who benefited from this union. The cults of royal saints...

... were an expression of a society in which the church accepted the task of sanctifying the ancestors of the monarch to defend his legitimacy and, in some cases, to shore up a power threatened by the rising strength within the feudal system of the high aristocracy (Vauchez 1990 : 322).

As accounted for above, the cult of saints emerged in late antiquity in the Roman world and spread through the translation of relics and hagiography, as the notion of the *holy* presence and the potential of miracles were manifested through special individuals' relics and shrines. The cult of saints embraced the disciples of Christ, St Paul and the Virgin Mary, while the most valued objects of the cult of relics would have been pieces of the True Cross or the blood of Christ. As the cult of saints spread, so did it develop. From the devotion of central figures in Christianity to the sanctity of martyrdom and asceticism, to the celebration of royalty. As the cult of saints developed and spread so did the definitions of sainthood.

André Vauchez has made a careful study of western medieval sainthood, particularly during the later Middle Ages (Vauchez 1997). In general, sainthood in the Middle Ages may be recognised in terms of *popular* and *local* sainthood. Vauchez' typology of sainthood is mainly based on the similarities in the histories of different saints. The cults of popular sainthood are, primarily recognised by the external manifestations of the cult i.e. the building of an oratory or a chapel. Hagiographic writing is usually absent, and such saints are primarily known through chronicles and iconographical evidence (Vauchez 1997 : 147). Popular cults are known to have been locally venerated, and their origins are usually based in an unjust accusation with the subsequent murder or execution of an individual or even an animal in the community. Injustice and martyrdom are key-words in popular cults:

By virtue of a process which we may see as a law of popular affectivity, pity provokes piety. Victims become martyrs, hence saints, since, in the popular mind, these two notions overlap and there are no other saints than those who died a violent death on behalf of justice (Vauchez 1997 : 151).

The popular cults were often prohibited by the ecclesiastical hierarchy, but it was under cover of the definition, *martyr*, that the popular cults reached the liturgical level and were able to survive and develop, in some cases until the modern period (Vauchez 1997 : 148, 152).

But as pointed out by Vauchez, if a cult is to last it needs 'the support of the clergy and the approval of an ecclesiastical authority':

The majority of well-documented devotions were, therefore, located at the level of local sainthood, that is, where the religious conceptions of the faithful and the requirements of the clergy intersected (Vauchez 1997 : 157).

The degree of this dialectical relationship between laity and clergy varied between region and period, but in general the laity's devotion to a popular saint was centred around a person of modest origin. In the veneration of local cults, on the other hand, the influence of the ruling classes are more evident, as the devotee was usually a person of higher rank in society. Hence the local sainthood was under influence of the political and social structures of the country or region in which it was established and was encouraged to develop (Vauchez 1997 : 157). It is within the definition of local sainthood that royal cults may be classified as well as the cults of men and women of noble lineage. However, saints were often recognised or distinguished by their material denials, the renunciation of physical pleasures or personal will. Sanctity was achieved through 'penitence attained in practice' (Vauchez 1997 : 191), in contrast to sanctity through noble birth, political power or ecclesiastical piety. Whether these saints had gained sanctity by lineage or position, or through deeds, penitence or renunciation as a life-style, a local cult would have been venerated on several levels in the society.

The rise of the cult of saints in Christianity is a complex subject whose development would have been influenced by several factors. Its origin should unquestionably be sought, as argued by Peter Brown, in Roman areas in late antiquity, with the veneration of the early Christian martyrs and ascetics as one point of reference. Though there are similarities in the veneration of pagan heroes and Christian martyrs, Brown argues against this analogy. The pagan and Christian cults of the dead reveal different relationships with their gods or God respectively. The Christian dead martyrs enjoyed a privileged position and had an intimacy with God which enabled them to protect the living. The saints were mediators between heaven and earth, and so were their places of burial and physical remains. The cult of and trade in relics came as a result of the saints' increasing importance and influence in Christian religious life and customs. In the rise and spread of the cults of saints in Christianity, the belief in the physical *presence* of the divine was a key factor. The significance of the location and position

of the holy dead in late antiquity meant that the presence of the saints were *at* their graves, located in cemeteries outside the cities of the Roman world. These cemeteries consequently became the centres of religious life. Churches and basilicas would later incorporate the shrines of saints and install reliquaries in privileged positions³ within these buildings, making the presence of the holy available to the public through celebrations or festivals at regular intervals throughout the year, or by facilitating the access of the shrine and relics in a pilgrimage process.

The veneration of holy women and men consequently became a regulated part of early Christian life in the medieval West. The cult of saints came to embrace many forms of veneration and indeed an enormous quantity of different saints, from biblical persons and objects to late medieval individuals whose sanctity never did reach Rome and an official canonisation. The diversity in saints' cults and their level of veneration in society would have influenced the spread of the individual cults and their popularity through time. The cults' function in society would likewise have been influenced or even directed by their relevance in society. Put differently, sainthood was often directed by the person's qualities or even lineage or ecclesiastical / royal power. The number of medieval Christian saints as well as their associated traditions or hagiography is considerable. Although much was lost in certain areas of the Christian West during the Reformation, traditions and customs surrounding certain cults is an ongoing process involving pilgrimage, festivals and masses. The veneration of saints has a physical expression in the location of the holy; the space where heaven and earth are joined. The proximity to the saints and relics in early Christianity and the Middle Ages has therefore been an essential part of the cult of saints, and this proximity is consequently a key-factor in the medieval pilgrimage process.

c) The origin of Christian pilgrimage.

The proximity of the holy may be explained as the distance between the *ordinary* and the *special*, between the *familiar* and the *other*, and overcome by individuals who sought the presence of the holy through pilgrimage. The shrines of saints and relics, or sites of historical and religious significance became places where people came to venerate; to be in contact with the holy and to be touched by the holy. The popularity of a shrine directed the influx of pilgrims, and pilgrims could walk for months to reach the desired place of veneration.

In order to understand the act of pilgrimage from a historical and archaeological point of view, it is necessary to have considered the rise and function of the cult of saints, relics and places. As discussed in chapter 3, the theoretical framework for understanding the pilgrimage process is also necessary in completing the picture. The pilgrimage journey – this forward progress, is broken down and its fragments labelled in terms of the continuously moving individual in contrast to the constant monuments and objects, interrupting the journey and at the same time not representing the end, only stations on the way. In the wake of a theoretical discussion a question should be asked: What is the origin of Christian pilgrimage? Why did this religious process begin, and what is its significance since pilgrimage became an integrated part of religious life and customs along side the cult of saints?

In the following, some of the driving forces behind the pilgrimage process will be investigated in order to establish a context of origin. Cultic devotion of places and people (the cults of saints and relics) in early Christianity and the Middle Ages did function as a central factor in drawing the attention of people and triggering a desire to undertake a pilgrimage. However, the cults of saints, relics and places (the physical expressions of the holy) were upheld by the belief in miracles. It should be emphasised, though, that not all pilgrimage goals were sources of miraculous events or cures, but rather represented the presence of the holy where miracles could take place. The miracle – the divine intervention – has its Christian origin in the Bible, more precisely in the New Testament describing the life of Christ. As discussed above, the hagiographic writing of saints' lives emphasised the miracles in order to establish the degree of the saintliness. In the conversion from pagan pantheistic beliefs to Christianity, the emphasis on miracles made this transfer more easy; as stated by Sumption

It was broadly recognized that miracles were necessary to assist the propagation of the faith, and that when the faith was established they would cease (Sumption 1975 : 57).

However, the belief in miracles and the pursuit of the miraculous continued and survived throughout the medieval period. Miracles were reported to have taken place at the graves of

saints, drawing pilgrims to the shrine in the hope of new miracles or cures for illnesses. The reports of miracles undoubtedly generated pilgrimage to most known shrines throughout the Christian world, although it is reasonable to assume that this process generated frauds in order to draw attention and pilgrims to less well-established shrines during the medieval period (Sumption 1975 : 56). In general, miracles were presented to the faithful as examples or illustrations of the spiritual life. The miracles were the evidence of the Church's teaching on Christianity and God's eternal intervention in the physical world (Sumption 1975 : 60-61). Through the Church's constant reference to miracles, the Christian faith became more established and God's Word became visible at the physical location of saints' graves or in places where miracles were reported to have taken place. The origin of Christian pilgrimage may therefore be sought in the conversion process. The notion of holy places, objects and saints aided the establishing of the Christian faith in the world, making the new faith more easily adaptable.

From a different perspective, the origin of the pilgrimage process may be sought in the biblical importance of the Holy Land and Rome. These great pilgrimages brought the Christians to the prime areas of Christianity according to the events in the Bible. The Holy Land with the cities of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, as well as Rome, the Christian capital of the world, the seat of the Pope and the graves of SS Peter and Paul. Jerusalem and Rome may be termed the two nuclei of Christianity, like Mecca and Medina of Islam. In the Christian medieval mind, a journey to one or both of these places was the ultimate fulfilment of Christian life and piety, and they would have served as models for the lesser known pilgrimages in the Christian world.

The argument for the rise and function of pilgrimage centres and pilgrimage routes, whether on a large or small scale, is based in the proximity to the holy. The saints' shrines were the manifestation of the holy in the world, the nucleus of the Christian community, the physical monument and space that connected heaven and earth. Within the phrase *the proximity to the holy* lies the pilgrimage process as a "sub-ritual" to the veneration of saints and relics. The need to be near, to touch and be touched by the holy generated the pilgrimage process: The ritual and physical movement from the security and normality of the home, through the insecure and sometimes dangerous gradual progress towards a distant, sacred goal.

The dynamics of the early Christian and medieval pilgrimage process until the Reformation are first and foremost exemplified in the pilgrimages to the Holy Land and Rome. The Holy Land was the place where Christianity was manifested; Jerusalem and

Bethlehem were the events and places described in the Bible could be visited and touched. According to the Old Testament the Holy Land and the Jewish people were chosen by God, and the descriptions in the Bible verifies this sacred bond through the acts of chosen individuals as well as God's direct interference in order to occupy the land of Israel. God's presence was therefore manifested in the landscape and the monuments that were associated with biblical events both before and after the birth of Christ. The importance of Jerusalem is also emphasised with the onset of the Crusades in the late eleventh century, when the infidel – the Moslems – invaded the city, threatening the holy Christian places. However, Christian pilgrimage to the city of Jerusalem may be traced back to the fourth century, to Constantine's conversion and his victory over the pagan Licinius in the eastern half of the Roman empire in AD 324. According to Coleman and Elsner (1995) this event was momentous in the history of Christianity as it for the first time united the eastern and western Mediterranean under a Christian monarch. Constantine summoned the Council of Nicaea in AD 325, and one of the doctrinal disputes concerned pilgrimage activity. As commented by Coleman and Elsner:

Pilgrimage was one of many novelties in Christian ritual created by the sudden and remarkable translation of Christianity from a persecuted sect to an officially accepted and imperially fostered religion (Coleman and Elsner 1995 : 80).

The Council of Nicaea in AD 325 showed that the act of pilgrimage already had become a doctrinal dispute within the early Church questioning whether or not the Bible – or Christ, recommended pilgrimage to the Christian followers. However, later Church Fathers, like Gregory of Nyssa, St Augustine and St Jerome, made theological arguments for and against the practice of pilgrimage in relation to the presence of the holy – whether or not God was confined to one particular place i.e. the Holy Land, or whether holy places, relics and images brought salvation to the individual (Coleman and Elsner 1995 : 80-81).

During Constantine's reign Christianity became an officially accepted religion, and the landscape of Palestine developed to become the religious landscape of the Holy Land. The early pilgrims visited places of significance in the life of Christ as recorded in the New Testament, and this information was channelled back to Christians elsewhere. The geographical locations of events described in the New Testament became physical manifestations of the 'Word of God'. The landscape, monuments and buildings were made holy; places and things with no previous religious connotations acquired literary reference from the Bible which changed the perception of the landscape (Coleman and Elsner 1995 : 83-84). Palestine's geography received a new dimension – from a profane to a sacred

dimension that could be experienced through the matter that made it holy – the belief in the Bible and that *the holy* was present in these places. Not only was the Holy Land pilgrimage generated by the perception of ‘holy landscape’, but the topography of Jerusalem in particular was, according to Coleman and Elsner, ‘experienced liturgically as a historical narrative of the Passion’. Christian worship was performed according to a pattern, a liturgy that in itself became a pilgrimage ‘through the city as a sacred territory’ (1995 : 88).

With the spread of Christianity, the notion of pilgrimage to the Holy Land became an important and desirable aspect of Christian devotion⁴. The idea of holy places and landscapes, people and relics, was undoubtedly actively promoted by the Church on one hand, and actively sought by pious Christians on the other. To seek the physical traces of the life of Christ would have been a religious desire and in itself a motivation, but making a long and hazardous journey would have been the first and main obstacle for many. Some early Christian pilgrims who successfully made the journey, also wrote about the wonders of the Holy Land. Such travel-descriptions were first and foremost made for those at home who were not able to make a pilgrimage themselves. As pointed out by Coleman and Elsner the Holy Land pilgrimage was ‘something to be accessed through books’. Although the travel-descriptions were also intended as travel-guides for pilgrims *in spe*, the Holy Land pilgrimage and the holy places in Jerusalem became ‘a literary image, a religious paradigm, more than a fact’ (1995 : 92). But this literary image of Jerusalem with its holy places and people became reflected in places and saints elsewhere. The Holy Sepulchre (P1 : 256), the Holy Cross, the Apostles and the Virgin Mary, were not only to be reached through pilgrimage to the Holy Land or through the written accounts of the holy places. The proximity to the holy became narrowed down and more easily available throughout Christendom.

During the reign of Constantine, the obscure graves of St Peter and St Paul outside the city of Rome had been covered by great basilicas (P2 : 257), and the emperor donated to the Church a piece of land within the walls of the city. This was to become the papal residence, the Lateran basilica, and the third of the three great holy places of medieval Rome. Although Rome was the capital of the western Christianity and a centre of pilgrimage through the presence of the Church Fathers and the papacy, the catacombs and the cemeteries outside the city walls also contained the bodies of major Christian saints and martyrs. The graves of the saints and martyrs located in the catacombs and graveyards were held by the Roman Church to be inviolate, but a series of destructive attacks on the city between 410 and 756 AD forced the popes to reconsider the location of the graves. With the shrines of St Peter and St Paul in the urban basilicas as examples of great liturgical cults, a natural step forward to secure the

relics was to remove them from the catacombs and cemeteries and translate them to more 'formal and imposing sanctuaries within the city' (Sumption 1975 : 219). In 757 Pope Paul I initiated the distribution of relics to churches and monasteries within the city of Rome, an operation which lasted for two centuries. But the extensive translation of saints and martyrs in Rome sparked a desire amongst the powerful churches of northern Europe to acquire the proper relics of saints to which their altars and churches were dedicated, rather than the mere *brandea*. The catacombs and cemeteries of Rome were emptied of the remains of holy women and men, and placed in basilicas and monasteries, but a vast number of relics were stolen, sold and again installed in churches of northern Europe to such a degree that by the middle of the ninth century the populace of Rome began to object. The saints and martyrs were seen as their protectors, and the extensive removal of bodies began to provoke serious riots. The shrines of SS Peter and Paul were left in their places, and after the Arab attack on the city in 846 the Vatican Hill became enclosed by the walls of Rome (Sumption 1975 : 220). The effect of the translations of the saints and martyrs within and out of Rome, as well as the importance of the presence of the Pope and the shrines of SS Peter and Paul is best summed up by Sumption:

In the space of a century, the spiritual geography of the city had been transformed. No longer the centre of a network of cemeteries and graveyards, Rome had become a museum of relics, second only to Constantinople. After the sack of Constantinople by the fourth crusade, Rome stood unrivalled (1975 : 220).

Not only did the vast collection of important relics in the churches and basilicas of Rome draw the attention of pilgrims. The prospect of indulgence⁵; the extra-sacramental remission of the temporal punishment due to sin that has already been forgiven and which remission is granted by the Church (Kent 1910 : 1), grew to become another major factor in the pilgrimage process during the Middle Ages. Rome was by far the most generous place in giving indulgences, a privilege that was during the twelfth century extended to lesser shrines all over Christendom on certain festivals of the year, set to a maximum of forty days by the Pope (Webb 2001 : 64). Although the Holy Land and Rome were the two pinnacles of Christianity during the Middle Ages, a multitude of smaller-scale pilgrimage centres arose throughout Christendom. In Spain the famous grave of St James in Santiago de Compostela attracted a great number of pilgrims and became the third most venerated shrine after the Holy Land and Rome during the Middle Ages. Similarly, the French shrines of St Denis and St Martin were famous places of pilgrimage.

In the British Isles the cathedral in Canterbury, the scene of the passion of St Thomas, became the most venerated place in England from about 1170 AD. He was murdered in a

sacred place: inside the cathedral, in front of or near the altar. His position as an important churchman, an archbishop, and his execution in close proximity to the altar, contributed to a quick elevation to sainthood. Soon after the murder, people in and around Canterbury had miraculous experiences that were attributed to the archbishop, even before the news of his murder had reached them (Loxton 1978 : 10-11). However, Winchester Cathedral with the shrine of St Swithun was a great place of pilgrimage two hundred years before the canonisation of St Thomas (Loxton 1978 : 118). Our Lady of Walsingham in Norfolk became the object of pilgrimage from the second half of the eleventh century. To this place, Nazareth in Judea, was to be 'symbolically translated' in 1061 AD, when a local aristocrat, Richeldis, dreamt that she was transported to the house of Virgin Mary, to the scene of the annunciation of the birth of Christ. Richeldis subsequently instructed her carpenters to build an exact replica of the holy house and Walsingham subsequently became a famous place of pilgrimage (Coleman and Elsner 1995 : 106). In Wales the ecclesiastical centre of St David's in Pembrokeshire was already famous as a cult-centre in the ninth century and was a place of pilgrimage in the late eleventh century (Davies 1982 : 196).

In Scotland there were in particular two important centres of early Christian and medieval pilgrimage: the island of Iona in Argyll with the early Christian monastic foundation and shrine of St Columba, and St Andrews in Fife (Ills. 4-5, page 67) which housed a shrine with relics of the apostle of Christ. The early Christian saint, Columba, established a monastic settlement on Iona in the sixth century AD, and his *vita* written by St Adomnan, the ninth abbot of Iona, serves as the primary source of information on this island's importance (Sharpe 1995). Besides Rome, there were two places pilgrims could venerate the relics of the apostles; at the shrine of St James in Compostela, Spain, and in St Andrews, Scotland. St Andrews therefore became an important place of pilgrimage, and the traffic was considerable by the time of Queen Margaret of Scotland (d. 1093), herself a frequent pilgrim to the shrine. Queen Margaret instituted a free ferry for pilgrims crossing the Fouth (Queensferry), and at the time there were also pilgrim hostels along the route to St Andrews, that functioned as resting places (Hall 1994: 90). But there were other crossings and resting places on the route to St Andrews. There was a pilgrim hostel refounded in the early thirteenth century beside a bridge crossing Lochleven, and there had probably been a resting place at the crossing of the River Eden at Guardbridge. There was also ferry across the Fourth, called 'earls-ferry', between North Berwick and Ardross founded in the mid-twelfth century by Duncan Earl of Fife, and a ferry across the River Tay (Hall 1994: 149-150). Queen Margaret's tomb in Dunfermline also

became a place of miracles and pilgrimage. Her grave was in placed in the new Abbey Church in c. 1150, built by her son, David I (Yeoman 1999 : 71).



Ill. 4. Iona Abbey (Argyll, Scotland).



Ill. 5. St Andrews Cathedral (Fife, Scotland)

In Ireland, medieval shrines associated with the patron saint, Patrick, are still frequent places of pilgrimage. The two most famous Patrick-pilgrimages are St Patrick's Purgatory in Lough Derg, Co. Donegal, and Croagh Patrick in Co. Mayo. The origin of both pilgrimage centres are rooted in medieval Irish mythology, tradition and legends going back to the tenth to twelfth centuries, and not in the veneration of physical relics. St Patrick's Purgatory was, as the name suggests, a place where a person could be purged from sin for the rest of his or her life, and on the mountain of Croagh Patrick the saint fought battles with demons (Harbison 1992 : 57, 67).

The examples briefly mentioned above may serve to illustrate a development in the pilgrimage process from the beginning of the Holy Land pilgrimage in the fourth century AD to the development of Rome as the centre of the universal Church with the shrines of St Peter and St Paul. These major centres of Christianity became models of pilgrimage in other parts of the Christendom, and lesser pilgrimage centres became established through the focus on the cults of universal or local saints. The holy house of Walsingham may be interpreted as a 'reflection of the Holy Land' with direct reference to the annunciation in Nazareth. Pilgrimage to lesser shrines, and the establishment of lesser shrines, in connection with the cults of saints and relics were initially founded on the idea of sacred landscapes and sacred places. In Christian teaching the land and the people were chosen by God, and the proximity to the holy was defined in the landscape and by biblical personae. With the spread of Christianity the proximity to the holy became redefined in new cults of saints and relics, and the journeys to the sacred places of Christianity came to include a great number of smaller pilgrimage centres, not only the Holy Land and Rome. Shrines such as the few mentioned above had great influence in some areas depending on the importance and popularity of the cults and how they were promoted. Although many centres of pilgrimage were acknowledged by the Pope and became alternatives to Jerusalem and Rome, the notion of sacred places on a local scale also became an important part of Christian customs and traditions throughout the Middle Ages.

d) Pilgrimage routes and pilgrimage superstition.

The prime aspect of Christian pilgrimage is the religious dynamics, the driving forces behind the pilgrimage process: the ultimate goal at the end of the journey bringing cure and salvation, making the journey worth while. From an historical viewpoint the pilgrimage process spread with the cult of saints and its origin should be explained within the context of sacred places referred to in the Bible. But the act of pilgrimage and the devotion at places associated with cults, relics and miracles were also defined within a landscape. The pilgrimage routes to the shrines were particular roads that led to the final goal at the end of the journey, and the act involved a movement from *known* to *safe* places, or *harbours* for the pilgrims, or in philosophical terms; from the *familiar* to the *other*. The distance covered between these two points may have represented a form of chaos for the pilgrim; the insecurity of the 'in between'. As discussed in chapter 3, the distance between the two known points would, at least during longer pilgrimages, have been punctuated by places of security or sanctuary⁶. The security of the stopping-places is rather of a religious character. These places, buildings or monuments were stations *en route* that offered rest, food or spiritual guidance to the pilgrims.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the pilgrimage roads should not only be discussed in light of the final goal, the shrine of the cult. The journey itself *is* the forward progress that contains the essence of pilgrimage. The pilgrimage process may be described and analysed in relation to specific pilgrimages: The routes to Rome and Santiago de Compostela have received much attention from scholars of various disciplines. Pilgrimage roads in general, besides being a physical journey, are also identified through associated monuments or buildings – the secure places – which may have been specially built or prepared for the pilgrimage process⁷. Examples may be hospices and inns, monasteries, chapels, crosses and wells (as in places of devotion – holy wells, or as sources of fresh water), bridges and ferries.

On the main route to Rome there were during the Middle Ages hospices by the road sometimes only two to three miles apart. Organised and private accommodation for pilgrims increased with the popularity of the greater shrines in Europe, particularly from the eighth and the ninth centuries onwards. In many areas the monasteries were the social focal point of the community, and charitable activities became common to some monastic orders. (Ohler 1998 : 86-89). In Scotland, the pilgrimage centre of St Andrews was under the protection of Queen Margaret who financed a safe-crossing of the Forth in form of a ferry-service and had hospices for pilgrims built on either side (Yeoman 1999 : 59). In Norway, the medieval routes leading to St Olaf's shrine in Nidaros were part of the common road system the maintenance

of which was secured under strict control by the old laws of Norway (Gulatingslova 1994 : 87, no. 90, Smedstad 1996 : 24)⁸. Along particular routes leading to Nidaros from Sweden there is a type of monument, the stone *beacons*. Their purpose was to lead the traveller in the right direction in difficult weather conditions. Along the route across the Dovre mountains, the larger beacons are placed within a few kilometres of each other, and the smaller beacons are placed within a shorter 20-30 metres distance. There are several examples in Norway of routes punctuated by such beacons. These are generally believed to have been built during the Middle Ages and were most probably part of the organised system of roads in Norway (Smedstad 1995 : 8-9).

Another aspect of the medieval pilgrimage process needs to be given further attention. Besides the importance of the shrines of the cults, the journey and the security of specially designated stopping-places during pilgrimage, is the notion that certain places or monuments were perceived as holy, that they contained meaning beyond their physical boundaries. Superstition and religious customs surrounding the pilgrimage process, cults and places of religious importance developed outside the regulated life of the Church. A number of places were in local tradition perceived as holy or sacred, although not being acknowledged by the Church. Places, buildings and monuments containing 'special meaning'; either churches and chapels or crosses and cairns, holy wells or trees, became an integrated part of Christian religious life.

Superstition, in relation to pilgrimage and religious devotion of monuments and physical landscapes, needs to be given some attention in this context and may be summed-up as follows. The word "superstition" derives from Lat. *Superstitio*, meaning the 'idea [or] practice, etc. founded on unreasoning belief in magic, witchcraft, etc.; irrational fear of what is unknown or mysterious' (Hornby et al 1987 : 868) and may be divided into the four categories of

1. *improper worship of the true God*: [when] improper elements are added to the proper and approved performances;
2. *idolatry*: [worship] becomes idolatrous when it is offered to creatures set up as divinities or endowed with divine attributes;
3. *divination*: the attempt to extract from creatures, by means of religious rites, a knowledge of future events or of things known to God alone, and

4. *vain observances*, which include magic and occult arts: beliefs and practices which, at least by implication, attribute supernatural or preternatural powers for good or for evil to causes evidently incapable of producing the expected effects (Wilhelm 1912 : 1).

Superstition in the sense of improper worship of the true God (1) may be implied to some aspects of medieval pilgrimage and religious devotion of monuments and physical landscapes. Acts of improper worship are further divided into the two sub-categories of *cultus indebitus*: which ‘consists in introducing *false* or superfluous elements into the practice of true religion’, and *cultus superfluus* ‘which consists in expecting from certain pre-arranged circumstances a greater efficacy of the religious performances’ (Wilhelm 1912 : 3). Examples of *cultus indebitus* may be the pardoner selling false indulgences or the invention of false miracles in order to spread the popularity of a cult. Examples of *cultus superfluus* may be the popular celebration of holy places, holy shrines, holy wells and famous relics, devotion to which was not approved by the Church (Wilhelm 1912 : 4).

In spite of the ‘improper worship’ associated with medieval pilgrimage, monuments and physical landscapes, this was thus part of religious life, customs, and traditions which added symbolic meaning to certain places and objects. Although writers and historians after the Reformation sometimes described pilgrimage and ‘improper worship’ as ‘popish beliefs and practices’, these references contain important information on religious devotion of e.g. small and local scale pilgrimages, holy places and holy wells, crosses, cairns and trees. The examples are numerous in post-reformation records of cultic devotion that point back to the Middle Ages.

The idea of holy water or *hydrolatry* – the worship of water – is universal and not exclusively linked with the baptismal rite in Christianity. Although water as an element may have gone through a conversion process at the coming of Christianity through re-association with a Christian saint, water-sources and springs are natural features primarily used as sources of freshwater. As objects of religious superstition there are several thousand examples of holy wells in northern Europe.

As sources of fresh water the most typical location of wells are the free-standing springs. Some wells are located at a distance from habitation. In the British Isles medieval wells may be located in towns, often with large, ornamental covering structures, as opposed to the more modest rural well-coverings. Rural wells are most commonly associated with other monuments or features held to be sacred such as trees or buildings. Sacred trees were common in Celtic areas, and particularly oak trees seems to have had a special significance

and associated with a particular saint's cult. One such example is St Juthware's Tree in Halstock, Dorset, which was held in great veneration and known at least until 1727 (Rattue 1995 : 73-75). In Scotland, at Innis Maree on Loch Maree there was a most celebrated tree next to a holy well. After the well had run dry, pilgrims still visited the tree and left pieces of metal as offerings in the trunk of the tree (Banks 1937 : 167).



*Ill. 6. Holy cross and holy well
(Kilmory Oib, Knapdale, Argyll, Scotland).*

In Ireland, there are similar examples where pilgrims visited holy wells and left coins or coloured cloth in the nearby tree, such as in Seir Kieran in Co. Offaly and at the Well of Doon in Co. Donegal (Harbison 1991 : 231). Other interesting activities associated with holy wells are the examples from Borgund in Sogn og Fjordane County, Norway, where people erected crosses around a holy well dedicated to St Olaf, and in Imsdalen in Oppland County, walking sticks and crutches were deposited next to the well by those who had been cured by the water (Bang 1885 : 8-9).

Another important element is the well - church/chapel association. An association and a ritual usage of holy water that was indeed approved by the Church and therefore not directly interpreted as *cultus superfluus*: Some wells may have had a baptismal usage through dedications to John the Baptist, and therefore been an active component in the church service. An unusual example is the ancient chapel of St Madron with St Madron's Well which water flows through the chapel's font, and the wells beneath Winchester Cathedral in England are known to regularly flood the crypt (Rattue 1995 : 67). Both these cases are examples of holy wells being the source of the *holy water* used by clerics in the service. A final element is the holy wells' association with boundaries. The universal notion that margins, edges or borders were seen as dangerous places which needed the magical protection is also found within the Church. Wells and springs or other monuments located on or near a boundary sometimes received the Church's blessing (Rattue 1995 : 75), a notion which is also connected with the sanctuary of the church or the churchyard.

Further examples of local holy wells and religious customs are found on the Isle of Skye in the Hebrides, where there was a well called Tober Ashig, dedicated to St Asaph. This well was frequently visited by strangers as well as locals because of its abilities to cure diseases. The pilgrims circled the well three times after consuming the water, and then an offering was made, deposited on top of the stone that covered the well (Walker 1883 : 186-187). According to Martin Martin, on the other hand, Loch-Siant Well was the most celebrated well in Skye:

It is much frequented by strangers, as well as inhabitants of the isle, who generally believe it to be a specific for several diseases - such as stitches, headaches, stone, consumptions, megrim. Several of the common people oblige themselves by a vow to come to this well and make the ordinary tour about it, called *dessil*, which is performed thus: They move thrice round the well, proceeding sunways from east to west, and so on. This is done after drinking of the water; and when one goes away from the well it is a never-failing custom to leave some small offering on the stone which covers the well (Martin 1695 : 197).

From the examples given above it may be deduced that the veneration of wells not only took place during pilgrimage, but were to a large extent cultic expression on a local level, containing elements of both superstition and religious rites approved by the Church. The veneration of holy wells and springs stagnated in certain areas after the Reformation. Although many medieval customs disappeared or were suppressed, the veneration of wells in many places continued undisturbed (Rattue 1995 : 103). It seems that the visitation of wells escaped, to some extent, the attention of the Church-reformers. While the veneration of local shrines, relics, images, and festivals were banned in written injunctions, holy wells were rarely mentioned in the same context. Throughout the British Isles some wells were banned and the ornamental coverings torn down and the water sources filled in, but in some places the veneration of holy wells was still being practised as late as the nineteenth century (Rattue 1995 : 104-105).

e) Concluding remarks.

In light of the questions discussed above concerning the origin of cults and pilgrimage, this thesis will in the following chapters further explore the cults of saints and relics and the pilgrimage process in the North Atlantic during the Middle Ages. In order to gain a general understanding of the pilgrimage process, the position of saints and relics needed to be discussed. In the following chapter the position of saints and relics within the northern Church is considered in order to identify traces of the pilgrimage process in the Norse area. The *translation*, *installation* and *celebration* of relics are traceable features in the creation of a Christian cult, and will be further explored in connection with local, regional, or national saints in the North Atlantic.

The origin of Christian pilgrimage is a difficult question to consider. Undoubtedly, it originated in late antiquity and in connection with the graves of Christian martyrs. The graves (the shrines) of the martyrs (the saints), were places of particular religious significance. These were places where heaven and earth were joined and the shrines with the physical remains of the saint acted as the mediator between Man and God. The importance of the shrine in this context was universal and not only associated with the graves of the Apostles and the famous martyrs of early Christianity. Portable relics or *brandea* were translated from one place to another, traded or stolen, and finally *installed* in a religious context; in a church, a chapel, or an altar, and relics were dipped in water of a well to which it was to be dedicated.

Besides focusing on the origin of cults and pilgrimage in order to get a better view of the situation in the Norse areas during the Middle Ages, this chapter has also sought to shed light on *cultus* and pilgrimage as acts of superstition. Although the act of pilgrimage became firmly established within and regulated by the medieval Church, a great number of small-scale cults and cult-centres arose and became objects of local veneration outside the regulated Church-life. These places were not only local chapels or shrines, but were monuments or places associated with the holy, places that were believed to convey something sacred. This belief – founded in myth rather than reality, was after the Reformation labelled ‘popish’ and superstitious. But superstitious rites connected with e.g. holy wells are important sources of information on religious customs and tradition before the Reformation. Although superstitious rites and customs associated with holy wells, trees, stones or features in the landscape may not have been approved by the Church, they do convey elements of the religious use of these monuments and their place in religious culture. The following chapters will give further examples of superstitious rites such as beliefs in the use of water and rites concerning particular places in the ritual landscape. These examples are meant to function as

supplementary information in order to paint a wider picture of cults of saints and the medieval pilgrimage process as a complex religious rite.

Notes to chapter 4.

¹ Cf. Ch. 2d : 23ff.

² Cf. Ch. 5b : 87.

³ Cf. Ch. 2b : 13.

⁴ Cf. Ch. 3b : 38.

⁵ Cf. Ch. 7f : 162ff

⁶ Cf. Ch. 2c : 17ff, and ch. 3d : 45ff.

⁷ Cf. Ch. 3c : 42ff.

⁸ Cf. Ch. 5c : 95.

Chapter 5

The North Atlantic

a) Introduction.

The coming of Christianity to Northern Europe brought the notion of pilgrimage and the cultic devotion of saints and relics. The islands in the North Atlantic were colonised by pagan Scandinavians in the decades around the ninth century, and Christianity was by this time spread throughout the western world and had reached as far north and west as Britain. By the time of the pagan Norse settlements in the North Atlantic, Bede had already written his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (c. 731 AD) and Adomnán his *De Locis Sanctis* (c. 679-685 AD). By the ninth century churches and monasteries had been built and the Christian faith established just next door to the pagan Scandinavians.

Although the conversion of the pagan societies in the North Atlantic may be historically dated to c. AD 1000 and associated with specific events or individuals, it is important to emphasise that the pagan Norse population was not unfamiliar with Christianity. Centuries before the conversion there had been regular contact between Scandinavia and the Continent and the East involving trade, raids, warfare and political alliances. From the sagas it is evident that the Scandinavians were not ignorant of Christian customs encountered during travels to Christian areas. We are told that pagan merchants and people employed by Christian men received the 'first blessing' or *prima signatio* in order to access privileged trade or to keep company with Christians. The *prima signatio* did not represent a personal religious conviction, but did rather represent an expression of cultural and religious enlightenment and understanding of the importance of adapting to different cultural and religious codes when travelling abroad, as expressed in Egils Saga:

King Athelstan was a good Christian and was called Athelstan the Faithful. The king bade Torolv and his brother to receive the *prima signatio*, as was the custom amongst merchants and other people serving Christian men at this time; for those who had received the first blessing could keep company with both Christians and heathens, but could otherwise have whatever faith that suited them best. Torolv and Egil did as the king bade and both received the first blessing. They had brought three-hundred men who took service with the king (Egils Saga : 50, translated.).

The missionary activity to Scandinavia began in the early ninth century, initiated by the archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen. Bishop Anskar made an attempt to convert the inhabitants of Birka in Sweden, but the outcome was unsuccessful (Cusack 1998 : 136). In c. 960 AD, at the time of the death of King Hákon Haraldson (the Good), an English bishop, Sigfrid, came to Norway with the intention to introduce Christianity to the people. This mission also seems to have failed, although Adam of Bremen claims that Sigfrid came to Norway as one of St Olaf's missionary bishops (Adam of Bremen ch. 57). However, the mission to Scandinavia is also linked with the English Church, perhaps more than the archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen as summed up by Jones:

The English share in the conversion of the Scandinavian lands was considerable, from Willibrord's mission in the first half of the eighth century to the time of Knut and Svein Estridsson in Denmark; under the two Olafs and Harald Hardradi in Norway; and so far as we can judge at various times in Sweden. England supplied missionaries, priests, saints, and martyrs, and influenced ecclesiastical terminology and epistolary usage (Jones 1973 : 378n).

The conversion of the Norse in the North Atlantic is a somewhat complex matter involving both political domination and cultural connections. The historical sources describing the process of conversion gives a colourful description of this process in the North Atlantic (Map 1 : XII). Historians agree in general that Norway was converted during the consolidation process particularly through the efforts of Olaf Tryggvason, Olaf Haraldson (St Olaf) and Hákon Haraldson (the foster-son of Athelstan of Wessex). The historical sources tell us that some of Olaf Haraldson's opponents were indeed Christian men, but the conversion of Norway is traditionally dated to the Battle of Stiklestad in 1030 when Olaf Haraldson was martyred, soon after to emerge as the primary patron saint of Norway.

Although the Norse population of the North Atlantic had its ancestral roots in Norway and settled the islands as well as parts of mainland Scotland, the Hebrides and Ireland, the process of conversion did not necessarily follow the same route. The Norse settlers arrived in areas already Christian, or where there had been early Christian monastic or eremitical settlements and churches. Iceland had until the arrival of the Norse been inhabited by a group of people that the Norwegians called *papar*. We are told by the author of *Íslendingabók*, Ari Thorgilsson, that Iceland was first discovered and settled by Irish monks or hermits (*papar*) who, on their departure, left behind objects associated with Christianity:

A7 *Dá váru hér menn kristnir, Þeir er Norðmenn kalla papa, en Þeir fóru síðan á braut, af því at Þeir vildu eigi vera hér við heiðna menn, ok létu eptir bækr írskar ok bjöllur ok bagla. Af því mátti skilja, at Þeir váru menn írskir* (Hermannsson 1966 : 60).

The amount of *papar* place-names in the Norse settlement-areas suggest, on the other hand, that the Norse may have been tolerant of the native Christian communities and that 'such tolerance might have allowed the persistence and transmission of Christian beliefs in some of the islands' (Crawford 1987 : 166). In Smyth's view Scandinavian historians have in the past had a tendency to treat the voyages of the *papar* and their settlements in the North Atlantic as a 'demographic cul-de-sac', interpreting the presence of the *papar* in the North Atlantic and the later Norse settlement as two different and independent incidents, which would indicate that Iceland was discovered twice within the same century (Smyth 1984 : 172). It is, however, more probable that Christianity was brought to the Norse in the Faeroes and Iceland by the *Vestmenn*, following the same sea-routes as the *papar*. The *Vestmenn* were the Vestrviking who had come from western Scandinavia, representing both Norsemen and Celts who migrated to Iceland from the Hiberno-Scottish area in the late ninth century (Smyth 1984 : 170-172).

Greenland was settled by Norse colonists lead by Eirik the Red in c. 985. Eirik was a heathen, but his wife, Thjodhild, had converted to Christianity and is said to have built the first church in Greenland at their settlement at Brattahlid, in the Eiriksford, in the Eastern Settlement (Map 5 : XVI). Their son, Leiv Eiriksson, was christened in the year 1000 in Nidaros, and was, apart from leading the expeditions to Vinland, perhaps part of Olaf Tryggvason's plan to bring Christianity to the Norse settlers in Greenland (Eiriks Saga ch. 5). The first bishop in Greenland, Eirik Upse, arrived in 1112 but became nine years later part of Leiv's expedition to Vinland. In 1124, Arnold was appointed the new bishop of Greenland. He arrived in 1126 and established the bishop seat at the great farm of Garðar in Einarsfjord, also in the Eastern Settlement (Kolsrud 1958 : 181).

Both archaeological and place-name evidence from Orkney and Shetland suggest the presence of early Christian settlements alongside the native Pictish population before the arrival of the Norse. The prime historical source describing the conversion of the Norse population in Orkney is the *Orkneyinga Saga*. The saga states that 'all Orkney embraced the faith' after Olaf Tryggvason's meeting with Earl Sigurd in c. 995. Olaf made a command that: 'I want you and all of your subjects to be baptized', and 'If you refuse, I'll have you killed on the spot, and I swear that I'll ravage every island with fire and steel' (Pálsson and Edwards 1978 : 37, Ch. 12). Such statements may give the text some dramatic effect, but as pointed out by Crawford the conversion of the Norse settlers in Orkney must have been closely linked with the earl and the *hirð's*¹ role and political domination in these islands; 'what they practised in the way of religious observances would be followed by the remaining Norse settlers' (Crawford 1987 : 80). In contrast to e.g. Iceland, where Christianity had been

introduced to the pagan Norse settlers through a Christian migrating Norse population, the conversion of the Norse in the Northern Isles and particularly Orkney was probably closely connected with the powerful dynasty of the Orkney earls and their strong links with the Norwegian kings. The link between the earldom and the native country remained strong throughout the tenth century (Crawford 1987 : 168) when Norway was still regarded pagan, and would to a certain extent have influenced the religious practices of the Norse settlers in Orkney and Shetland.

Archaeological evidence indicates that the early Norwegian settlers in the Northern and Western Isles, Scotland and the Isle of Man, England and Ireland were in general pagan in their religious expressions, evident in their treatment of the dead: Inhumation burials, sometimes in mounds, near the settlement, with no obvious preferred orientation and with the presence of grave-goods, usually indicating the gender and status of the deceased (Shetelig 1933 : 62-80). On the basis of the archaeological material the conversion of the Norse population is first and foremost evident in the shift in burial customs: from the presence of grave-goods and no preferred orientation of the grave in sometimes impressive artificially built mounds, to the absence of grave-goods and an east-west alignment of the body. In the last stages of the conversion process, graves were located within consecrated ground. Although Christianity demanded a change in burial practices, the change from visual structures like mounds to relatively modest and strict burial forms within a defined space did not necessarily mean a sudden change upon conversion. There are examples of Christian influence in pagan graves in Norse areas as well as in Norway dated as early as the late eighth or ninth century. The Kiloran Bay boat-grave in Colonsay was explored and excavated in the 1880s and found to contain two slabs in the stone setting incised with simple crosses (Graham-Campbell and Batey 1998 : 118-119, 122). Other examples of pagan graves with Christian influence are from Rogaland County in south-western Norway (Hernæs 1993 : 75-117, 1995 : 80-120): Two boat-graves, "Grønhaug" and Gunnarshaug / "Storhaug" in Karmøy kommune, dated to the late eighth century both contained wax or wax-candles. The wax found in Gunnarshaug was only a wax-disc but a cross had been carved onto its surface (Hernæs 1993 : 106).

The presence of Christian influence in Norse pagan burials may indicate some aspects of the conversion process, or at least the attitude of the relatives – those who made the burial arrangements, but as rigorously pointed out by Crawford:

Influence by Christianity and the rate and progress towards conversion is a very difficult thing indeed to monitor. The graves themselves are so disparate and difficult to date that only the very broadest generalizations about the progress of conversion of the Norse to Christianity can be drawn from them. The decline in the numbers of tenth-century pagan graves discovered can tell us only that pagan beliefs were changing, but not how, when and why the Christian religion was adopted (Crawford 1987 : 163).

The central theme in the conversion of the Norse population is the consolidation process of the kingdom of Norway as well as the cultural contact between the Norse settlers and the Christian native population. But the adaptation of Christianity in the North Atlantic should also be considered from a universal perspective. As Gro Steinsland has pointed out, the pre-Christian, or pagan, religion of the Viking Period may be classified as an *ethnic religion* associated with one group of people and a defined territory. The central and defining element of an ethnic religion is described as the sacred customs – or the cult, which is the platform of both the religious and the social community: a person born into the social community is therefore also born into the religious community. Within the defined territory of the Norse ethnic religion there is a whole spectre of gods and creatures of the underworld, however, the Norse belief in gods like Odin and Thor did not conflict with other peoples' gods. Although the Norse religion may have been tolerant of other gods, it may not have been so regarding the religious customs or rites. As Steinsland emphasises; the cult is a highly conservative element within the ethnic religious culture (Steinsland 1996 : 110-111).

In light of the conservatism regarding customs and rites of the pagan cult, the conversion of the Norse population would consequently have resulted in a cultural conflict with Christianity as a *universal religion of salvation*. In contrast to the Norse community-orientated ethnic religion, Christianity addresses the individual and his or her personal relationship with the one God, simultaneously rising above one ethnic group of people and their specific territory. Christianity may be seen as embracing the world and spreading its doctrine especially through mission, giving mankind the opportunity of salvation. As summed up by Steinsland, there is a fundamental difference between Christianity and the pre-Christian Norse religion in how the individual is addressed. Christianity focuses on the personal relationship with the universal God and a strong emphasis on mission, while the Norse religion emphasised the individual's relationship with the community and kin (Steinsland 1996 : 111).

This general introduction to the conversion of the Norse population and settlers does not immediately give us any direct access to the evidence concerning the development of the pilgrimage process or the cult of saints, relics and sacred places in the North Atlantic. There seems to have been a great leap from abandoning the old religion to adapting a new one,

particularly regarding the introduction of new customs: One aspect of the conversion process is the personal conviction felt and experienced by each individual, another aspect is the abandonment of traditions and customs that would have kept both community and family together for generations and replacing them with a set of new ones. Christianity may at first have been introduced to one level of society and from there adopted by other levels either by force or through political / religious persuasion. However, the collective conversion to Christianity, whether or not brought on by force, would gradually have introduced new trends and traditions into the community, as reflected in the archaeological evidence concerning grave-goods.

Although, as pointed out by Steinsland, the pre-Christian Norse religion may not have been tolerant of new traditions or rites, there are indeed indications that suggest similarities between the pagan-Norse religion and Christianity, particularly regarding burial customs and the notion of the grave as a special, sacred place and protected space. Although pre-Christian burial customs are not to be further discussed in this context, it is necessary to point out that special places associated with special rites and customs were part of the religious sphere present within a community before the arrival of Christianity. The most visible examples are the pre-Christian burial mounds that undoubtedly contained symbolism such as 'life beyond death' and the 'sanctuary of the grave' and 'the body within a protective physical structure protruding in a defined landscape'. An analogy between pagan and Christian symbolism and burial customs will not be further pursued in this context, but the importance of protected space, the grave and the treatment of the dead were indeed also central themes in the Christian customs introduced to and adopted by the Norse people in the North Atlantic.

b) The cult of saints in the North Atlantic.

To uncover traces of medieval pilgrimage in the North Atlantic it is necessary to take a closer look at the general background concerning cults of saints and relics after the Norse conversion to Christianity. As discussed in chapter 4, it would be too easy to dismiss the veneration of saints and relics as a convenient continuation of beliefs in the process of conversion from pagan to Christian societies (Brown 1981 : 5-6). However, as briefly mentioned above, the notion of certain places being perceived or treated as sacred would have been present in the pagan-Norse religion. When the Norse population came in contact with Christians and converted to Christianity, the veneration of holy women and men, relics and places were indeed part of the Christian message. Christian rites and customs were adopted and developed in concordance with the universal Church, although local variations occurred. Particularly the establishment of bishoprics in all parts of the Norse areas as well as the founding of the archdiocese of Nidaros in Norway in 1152/53 (Map 2 : XIII) would have become platforms for the development of cults of saints and pilgrimage. Until the establishment of the archdiocese of Nidaros, Norway and the North Atlantic had for fifty years been part of the Danish archdiocese of Lund, preceded by the archdiocese of Hamburg-Bremen. In 1152 cardinal-bishop Nicolas Brekespear came to establish a new archbishopric in Nidaros and bishop Jon Birgeson of Stavanger became the first archbishop. All Norse areas in the west: Iceland, Greenland the Faeroes, the Northern Isles, the Hebrides and the Isle of Man from now on belonged to this new church-province, of which ten bishoprics became part. In Norway there were the four bishoprics of Bergen (1066), Oslo (1073), Stavanger (1130) and Hamar (1152), the latter having been established on the occasion of the new archdiocese. In Iceland (Map 3 : XIV) there were the two bishoprics of Skálholt (1056) in the south and Hólar (1106) in the north (Gunnes 1996 : 50, 65, Helle 1974, 1991 : 48-50, Foote 1994 : XIII). The bishopric of Kirkjubøur in the Faeroes (Map 4 : XV) was probably founded in the eleventh century; Bernhard was the first bishop of the Faeroes, and Orm, fourth bishop, in Kirkjubøur in the 1130s (DN XVIIB : 287, Kolsrud 1958 : 181). In Greenland (Map 5 : XVI) the bishopric of Garðar was established in 1112 or 1113 (Map 5 : XVI). In 1121, the first bishop, Eirik Upse, went on an expedition to Vinland (DN XVIIB : 281). In the Northern Isles the first bishop's seat was, according to the *Orkneyinga Saga*, established by Earl Thorfinn at Birsay (Map 7 : XVIII) on the Mainland:

A8 *Hann sat jafnan í Byrgisheraði ok lét þar gera Kristkirkju, dýrlegt musteri; þar var fyrst settr byskupsstóll í Orkneyjum (OS XXXI : 80).*

The establishment of the first bishopric in the Northern Isles and the consecration of the first bishop, Thorolf, is thought to have taken place in c. 1050. The only other reference to the first bishop in Orkney is found in the *Liber Quartus*, the fourth book of Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesie pontificum*, in which the reference to *in civitatem Blasconam*, may be a Latin corruption of the name 'Birsay' (Storm 1880 : 295, Crawford 1983 : 103-104, note 13 : 116-117):

A9 *Ad easdem insulas Orchadas, quamvis prius ab Angelorum et Scothorum episcopis regerentur, noster primas iussu papae ordinavit Turolfum episcopum in civitatem Blasconam, qui omnium curas ageret* (Adamus Bremensis : 59).

In c. 1137 the bishop's seat in the Northern Isles (Map 7 : XVIII, Map 8 : XIX) (including all islands of Orkney and Shetland) moved from Birsay to Kirkwall when Earl Rognvald built the cathedral dedicated to St Magnus (Pálsson and Edwards 1978 : 130, OS : 68). The southernmost episcopal seat that became part of the archdiocese of Nidaros in 1152/53 was Peel (Map 6 : XVII), a tidal island off the coast of Man, being the centre of the bishopric of Man and the Isles (*Sodor - Sudreyar*) (Crawford 1993 : 27-29).

By the time of the founding of the archdiocese of Nidaros in 1152/53 the Church had been established in Norway and the North Atlantic for about 150 years. During this period, from the general conversion of the Norse population between 995 – 1000 AD until Brekespear's visit, the establishment and organisation of the Church had already come a long way. Churches were built and dedicated to the Holy Cross, to Christ and to biblical and historical saints. Such dedications may give some indication as to the cultic influences in the North Atlantic and the development of the cults of saints and relics in the Middle Ages.

As discussed in chapter 4, the spread of the cult of saints was a process involving the movement of relics from one place to another. The *translatio* of bones or objects associated with a saint meant that this saint became elevated within the society as one to whom people could pray and could venerate. The medieval Christian dedications in the North Atlantic would therefore give an indication of the cults venerated within the Church. As pointed out by Brown, the movement of relics – the *translatio* – either within one specific area or from one area to another, would have involved ceremonies celebrating the arrival, the installation and the annual celebration of the relics. The cults of saints in the North Atlantic would therefore have been expressed in the Church and in the society on different levels – not only in the dedication of church-buildings. If, as argued by Brown, the arrival and presence of relics in a society conveyed a sense of amnesty to the people and that the celebration of these relics after their installation in a church lead to stronger social interaction within the community (Brown

1981 : 93), one would expect to see this expressed in the historical and the archaeological, as well as in the folkloric material: a religious cult would have left traces of cultural expressions in documents, landscape, art and customs. The Christian cults of Norse saints venerated in the North Atlantic region would have been no exception. Using Brown's threefold model of the *translatio* of relics, the installation would have been the most visible symbol of *cultus*. The place of burial – the shrine, represented the nucleus of the cult. The place where heaven and earth met, where the role of the shrine (the saint) was to act as a mediator between God and Man. Relics possessed by a church would have been installed, kept and perhaps displayed to the public in the most sacred place within the church – in the choir, preferably near the altar. The shrine and the relics would also have been made available for the public on important days of celebration when the saint was to be venerated. The arrival of relics would consequently have been a great attraction and of great significance for the Christian community. It connected heaven and earth, and tied a closer bond between the Church and its people.

In Iceland the presence of saints' cults from the conversion to the fifteenth century has been explored by Margaret Cormack (1994). Her work is based on the lists of 'Holy Days of Obligation' in the Icelandic law codes: the *máldagar* which are the Icelandic church charters that contain information on church-property, often naming the patron saint of the individual church; hagiographic literature; baptismal names; annals and narrative sources. By using these groups of sources, Cormack has analysed medieval cults of saints in Iceland by categorising different forms of veneration, distinguishing three categories typical of medieval cultic veneration: feasts, the use of relics, and vows. These three forms of veneration would have been expressed through prayers and masses, fasts, offerings, and pilgrimage. By investigating the occurrences of these categories in the sources, Cormack presents indices of saints venerated in Iceland and churches and chapels dating before the fifteenth century including information on dedications, dates and forms of veneration.

Cormack's index of saints' cults in Iceland contains 78 entries. This great number of saints venerated and commemorated reflects the popularity and spread of cults to Iceland as well as those within the country. It includes both Icelandic and Norse saints, biblical persons and early Christian saints. Amongst the Icelandic saints whose cults became popular to varying degrees were those of Jón Ögmundarson († 1121), bishop of Hólar, Þorlákr Þórhallsson († 1193), bishop of Skálholt, and Guðmundr Arason († 1237), bishop of Hólar (Cormack 1994 : 74 – 165). Amongst these three the cult of St Þorlákr was by far the most influential and ranked fourth after the biblical saints Mary and Peter and the Norwegian

patron saint Olaf in terms of the number of church dedications and honours paid (Cormack 1994 : 165).

In Norway, despite the lack of similar research, the veneration of saints and cults would probably have been just as varied as in Iceland. The converted and united Norway produced three saints: The Norwegian king Olaf Haraldson († 1030) was killed at the battle of Stiklestad, the event that is traditionally accepted as the conversion of Norway. The cult of Olaf belongs within the tradition of secular cults, or royal cults, celebrating death and victory in the name of Christ and sanctification through deeds. Olaf soon emerged as the patron of Norway, and Christ Church in Nidaros became the centre of his cult (P3 : 258). A *vita* and a *miraculae* were written after his death, as only fit for a royal saint, and recorded in the twelfth century *Passio et miracula beati Olavi*, written by Archbishop Eystein, in Snorre Sturluson's *Heimskringla*, and in *Flateyrbók*. The sagas describe the life and martyrdom and subsequent miracles and pilgrimage process to his shrine. The body of the dead king was enshrined in Christ Church in Nidaros a year after his martyrdom, but his sanctity had been thoroughly established before this time (*Flateyrbok* 1862 : 375-394, Sturlusson (1965) : *Óláfs saga ins helga*).

A second and less prominent cult was that of Halvard Vebjørnson († 1043). The source of the cult of St Halvard is a legend probably dating from the thirteenth century or earlier. The legend is included in a manuscript from Utrecht, the Netherlands, and fractions are included in the *Breviarium Nidrosiense* but contains no information on posthumous miracles (Storm 1880 : XXXIV-V). His cult never spread beyond eastern Norway although he became the patron saint of the Norwegian priesthood (Bull 1931 : 83). The third and western cult of St Sunniva († 996) was centred at the monastery on the island of Selja, on the west coast of Norway. The legend of St Sunniva and Seljumennene is found in Latin breviaries and Norse sagas. Only the most well-known will be briefly referred to below.

A Latin legend has been included in the *Breviarium Nidrosiense* and consists of nine lessons that would have been read during Mass on the festival of St Sunniva on 8 July. A non-liturgical source, found in *Seljumanna þáttur* in *Saga Óláfs Tryggvasonar* is probably based on a Latin text by Oddr Snorrason Munk of Þingeyrar, written c. 1190. The Latin text by Oddr Snorrason Munk has also survived in other late fourteenth century manuscripts, one of which is known as *Flateyrbók* (*Flateyrbok* 1860, Rekdal 1997 : 102-106, Rindal 1997 : 267-268). *Flateyrbók* states that the veneration of St Sunniva began soon after the discovery of her relics on the island of Selja. From about 1070 Selja was the first Bishop's Seat in western Norway, and in the early 1100s a Benedictine monastery was established on the island with an abbey dedicated to the early English saint, Alban. On 7 September 1170 the relics of St

Sunniva were translated to Bergen and the cult continued there (*Flateyrbok* 1860 : 242-246, Johnsen 1968 : 40ff, Hommedal 1997a : 43). Although the cult of St Sunniva was based in western Norway, there is some indication that the saint was venerated in Denmark and further west, in Iceland and in Shetland. In Iceland 8 June was a Holy Day of Obligation of the *Sanctorum in Selio* (Cormack 1994 : 154), a document from c. 1327 suggest that the saint was also venerated in Shetland. The document is a letter written by Bishop Audfinn of Bergen who requested assistance from Bishop William of Orkney² to collect the Sunniva-meal paid by the inhabitants of Shetland “since ancient times” to the shrine of St Sunniva in Bergen:

A10 *Cum coloni Hialtandie se voto, longis retroactis temporibus, firmiter adstrinxerunt, pro fertilitate terre sue, ut singuli singulis annis certam mensuram farine, que Sunnifumiol in vulgari apellatur, ad scrinium beate Sunnive Bergis offerent* (DN VII : 134, no. 120).

On the small island of Balta, Unst, Shetland, there is a possible chapel-site which, according to tradition was dedicated to St Sunniva. There are no certain structures left of the chapel and no trace of an ecclesiastical enclosure, only a dark rectangular stoney patch of ground on the shore (Saxby 1932 : 18, Lowe 1988 : 180-182). The dedication of the site, however, does further indicate that the cult of St Sunniva was present in Shetland.

The discrepancy in research concerning the cult of saints, as briefly referred to above, is further reflected in the information available on the cult of saints in the Faeroes. It is reasonable to assume that the Faeroes had, like Iceland, a number of saints to whom honours were paid and venerated, and at Kirkjubøur the uncompleted cathedral (P12 : 266) next to St Olaf's Church was dedicated to the earl of Orkney, St Magnus³. Bishop Erlend (1269-1308) gained some sort of saintly status for his kind and pious character, although his popularity may have been disputed as one legend claims that he was murdered after imposing heavy taxes in order to complete the cathedral at Kirkjubøur. The translation of Erlend's relics took place as late as c. 1420, but the canonisation failed, and may rather be understood as a very late attempt to establish a patron saint for the Faeroes (Bruun 1929 : 50-54, Stove and Jacobsen 1944 : 42)

The Norse colonies in Greenland were converted to Christianity around the year 1000. Leiv Eiriksson's mother, Thjodhild, was a Christian and built a church near their farm at Brattahlid in Eiriksford (Eiriks Saga ch. 5), but by the end of the sixteenth century the Norse population had disappeared. Although bishops were continuously appointed to Greenland throughout the fifteenth century, most of them never visited Greenland and were serving as supplementary bishops elsewhere in Scandinavia, Germany and Italy (Kolsrud 1958 : 190). Because of the limited documentary evidence for Church life and affairs in medieval Norse

Greenland, little is known of Christian traditions or the cult and veneration of saints. Archaeological investigations and excavations have revealed the foundations of sixteen churches, twelve churches in the East Settlement including two monasteries, and four churches in the West Settlement (Roussell 1941 : 7). Most of these churches would have had associated dedications like the cathedral at Garðar, dedicated to St Nicolas (Brøgger and Bolstad 1945 : 80). It is likely that any dedication or cultic veneration in the Norse settlements would have received influences from the settlers' homelands, first and foremost Iceland and Norway. In light of the absent bishops in Greenland from c. 1400, as well as the missing Norse population, the *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* contains an interesting letter from the Vatican dated 21 November 1492. The letter states that Pope Alexander VI granted Bishop Mathias of Garðar's application for the translation of relics from Rome, or the surrounding area, to Greenland (DN XVII : 646, no.761). The fact that there would not have been any people in Greenland to take part in and witness the installation and celebration of the newly acquired relics makes the pope's letter intriguing.

In Orkney and Shetland the martyrdom and later sainthood of Earl Magnus Erlendson (in c. 1116) is thoroughly established in the saga-tradition in the *Vita Magnus*, which is included in the *Orkneyinga Saga*. The pinnacle of his cult was the St Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall, which is a magnificent representation of the establishment of a cult by the secular and the ecclesiastical authorities^{4a}. The cult of St Magnus was, however, at first tainted by a controversy involving both bishop and earl which, according to the *Orkneyinga Saga*, took about twenty years to settle. Because the martyrdom of St Magnus was the outcome of a dispute concerning the division of Orkney and Shetland, miracles and veneration of the dead earl were suppressed and discouraged. After a longer period of peace and unity in the earldom, the cult of St Magnus was gradually encouraged and used by the new earl and the Church as a political factor to emerge as a symbol of power in the Northern Isles^{4b}.

In contrast to the royal cult of St Olaf in Norway, which establishment was immediately encouraged by both Church and King in the conversion process, the cult of St Magnus became established over a century after the conversion to Christianity. It is significant that Norway was first to produce a native patron saint and cult although the conversion process may have taken longer there than in any other Norse colony. Iceland did not get an influential native saint until the end of the twelfth century with the death of bishop Þorlákr in 1193, but the Icelandic saints never outranked St Olaf in popularity (Foote 1994 : XV). As mentioned above, the uncompleted cathedral at the bishop seat of Kirkjubøur in the Faeroes was dedicated to St Magnus, the patron saint of the Northern Isles. Disregarding the late and insignificant cult of Erlend, both the Faeroes and Greenland seem to have been

unable to establish native cults of some fame and rank like the cults of SS Olaf, Magnus and Þorlákr.

The success of these three cults may have been dependent on capable and willing background strategies, first and foremost by the Church and the bishoprics, to nurture the development of the cults and the establishment of shrines in order to sustain cultic popularity with the public. It may therefore be argued that Norway, Iceland and the Northern Isles had the opportunity and resources to sustain cults of national or regional proportions. Within a broader context, the establishment of national (regional) and royal saints may have been an expression of royal power as well as the presence and continuity of the Universal Church within the North Atlantic.

As pointed out by Peter Brown, the rise of the cult of saints in western Europe is easily traceable: The power contained in the shrines and the relics merged with the Christian leadership (Brown 1981 : 10) and the spread of the cult of saints arrived in the North Atlantic in the wake of the Christian conversion. It was an established part of Christian worship which found continuance in the north-western European churches, chapels and monasteries as well as in the royal houses and every-day life of women and men. The shrines' and the relics' proximity to the holy was the prime concern in the theft of and trade in relics as well as the establishment of shrines and cults of saints. This notion would have been the main consideration in the establishment of the three Norse cults of SS Olaf, Magnus and Þorlákr. The proximity to the holy and the greatness and popularity of both shrine and *cultus* were closely connected with secular and ecclesiastical power. The notion of 'improper worship'⁵ such as *cultus indebitus* and *cultus superfluous* would, on the other hand, have been present in the North Atlantic during the Middle Ages. There are several examples of holy places, shrines, relics and wells associated with religious traditions which would, to varying degrees, have been expressions of *cultus superfluous* and therefore not approved by the Church. However, the shrines and cults associated with secular and ecclesiastical power recorded in the saga-tradition are generally early pilgrimage centres, established in the wake of the conversion process and the national or regional development of the Church. In contrast, there are examples of pilgrimage and cultic veneration on a more local scale the origins of which are most certainly of a later date. However, both categories of pilgrimage will be discussed in the following as examples of cultic veneration and traditions of pilgrimage and how these may have been expressions of Christian ritual and holy places during the Middle Ages.

c) Traditions of pilgrimage around the North Atlantic.

The conversion process in the North Atlantic would have brought with it the notion of places and people considered to be holy or sacred. Places and people of special significance within a biblical or Christian context, and the corporal remains and associated objects of saints – the relics, were important religious elements in the establishment of the new faith. Although Christian veneration of holy people, sacred places and monuments were only some aspects of religious life during the Middle Ages, they were none the less important. Customs and traditions were therefore central within the sacred sphere of society. This sacred sphere would have been the religious community whose nucleus was the local church. On the other hand, the sacred sphere would also have been the sanctuary of the home – the private sphere of the buildings and the outer boundaries of the farm or community. As discussed in chapter 3, a pilgrimage involved the *movement* of the individual pilgrim from one designated place to another, from the sanctuary of the home to the sanctuary of the shrine, only interrupted by necessary stops and pauses. In the North Atlantic there are several examples of pilgrimages that were approved by the Church as well as being expressions of *cultus superfluus*. These also contained the elements of the progress involving movement from one recognised place to another. Many of the examples are local in character and specific routes are largely impossible to trace. The examples of places of pilgrimage will, however, be presented in order to investigate the wider context of the pilgrimage process to the shrine of St Magnus in Orkney. The information concerning pilgrimage, customs and traditions in the examples below, are in some cases sources that would otherwise be considered obscure. The information on pilgrimage was recorded after the Reformation and may therefore not be considered as *evidence* of pilgrimage in the Middle Ages. It is rather seen as traces of past traditions of pilgrimage. The informants of this ethnological material were most likely local and to some degree familiar with the history and traditions of these past places of pilgrimage. The information is therefore, in the present context, considered to provide sources of local knowledge concerning earlier cultic veneration. It is also necessary to point out that pilgrimage traditions may be of both earlier and later dates, from the High Middle Ages to post-Reformation times. The examples used below are therefore not a complete assembly of pilgrimage traditions for the North Atlantic region, but only selected examples from Norway and the Northern Isles. These are presented in order to place the pilgrimage and cult of St Magnus within a common context.

Pilgrimage in Norway.

In Norway there are several places of pilgrimage of both earlier and later medieval origin amongst which the island of Selja near Stadt in Sogn og Fjordane County and the perspiring crucifix in Røldal, Hordaland County, are the most famous. The perspiring crucifix in the medieval stave-church in Røldal, was a place of pilgrimage until 1850, over three hundred years after the Reformation. The earliest known record of the parish of Røldal is a document from 1462 which does not mention the pilgrimage process (DN VIII : 401, no. 375), but the church was probably built no later than the thirteenth century. The 85 cm. long crucifix made of oak is still hanging above the entrance to the choir, and pilgrimage to the church was particularly popular on the Mass of St John, traditionally celebrated around 6th of July. The crucifix perspired during this festival and the sweat was believed to cure illnesses (Dalen and Dalen 1979 : 66, 74-77).

According to Alf Tore Hommedal, identification of the island of Selja as a centre of pilgrimage in the Middle Ages, is archaeologically and historically difficult, although housing the shrine of St Sunniva until 1170 (see map 2 and ill. 7, p. 97). The cults of St Sunniva and the Seljumenn were included in the church calendar and celebrated locally in some areas of Norway and the Nordic areas, but any written sources connecting the cult of St Sunniva alone to a pilgrimage process, are pointing towards Bergen further south, with the transfer of the bishop's seat in c. 1170 (Hommedal 1997b : 183). In view of the archaeological material that may identify the island as a centre of pilgrimage, only the structural layout of the monastery gives an indication of pilgrimage activity on the site. Archaeological excavations reveal a possible threefold division of the monastery as a shrine; the cave, the church and the terrace. The terrace may have served a liturgical function for pilgrims gathering to enter the church and the cave (the cave is directly associated with the legend of St Sunniva), as the church itself must have been too small to hold any great numbers of pilgrims, particularly during the festivals. The church would have housed the reliquaries, and the pilgrims could enter and exit the church in the northern and southern sides of the nave, touching the shrine as they passed by the altar (Hommedal 1997a : 52). There is, however, no evidence for a particular pilgrim route or routes leading to Selja, which is explained by the coastal location of the site. Selja is centrally situated on the main travel-route along the west coast of Norway, and the pilgrims did probably use the same routes and the same stopping-places as other travellers (Hommedal 1997b : 191). There is, however, a stone-flagged path that runs between the main harbour at Bø on the east of the island, and the monastery on the west side. This path is thought to be very old (Djupedal 1966 : 67, 1982 : 33, 39, Djupedal 1996 : 144), and may be considered as a 'pilgrims' path'. The final part of the journey between harbour and sanctuary.

The most famous Norwegian shrine was, however, Christ Church in Trondheim which housed the relics of the patron saint Olaf, which pilgrims came to venerate throughout the Middle Ages (see map 2 and ill. 8, p. 97). In the second half of the eleventh century (c. 1075-80), Adam of Bremen described the Nordic islands in his *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesia pontificum* chapter four: *Descriptio insularum Aquilonis*, the best route to the shrine of St Olaf in Trondheim:

A11 *Metropolis civitas Nortmannorum est Trondemnis, quae nunc decorata ecclesiis magna populorum frequentia celebratur. In qua iacet corpus beatissimi Olaph regis et martyris. Ad cuius tumbam usque in hodiernum diem maxima Dominus operatur sanitatum miracula, ita ut a longinquis illic regionibus confluant hii, qui se meritis sancti non desperant [posse] iuvari. Est vero iter eiusmodi, ubi ab Alaburg vel Wendila Danorum ingredientibus naviam per diem mare transeat ad Wig, civitatem Nortmannorum. Inde vela torquentur in laevum circa littora Norvegiae, V^o die prevenitur ad ipsam civitatem, quae Trondemnis dicitur. Potest autem iri et alia via, quae ducit a Sconia Danorum terrestri itinere usque ad Trondempnem ; sed haec [est] tardior in montanis, et quoniam plena est periculo, declinatur a viatoribus (Adamus Bremensis : 55, 57).*

The most obvious and easiest route from the south to Nidaros would have been the sea route as referred to by Adam of Bremen. This was the fastest route and commonly used in trade and the transportation of goods. The coast is punctuated by good harbours, *viks* and fjords which would have provided safety and shelter for seafaring pilgrims. Particularly the west coast with the fjords would have provided shelter as well as rest and sanctuary at the twelfth century cathedral dedicated to St Swithun in Stavanger (P4 : 259). On 17 August 1275 Archbishop John of Nidaros granted 40 days of indulgences for those who came to the cathedral to seek repentance on the festivals of St Swithun and St Vincent, or who otherwise offered help to the newly out-burnt cathedral (DN III : 13, no. 12). Fifteen years later, on 7 October 1290, Pope Nicolas IV granted 1 year and 40 days of indulgences to those who sought repentance at the cathedral of St Swithun on certain days (DN VI : 51, no. 56). Although these two documents do not represent historical and positive evidence for pilgrimage to the cathedral in Stavanger, the seeking of repentance at a bishop's seat and shrine of this rank implies movement to, and veneration in, a specific place at certain times. The thirteenth century monastery at Utstein near Mosterøy, dedicated to St Lawrence, as well as the thirteenth century royal church at Avaldsnes on Karmøy, dedicated to St Olaf, which both previously had been amongst the royal residences of Harald Hårfagre (Harald Hårfagres Saga : 38), would have been well known places for rest and sanctuary; Moster, in the south of Hordaland County, where Olaf Tryggvason celebrated Mass and built a church; the medieval town of Bergen with the eleventh century Episcopal church founded by Olaf Kyrre and dedicated to Christ, as well as

the monasteries (e.g. Munkeliv, Lyse and Nonneseter) would have been important places along the route (Helle 1974 : 238). Similar to the documents concerning indulgences granted to the cathedral in Stavanger there is an entry in the *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* concerning a chapel that the king of Norway was having built in Bergen, dedicated to the Holy Cross: On 1 February 1292, Pope Nicolas IV granted 1 year and 40 days of indulgences to this chapel that housed a piece of the Christ's crown of thorns and other "venerable relics" (DN XVII : 17, no. 17). The eleventh century monastery on the island of Selja, the centre of the cult of St Sunniva and the church dedicated to St Alban would also have been an important and prominent stopping-place, both as an ecclesiastical centre and as a safe-haven from the sometimes violent sea of Stadt, before entering the archipelago on the final stage towards Nidaros.

Across land, the pilgrimage route to Nidaros from the south went mainly from Viken, probably the Oslofjord area, due north to Lake Mjøsa then crossing the mountain range of Dovre and through the inland valleys to Nidaros. Although Adam of Bremen is reluctant to recommend this route, the construction and keeping of the road-system was under strict law-enforcement (GL 90 : 87, *Vm þioðgotu*). Pilgrims would not have been a rare sight along the inland route-system, as there are several medieval monuments like crosses as well as place-names indicating pilgrimage (Smedstad 1997 : 191-198). A late fourteenth century document states that there had been a great cross placed near Eidsskog Church (Hedmark County), dedicated to St Olaf. Bishop Eystein of Oslo announced on 18 February in 1394 that the cross should be kept in repair and that a small prayer-house for pilgrims should be built next to it (DN I : 396, no. 545).

The coastal-route to the shrine of St Olaf in Nidaros was probably the safest and most common route of travel between north and south. The physical movement of pilgrims, on the other hand, have left traces imprinted on the landscape of the inland route to Nidaros. The pilgrimage process to the shrine of St Olaf began soon after his death in AD 1030, reinforced by the many reports of miracles as well as the first translation and canonisation on 3 August 1031. This first translation was arranged by Bishop Grimkjell, Olaf's hirð-bishop. The shrine was installed on the high-altar of the Church of St Clement in Nidaros. The relics were later translated on several occasions until they were finally installed in King Olaf Kyrre's Christ Church in c. 1100 (Blom 1996 : 72-73). From the martyrdom until the final translation, the veneration of Olaf Haraldsson developed into a great cult confirmed by miracles and subsequently through hagiography. The cult was further established through a multitude of folk-legends which first and foremost celebrated the deeds of Olaf, the king, in life, and not as a saint in death. Within the tradition of so-called Olaf-legends certain themes were particularly emphasised and glorified: Olaf's fight against the superior force (the Danish

king), Olaf's fight against the pagan gods – often metaphorically represented by the evil troll of Norwegian folklore, and Olaf as a founder of churches (Aukrust 1997 : 235, 244-250)⁶. The popularity of the cult of St Olaf spread primarily through his allies from the battle of Stiklestad against King Cnut of Denmark. Secondly, the Church was eager to promote his sanctity, particularly from 1152 onwards, with the establishment of the Archbishop's Seat in Nidaros and Christ Church at its centre (Blom 1996 : 73). Throughout the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, the cult of St Olaf spread south and west, particularly to the Norse settlements in England, Scotland, the Western and Northern Isles. His cult was particularly celebrated in these areas through dedications of churches and monasteries, but also in ecclesiastical iconography, in martyrologies and calendars, in poetry and folklore (Dickins 1945 : 57-80, Cant 1975 : 47-50) In Norway, churches and monasteries were similarly dedicated to St Olaf throughout the country, and the festivals of St Olaf were celebrated in the Church, with a particular focus on his martyrdom, 29 July (*Ordo Nidrosiensis*).

The hagiography and sagas describing St Olaf's life and martyrdom, the reports of miracles, the numerous Olaf-legends, and the acknowledgement by both Church and State of his authenticity and sanctity, led to an influx of pilgrims to Nidaros on a large scale which, to some degree, left an imprint of movement through the landscape, first and foremost identified by the inland routes in Norway. The Old Laws of Norway (c. eleventh century) stipulate different categories of roads and their maintenance (GL 1994 : 87, no. 90), indicating that there were several types of roads; short roads leading from settlement to settlement, to the greater road crossing the country. Although there are no documents describing particular pilgrimage routes to Nidaros, the roads used by pilgrims were part of the already established route-system of the Middle Ages. In a royal document from 1297, King Eirik Magnusson declared that everyone making a pilgrimage to the shrine of St Olaf in Nidaros, whether native or foreign, enjoyed full royal protection (DN I : 79, no. 87). The document implies that pilgrims travelling to Nidaros were frequently attacked on the road. About thirty years later, King Magnus Eiriksson issued an order concerning the protection of pilgrims travelling through the inland areas of Norway to Nidaros (DN II : 140-141, no. 164). These two documents confirm Adam of Bremen's information concerning the inland routes to Nidaros, about two hundred years earlier.

In the mountain-pass of Skurdalsporten on the Swedish-Norwegian border, between Jämtland (formerly Norwegian) and Verdalen, one of the main arteries from Sweden to Nidaros, crosses have been carved onto the face of the pass. Although the crosses cannot be dated, they reflect the Christian symbolism of the *holy*, perhaps as a way-marker or a space of religious sanctuary in a border-area (Smedstad 1996 : 27-28). The great cross near Eidsskog Church⁷,

was directly linked with St Olaf and the pilgrimage process to Nidaros. The bishop of Oslo's announcement in 1394 that a guest-house for pilgrims should be built near the cross (DN I : 396, no. 545) further underlines the fact that particular buildings and monuments in specific places were directly associated with the pilgrimage process to Nidaros. Sagas and royal documents also confirm that places called ON *sáluhús* and *veizluhallir* (guest-house) for travellers and pilgrims were needed and indeed built along the main inland routes. The place-name, Salhus, is found several places in Norway such as in Åsane near Bergen. The name probably comes from the word *sáluhús*, meaning inn or house for travellers (Sandnes and Stemshaug 1976 : 267). Paragraph 100 of the Law of the Gulating stipulate that travellers may only stay for the maximum of three days in the guest-houses (GL 1994 : 91, no. 100). King Eystein Magnusson (1103-1123) told his brother, King Sigurd⁸, that he had repaired and facilitated a *sáluhús* in the Mountains of Dovre where there was a road from Trondheim (Nidaros) (*Morkinskinna* 2001 : 275, ch. 71). This house is believed to have been located at Hjerkin north in Oppland County. The excavation of the foundations of a building at Vesle-Hjerkin (Little-Hjerkin) uncovered an unusual high-frequent activity and differentiated usage of the building, much more than expected at a location in the high mountains. The excavation also revealed that it was a relatively large building measuring 20 x 8 metres, and it was dated to the eleventh century. These foundations at Hjerkin may have been the remnants of King Eystein's *sáluhús* (Lie 1996 : 69, Bø 1960 : 702). In chapter 333 of the Saga of Hákon Hákonsson⁹, where the posthumous reputation of the king is described¹⁰, it is told that he built guest-houses at Huseby in Skaun and at Ringsaker (Hedmark County), at three farms in Gudbrandsdalen south of Dovre; at Vedem in Øyer, at Steig in Sør-Fron, and at Bredi in Sel (Oppland County) (*Håkon Hákonssons Saga* ch. 333 : 344). A royal document copied in 1358 concerns the upkeep of a *sáluhús* at Fillefjell in the western part of Oppland County. The house is called *Margrethe stofue*, and it is further described as a *salestofue* (DN XI : 47, no. 47) which may have another meaning than just being an inn: *sale* may come from ON *sálu*, soul, and *stofue* from ON *stófa*, small house/cottage, i.e. a house for the soul. The location of this *salestofue* west of the route between Oslo and Nidaros, indicates that the building was located on a western route leading north-east to Nidaros. The other examples from the sagas, above, are all located on, or near, the main route to Nidaros.

The pilgrimage to Nidaros led to the prime royal shrine of the Middle Ages in the North Atlantic. Olaf Haraldsson was a king; he died as a martyr, and he emerged as a saint, a situation which could only lead to royal sanctity. His death may be interpreted as a unique opportunity for his supporters in the opposition against the Danish king. The pilgrimage process to the shrine was part of this political situation, promoting royal sanctity. Within the

first year, Olaf had been translated and his shrine installed in the church and he had consequently been elevated to and included in the prominent ranks of *the Holy*. His shrine was finally installed on the high-altar of Christ Church, the greatest church of the Norwegian kingdom and later the seat of the Archbishop of Nidaros. A strong focus on the royal cult and an influx of pilgrims to Nidaros seeking cures and miracles, and receiving penance, confirmed the supremacy of both king and Church. The routes to Nidaros consequently received an extended function: The religious rite of the pilgrimage process was perceived as connecting *landscape and cult*¹¹.



*Ill. 7. The island of Selja:
the monastery, the terrasse and the sanctuary/the cave (in sequence), Norway.*



Ill. 8. The west front of Christ Church in Nidaros, Trondheim, Norway.

Pilgrimage in the Northern Isles.

In the Northern Isles, the medieval cult of St Magnus Erlendson was from the twelfth century until the Reformation the primary regional pilgrimage, centred at the shrine housed in the cathedral in Kirkwall, Orkney, and dedicated to that saint. The pilgrimage to the shrine of St Magnus and the cultic expressions will be discussed in the following chapter and will therefore not be considered here. However, the examples of sites associated with local pilgrimage activity as well as the pilgrimage to the shrine of St Magnus may be paralleled to the national pilgrimage to St Olaf's shrine in Nidaros¹².

In Orkney and Shetland there are a number of local pilgrimage sites recorded by post-Reformation writers. The customs and traditions concerning these places of pilgrimage will in the following be presented. Although the information may not serve as direct evidence because of the late records, the information is still traditionally associated with Catholic customs and may therefore have an indirect value as sources of cultic veneration of monuments and places of religious importance.

In *Papey* (Papa Westray (Map 7 : XVIII)), which is the north-westernmost island of Orkney, the medieval ruined chapel dedicated to St Tredwell has an associated pilgrimage tradition as well as traditions that may be labelled *cultus superfluus*. According to Brand, St Tredwell's Chapel was the most famous place of pilgrimage in Orkney which the people...

...have such a Veneration for, that they will come from other Isles in considerable numbers to it, some of us having occasion to be on that Isle, we saw this Chappel, situated on a small low Rock, within a Loch commonly called *St. Tredwels Loch*, to which we passed by stepping-stones, before this Chappel door there was a heap of small stones, into which the Superstitious People when they come, do cast a small stone or two for their offering, and some will cast in Money; the Chappel hath been but little, and is now Ruinous, only some of the Walls are standing, which the People are so far from suffering to be demolished, that they labour to keep them up, and tho the Properitour of the ground hath some way enclosed it, yet this proves not effectual to prevent the frequenting thereof (Brand (1701) 1883 : 87).

Barry was also informed of the wonders of St Tredwell's Chapel but he was also aware that these wonders were no longer believed to perform, however:

To add to the beauty of this charming island, a loch of fresh water ornaments its south-east corner, in which there is an enchanting isle, little larger than is sufficient to serve for the foundation of a Pict's-house, on which was afterwards reared the once noble chapel of St Tredwall (Barry 1867 : 62).



Ill. 9. St Tredwell's Chapel and Loch (Papey, Orkney).

Jo. Ben, although writing at a much earlier date than Brand and Barry, was not informed of any form of pilgrimage or cultic veneration associated with this site:

A12 *Papa Westray, quasi dicas subjecta est priori insulæ, fertilis ut aliæ insulæ, lacus est in hujus insula meditullio et in lacu insula in qua capella parvula est (Jo. Ben 1529 : 450).*

Dryden informs that the female saint to which the chapel is dedicated, Triduana, had her festival on 8 October, according to the Roman Calendar. The chapel (P10 : 264) is a plain parallelogram approximately 20 by 13 feet, and has a narrow doorway near the west end on the south side of the building (Dryden 1896 : 107). The chapel was cleared or excavated in the early 1880s by Mr. W. Traill, who found coins from the period from Charles II to George III as well as two French and one Dutch coin. Such a find would indicate that there was indeed, as Brand mentioned, offerings being deposited within the chapel. A cross-slab has also been seen in the loch close to the islet but attempts to recover it failed (Lamb 1983 : 19).

The cult of St Tredwell in Orkney is particularly associated with the curing of eye-decease. Tredwell has been identified as St Triduana who is said to have died at Restalrig in Edinburgh, where a chapel was built in her honour and also became a place of pilgrimage for people suffering from eye-problems (RCAHMS Orkney, vol. II, 1946 : 180, no. 521, note 3). The name, Tredwell, is thought to have derived from the word *Trollhæna*, probably a Norse name for a female *troll*. Some chapel-dedications to St Tredwell are found in Scotland: in Kintradwell in Sutherland and at Croit-Trolla in Caithness (Marwick 1925 : 35). In the *Orkneyinga Saga* there is a passage stating that Bishop John in Caithness was blinded by Earl Harald Maddadson of Orkney. The bishop prayed to the 'holy virgin St Tredwell' and was later taken to where she rested and was healed in that place (Pálsson and Edwards 1978, ch. 111 : 222). The shrine to which Bishop John was brought may have been Croit-Trolla in Caithness.

The *Brough of Deerness* on Mainland Orkney (Map 7 : XVIII, P11 : 265) was another famous place of pilgrimage as well as being a considerable settlement site. In contrast to other pilgrimage sites in Orkney, the chapel on the Brough is the only one that has been archaeologically excavated. The Brough is situated on the coast south of the Mull Head at Deerness, and may today only be accessed from a narrow path leading to the platform of the Brough from the sea-shore. However, it has been suggested that the settlement would have been reached by a land-bridge from a neck of land now eroded away (RCAHMS Orkney, vol. II, 1946, no. 621 and Morris and Emery 1986 : 309). The Brough was surveyed by Dryden in 1866 and again in 1930 by the RCAHMS. The surveys have produced plans of the site including buildings and the enclosed chapel. During the period 1975-77 an excavation of the chapel was carried out, and in 1977 the entire Brough was surveyed by Morris et al..

The Royal Commission identified two groups of buildings; a cluster of twenty-one small circular huts and a well south of the chapel as well as nineteen rectangular 'domestic buildings' west, east and north of the chapel. The circular huts were interpreted as 'vestiges of a primary occupation older than the chapel' and the rectangular domestic buildings as probably 'as contemporary with and later than the chapel' (RCAHMS Orkney, vol. II, 1946, no. 621). Morris et al.'s survey in 1977 did, on the other hand reveal at least thirty rectangular buildings W, N, and E of the chapel (Morris et al. 1986 : 312). The Brough has, however, been subject to a series of interpretations, overall favouring the site as an ecclesiastical settlement of the Celtic tradition (Morris et al. 1986 : 351-352), but Low, writing in 1774, although aware of the site's pilgrimage association, described it as a 'rock fort' (Low 1879 : 56). The archaeological excavation in the mid 70s did, however, place the stone chapel within

the Norse period and it was probably not built before the eleventh century, although preceded by a timber-built chapel (Morris et al. 1986 : 357-358).

Unfortunately, the chapel's dedication is unknown but finds from the excavation seem to confirm the local tradition of customs associated with the site¹³. Jo. Ben provided the most descriptive narrative of pilgrimages to the Brough:

- A13 *Dierness quasi (the Ness of Diers) hæc parochia olim erat næmorosa; et multæ feræ hic fuere; tandem diluviis venientibus, arbores, vulsis radicibus, submersi sunt. In aquilonari parte istius parochiæ in mari est nativum Saxum ubi homines manibus et genibus quam difficillime ascendunt ad cacumen; illic est sacellum quod nominatur (the Bairns of Burgh). Confluunt huc diversis insulis, homines, juvenes, pueri, senes, servi, innumerabiles, venti vero, nudis pedibus, ut prius dixi, orantes ascendunt ubi nullus preterquam unus ad sacellum uno tempore venire potest: Illic est fons purus et nitidissimus; quod quidem mirabile est: Tunc homines, genibus flexis, manibusque conjunctis, diffidentes Deum esse, orant (the Bairns of Burgh) multis incantationibus, projicientes lapides et aquam post tergora, et circa sacellum bis terve gradientes, finita oratione domum redeunt affirmantes se vota habuisse. Non pure hic colunt Deum (Jo. Ben 1529 : 452).*

Men of all ages and classes and from different islands climbed bare-feet and on hands and knees up the steep and narrow path onto the Brough. When reaching the chapel the pilgrims would proceed with bent knees and folded hands three times around the building, throwing water and stones behind their backs. The site was described by Jo. Ben as *the Bairns of Burgh* which probably was a misspelling of ON *bæn-hus*, meaning prayer-house, i.e. the chapel, and according to Marwick the pilgrimage continued until the late eighteenth century (Marwick 1951 : 112).

Ill. 10.
*Pilgrimage
chapel
on the
Brough of
Deerness
(Orkney).*



In 1974, when the turf was being removed from the foundations of the chapel, 16 copper coins from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were discovered. During the excavation, a further 16 coins were found inside the chapel, of which 15 coins were dated to the seventeenth century. The majority of the coins had only been moderately or slightly worn by circulation, and the span of two centuries led to the conclusion that the coins had been deposited individually. The condition of the coins also suggested that these had been specially selected 'For a normal feature of surviving 17th century copper coins is considerable or indeed excessive wear, while the later state of coins was even worse' (Stevenson 1986 : 343). The tradition recorded by Jo. Ben in 1529 only refers to stones and water being thrown over the backs of the pilgrims. It is also significant that none of the coins recovered from the chapel pre-dated 1640. This may be due to earlier clearances of the site, or that the deposition of coins, perhaps as a thank-offering or as reinforcement of prayer, is a later tradition (Stevenson 1986 : 345).

St Tredwell's Chapel (Map 7 : XVIII) on Papey and the Brough of Deerness were perhaps the two most famous places of local pilgrimages in Orkney, but there were other places of 'popish' beliefs and practices: in *Westray* there were 'the remains of some Popish chapels, for which the people, till lately, shewed no small degree of veneration' (Barry 1867 : 61). However, none of the two known medieval churches on Westray, Lady Kirk in Pierowall and Cross Kirk (Westside Church) in Tuquoy, have any attached pilgrimage traditions or traditions of *cultus superfluus*. On the island of *Sanday*, the chapel at Cleat is said to have been a sacred site to which people made pilgrimages (Marwick 1923 : 52). The small island of *Damsay*, situated in the Bay of Firth, is thought to have had a chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary but locally called Hellie Boot (Low 1773 : 53). Many wonders were believed to have taken place in this chapel, but 'This fabric, with all its mighty miracles, has now almost sunk into oblivion' (Barry 1867 : 66). In the Parish of Harray there was a chapel dedicated to St Mary, located on the shore of Loch of Harray and described by Jo. Ben as being a place of worship and pilgrimage:

A14 *Hara alia parochia, ubi ignvissimi fuci sunt, ideoque dicuntur. Hic est magna Ecclisia dedicata Sanctæ Mariæ, vulgus vocat de qua homines multa fabulantur: Hic multi confluunt ex diversis insulis* (Jo. Ben 1529 in Barry 1867 : 454).

In Shetland, *Weisdale Church* (Map 8 : XIX), or the '*aamis-kirk*'¹⁴, dedicated to *Our Lady* (Ill. 11, page 103), in the parish of Tingwall, is the most well known place of local pilgrimage. Local tradition say that this church was built by two wealthy ladies who

encountered a storm off the coast of Shetland. They prayed to St Mary and promised to build a church in her honour if she would bring them safely to shore. The ship is said to have anchored in Weisdale Voe, and the church was subsequently built in this place (Turnbull 1845 : 69). Concerning the pilgrimage tradition to Weisdale Church Brand explains that the church...

...is much frequented by the superstitious Country People, who light Candles therein, drop Money in and about it, go on their bare knees about it, and to which in their Straits and Sickness they have their Recourse,... A Minister also told me, that it was much frequented by Women, who when they desire to Marry, went to this Church making their Vowes and saying their Prayers there, so assuring themselves, that God would cause Men come in suit of them; But this is not now so much in use as formerly (Brand 1701, 1883 : 138-139).

It seems that in Brand's, as well as in Low's, time pilgrimages to St Mary's Church in Weisdale were still ongoing, but were about to disappear, and to Low it was...

...remarkable for the superstitious regard anciently paid by the more ignorant inhabitants to its Church. Those people who for a small sum wanted to clear off their scores, thought they could do it nowhere better than here, they also thought here their works of penance would be more acceptable. I was well informed that many years ago there was found on the pulpit of this Church a small pyramid of all the different coins generally current in Schetland, from the largest German silver coin down to a stiver. This superstition is, however, now much wearing out, particularly since the death of an old Smith, who found it in his interest to keep the roof on this Church after it began to decay, and to preach up the miraculous effects which visits (especially when the visitor came not empty handed) might produce on the credulous (Low 1774 : 79-80).



Ill. 11. St Mary's Kirk (in Weisdale, Tingwall parish, Shetland).

In Northmavine, there were frequent pilgrimages to *Cross Kirk* (or Holy Rude) at Breckon in Eshaness (Map 7 : XVIII). When the church was demolished, several pieces of silver were found, behind the demolished altar as well as underneath the pulpit, in the shapes of legs, arms and heads. These objects may have been offerings representing the parts of the body healed after pilgrimages to Cross Kirk (Brand 1701 : 143). On the northernmost island of Unst in Shetland there was a chapel, now ruinous, in *Clibberswick*, dedicated to the Holy Cross (Map 8 : XIX). Cross Kirk was in use about 200 years ago, and the chapel was long a place of pilgrimage. As reported by Jessie Saxby in 1905:

This chapel was in use 120 years ago. Foundation of chapel still distinct. Long a place of pilgrimage. Coins found quite lately in the wall (Saxby 1905 : 135).

The women of Unst apparently went there to pray for their men at sea (Saxby 1932 : 14). In recent years the site has been archaeologically surveyed, and the investigations consider the folkloric sources describing the chapel as a place of pilgrimage in addition to the physical surveys of the site's complex and ruinous condition (Lowe 1988 : 167-173, Morris and Brady 1998 : 23).



Ill. 12. Holy Cross, Clibberswick (Unst, Shetland).

d) Pilgrimage and holy water around the North Atlantic.

Holy water in a Christian context is first and foremost associated with the sacramental act of baptism, both in pre- and post-Reformation times. The use of blessed water is also used in both Catholic and Protestant rituals. However, the veneration of water is usually associated with holy wells and springs dedicated to a particular saint and may thus be labelled *cultic veneration*. As discussed in chapter 4¹⁵, hydrolatry – the worship of water, has been part of both pagan and Christian rituals in most parts of the world, and that there was a ‘conversion process’ with the coming of Christianity, to allow the continued worshipping of water through re-association with a Christian saint. The veneration of holy wells was usually associated with miraculous cures of illnesses, and that consumption or application of water on the affected area would provide a cure, often preceded or succeeded by cultic rituals or customs. As late as the mid nineteenth century the consumption of water from a natural spring in the parish of Orphir (Map 7 : XVIII) in Orkney was thought to bring good health, diminishing the need for medicine:

Besides the advantages of excellent grain and plenty of fish, the inhabitants [of Orphir] are so fortunate as to procure health by the frequent use of the chalybeate spring, in the virtue of which they place such implicit confidence as supersedes the necessity of medicine (Barry 1867 : 28).

There are otherwise two famous traditions regarding sacred water in Orkney; At Hunton in Stronsay (Map 7 : XVIII) there are three holy wells which are collectively called *the Well of Kildinguie* (Marwick 1927 : 71). According to Barry, this well is a set of three mineral springs that differs in strength (Barry 1867 : 52). Tradition say that it was held in such high repute that people came from Denmark and Norway to drink its water, and on the sandy shore about two miles south-east of the Well of Kildinguie there was a place called Guiyidn where people could collect and consume a seaweed called *dulse*. The water from the holy well, the *dulse* and the fresh air in Stronsay would ‘cure all maladies except the black death’ (Anderson 1794 : 325).

St Tredwell's Loch on the island of Papey, mentioned above, was famous for its ability to cure sore eyes. People used to come from other islands to the loch to be cured, like the gentleman who had sore eyes and in much distress. He went to the loch and washed his eyes with water from the loch and became ‘sound and whole’. The minister of Westray at the time of Brand’s visit to Papey in the late sixteenth century, told him that those who were able to walk, would circuit the loch as many times they thought were necessary to perfect the cure, before making use of the water. During this procedure the person should not speak to anyone,

as it would ruin the effect of the water. It was also customary to leave an offering by the loch, like an old cloth. Another obscure tradition associated with St Tredwell's Loch says that it will appear like blood before a disaster befalls the Royal Family (Brand 1701, 1883 : 88-89).

There are other traditions in Orkney regarding sacred water. In the parish of Sandwick there were two holy wells, one superior to the other: One was called *Crossikeld* in a spot called Forsewell that possessed curative powers superior to the well in Kirkness township. The well in *Kirkness* was dedicated to St Margaret and was believed to possess healing powers (Fraser 1924 : 27). In the parish of Stenness there is a local tradition of a holy well at *Bigswell* below the Ring of Brodgar, and it was thought that the water was to some extent curative (Fraser 1926 : 23).

In Shetland there are only a few examples of traditions regarding sacred water and holy wells. There was a spring near the Loch of Watlee in Unst called *Heilia Brune* or *Heljabrün*. There is a legend associated with the origin of the water's curative abilities:

A wandering packman (of the Claud Halcro class) was murdered and flung into Heljabrün. Its water had always been known to possess healing power, and after becoming seasoned by the unfortunate pedler's remains, the virtue in the water became even more efficacious. People came from far and near to procure the precious fluid. All who took it away had to throw three stones, or a piece of "white money" into the well, and the water never failed to cure disease (Edmondston and Saxby 1888 : 216).

Hibbert names the well *Yelaburn* or *Hielaburn* and refers to old local customs of making offerings near the source:

It was of late years usual to walk to its source, and on an adjoining site of ground to throw three stones. This custom is so old, that a considerable pile has been raised by these offerings; but as the influence of the water god has been long on the wane, the acknowledgement is now much less frequently paid. It was also usual, after the sacrifice to the deity had been made, to drink of the water of the spring, which insured health to the zealous imbiber (Hibbert 1822 : 187).

Hibbert's spelling of the name was probably miss-spelt or misunderstood, and taken to mean the *burn of health*, from the Shetlandic/Scottish word *burn* meaning *stream*. However, Edmondston and Saxby's spelling, *Heljabrün*, is Old Norse meaning "holy well". In the vicinity of Heilia Brune there is a loch with the similar name of *Helliers Waters*. Although this loch did probably earn its name through similar customs, no traditions have been recorded. In Aithsting the loch of Heilia Water carry similar connotations, and similarly no traditions have been recorded. In Northmavine, on the other hand, the name of the loch of *Helga Water* indicate religious customs of sacred water and has been briefly mentioned by

Hibbert. His statement does not, however, imply that the loch *was* visited by 'natives with superstitious views', only that it *appears* so:

The pool of Helga Water also appears to have been formerly visited by the natives with superstitious views, and with perhaps the same mystical ceremonies that were used from time to time immemorial in Orkney, such as walking round it in the course of the sun, observing strict silence in their perambulations, taking up water in their hands, and casting it on their heads (Hibbert 1822 : 265).

Hibbert's reference to the mystical ceremonies that were used from time immemorial in Orkney show that he knew of religious customs and rituals concerning water from earlier periods. His particular reference to patterns and rituals of movement and the use of water at certain places in Orkney indicate a familiarity with, or perhaps survival of these customs as late as the nineteenth century.

In Norway, a collective description of holy wells was published in 1885 by A. Chr. Bang (Bang 1885 : 1-10) and includes the description of thirty-four wells venerated in Norway before the Reformation, but some were still in use at the time of the publication. The list of holy wells includes both the dedication of the well, if known, and associated customs. Amongst the thirty-four wells there are twenty-one wells dedicated to St Olaf, and five holy wells have the following dedications: St Agatha, St Even (St Edwin), St Halvard, St Helena and St Margaret. One well is associated with a pious man named Lidvor, and two entries are tarns (small lochs), one dedicated to St Olaf, the other associated with St Nicholas. The remaining five holy wells included in the list have no known saint or cultic dedication.

Bang's list of holy wells also gives descriptive information of the customs and rituals associated with the veneration of the holy wells from the medieval period, belonging within a Catholic tradition. In general, the characteristics of the associated customs and traditions are in the form of local-scale pilgrimages: Visitations on specific days usually in connection with the celebration of a saint; six of the entries in Bang's list were visited on the eve of the festival of St John. The veneration and use of water during the celebration of the festival of St John may be connected with this biblical saint's association with water i.e. the baptism as a symbol of the spiritual cleansing of the body. The water's cleansing abilities is in most cases connected with the prospect of the cure of illnesses. The visitation of holy wells to obtain a cure seems to have been common. Bang's list includes twelve references that relate to cures obtainable by drinking the water, a religious belief also found in connection with the traditions associated with St Tredwell's Loch in Papey and the Well of Kildinguie in Stronsay, Orkney, as well as the Heilia Brune in Unst, Shetland. Further customs associated with holy wells in Norway are the depositing of coins and objects of silver, clothing, crutches

and crosses in and around the wells. In connection with two of the holy wells dedicated to St Olaf, the custom of leaving small crosses around the well in the county of Sogn og Fjordane was an ongoing tradition as late as the nineteenth century. A well in Møre og Romsdal County had been visited as late as 1720, and until this time the custom of drinking the water was followed by the erection of small crosses at the site. The depositing of clothing, crutches and coins at the site of the wells also seems to have been common in traditions regarding the visitation and veneration of holy wells. There are several examples of such items being deposited in or near the wells as offerings for the use of the water (Bang 1885 : 1-10).

According to Mircea Eliade, the veneration of water in *any* religious tradition symbolises *death* and *rebirth*. Water becomes the symbol of original and eternal existence. Its function is always the same: it disintegrates, it dilutes all shapes and forms, it washes all the sins away and it cleanses and regenerates at the same time – through the submergence into and re-emergence from the water (Eliade 1969 : 76-77). In the Bible the water as an original and eternal entity is first and foremost used to describe God's creation of the world:

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters (Gen. 1 : 1-2).

From the water land appeared:

And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry *land* Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that *it was* good (Gen. 1 : 9-10).

The symbolism of death and rebirth, cleansing and regeneration by water is further exemplified in the Old Testament by the story of Noah and the Ark of the Covenant:

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights (Gen. 7 : 11-12).

And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained *alive*, and they that *were* with him in the ark (Gen. 7 : 23).

Finally, the New Testament describes John the Baptist's use of the water to cleanse the souls of men, to wash the sins away, to repent and to clear the way for what was to come:

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and *with* fire (Mat. 3 : 11):

And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightaway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him (Mat. 3 : 16).

The symbolism of water is universal, and not exclusive to biblical myths of origin of the Earth, the destruction of man and the washing away of sins. The river Jordan obtained a central place in the geography of Christianity through the baptism of Jesus in its waters (McKenzie 1988 : 17-18), and the Christian Church continued to use the water-symbolism: The cleansing and purifying abilities of the water through baptism became a sacrament with the rise of Christianity, although water-symbolism had pre-Christian motifs (Eliade 1969 : 77). Submergence and re-emergence of the individual through baptism signifies death and rebirth – the regeneration of the being (Eliade 1969 : 78).

In Christian ritual the veneration of holy wells should be interpreted as a reflection of the sacrament of baptism belonging within a universal sphere of symbolism, although the depositing of offerings after the use or drinking of the water may rather be a reflection of pre-Christian customs. Customs and traditions regarding holy wells and sacred water in the North Atlantic should therefore be seen in connection with the universal symbolism of water bringing life, fertility and healing (McKenzie 1988 : 17) (see ill. 13, below).



Ill. 13. The holy well at Selja, Norway. Not included in Bang's list.

e) Concluding remarks.

The cults of saints and the pilgrimage processes in the North Atlantic during the Middle Ages are complex and difficult to define. The conversion process of the North Atlantic region is an historical problem, and the impact of the Christian customs and traditions transferred to and replacing a heathen belief-system are difficult to assess. As stated by Helle:

The religious influence is perhaps the most difficult thing to evaluate. The Church [in Norway] was to a large extent capable of accomplishing the external European, Catholic forms of veneration, but the source-material does not reveal the depth of the peoples' religiousness (Helle 1974 : 241, translated.).

Although the establishment of saints' cults in a North Atlantic context, like the cults of SS Olaf, Magnus and Þorlákr, were completely in accordance with the universal Church and Christian practices of the Middle Ages, the true extent of the pilgrimage process and cultic veneration of shrines, relics or holy wells are difficult to estimate. Although the pilgrimage processes to the shrines of St Olaf and St Magnus were ongoing by the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries according to the saga-tradition, there are other examples of pilgrimage on a much more local scale traditions of which only survive in folklore recorded after the Reformation. It is, however, important to include both early (regional) and later (local) accounts of pilgrimage in order to gain a general understanding of the religious influences in the North Atlantic. Although the origin of some traditions may be highly uncertain and obscure, they do reflect attitudes towards religious customs as well as superstitions pointing to some degree back in time to a medieval Catholic mental sphere.

This medieval Catholic mental sphere, will to most people within a protestant tradition, seem strange and obscure, but to the Norse population in the North Atlantic, the coming of Christianity may likewise have seemed foreign. Although the historical sources as well as the archaeological material indicate that the Norse population was in contact with Christian peoples and culture well before the conversion, a shift in traditional customs and religious practices would have had a profound impact on peoples' lives. The coming of Christianity meant a complete change of mental orientation; from an ethnic family/community orientation to a universal perception of the world, its centre, the origin and destiny of man. Heathen customs such as sacrifice in connection with the harvest in the autumn and the regeneration of life in the spring were replaced by the yearly cycle of the universal Church: The Christian calendar regulating religious life was set according to events recorded in the Bible, such as the birth and death of Christ, and the festivals of saints. Most of these festivals of the Church that had happened about one thousand years earlier in a land far away, came to

set aside the old traditions and beliefs, replacing them with new ones. Rites of passage such as birth, marriage and death became the matter of the Church, and the places of religious or spiritual exercise were no longer limited to the dwelling or private land. Exercising Christian belief became closely connected with the buildings, monuments or sites defined by physical boundaries consecrated by the Church. In Christianity the Holy Land and Rome were the centres of the world. In contrast, any other places would have been regarded as the religious periphery. However, the establishment of cults, shrines, and churches, archbishop- and bishoprics would have brought the notion of the Holy Land and Rome much closer to home in accordance with the universality of Christianity. The building of churches and church-centres would *to some degree* have contributed to a more rapid acceptance of the new faith, since structures such as the monumental churches and cathedrals symbolised a visible and permanent bond between Heaven and Earth, God and Man.

Within a church-setting the Christian message was conveyed in Latin. A foreign language not generally understood in the North Atlantic. Although Latin was ‘the Language of the Books’, the Christian symbolism and customs did not necessarily require scholarly wisdom to be understood or performed. Apart from the basic Christian message of the Bible, the symbolism and customs of the Church also reached the Norse population: The cultic veneration of holy women and men as well as holy objects and places of significance in the history of Christianity were aspects of the religious exercise. Apart from the celebration of Mass within the church-building, religious exercise also meant individual acts of repentance and veneration of the *holy*. Cultic veneration and pilgrimage were part of this exercise of the faith: *As reflections* of the greater cults and pilgrimages and *reflected* in national / regional pilgrimage centres as well as pilgrimages on a smaller, local scale. In the North Atlantic the dedications to and veneration of saints seems to have been an element adopted soon after the conversion. In Norway, only a few decades after the general conversion, the Church produced a native martyr, saint and cult. Approximately one hundred years later, a similar thing took place in the earldom; a martyr, saint and cult emerged – joining the hands of the earls and the Church.

Notes to chapter 5.

¹ Hirð (ON) the king or the earl's men / army.

² Villialmr III (Kolsrud 1913 : 299).

³ Cf. Ch. 8b : 176.

^{4a} The construction of the Cathedral and its significance as the focal point of the cult of St Magnus will be discussed in chapter 7, p 152 ff.

^{4b} The various aspects of the cult of St Magnus will be further explored in chapters 6, 7 and 8.

⁵ Cf. Ch. 4d : 70.

⁶ Examples of legends of St Olaf as a miracle-worker in life are found in Bang's list of holy wells in Norway (Bang 1885 : 3-9, no. 6, 10, 15, 21, 22-24, 27, and 31). Also see part d), below.

⁷ Cf. Ch. 2b : 14

⁸ Cf. Ch. 5a : 80.

⁹ Cf. Ch. 7e : 159-160.

¹⁰ King Hákon Hákonsson died in 1263 in Kirkwall, Orkney.

¹¹ Cf. Ch. 9 for discussion on *landscape and cult*.

¹² Cf. Ch. 9 for discussion on the cults of St Olaf and St Magnus.

¹³ Cf. Ch. 7g : 168.

¹⁴ Possibly the "alms-church", cf. Ch. 7g : 168-169.

¹⁵ Cf. Ch. 4d : 71-72.

Chapter 6

Magnúss jarl hinn helgi

a) Introduction.

Earl Magnus Erlendsson was murdered on 16 April c. 1116 on the island of Egilsay (Map 7 : XVIII) in Orkney. His cousin, Earl Hákon Pálsson, arranged the murder which was to become a martyrdom, leading to sanctification of Magnus during a process of about twenty to thirty years. The martyrdom of Earl Magnus, which was sparked by political disagreement between the two earls, subsequently developed into a Christian cult in the Northern Isles. The cult of St Magnus incorporated the building and dedication of churches throughout the North Atlantic; hagiographic manuscripts describing the life, martyrdom and miracles; liturgical music and religious poetry; and the physical centre of the cult – the great twelfth century cathedral in Kirkwall. Because of the extent of the cultic expressions such as the cathedral, dedications and hagiography, the cult of St Magnus may be characterised as regional. There is, however, no solid evidence for cultic influence of any great extent¹ outside the North Atlantic, and despite its thorough establishment within the earldom it never outranked the cults of St Olaf in Norway and St Þorlákr in Iceland.

Whether or not the cult of St Magnus was a “regional” or a “national” cult is a point of discussion. From the view-point of the Northern Isles, St Magnus may be seen as a “national” saint because he represented the ruling dynasty of the Orkney island. As a “national” saint connected with the political rulers he is placed in the same category as the national saints of Scandinavia (St Olaf of Norway, St Cnut of Denmark and St Eric of Sweden) (Crawford 1998 : 24). From the view-point of the Church, on the other hand, the cult of St Magnus did not have any profound impact on the religious life of women and men of western Christianity, outside the North Atlantic, during the Middle Ages. It cannot be disputed, however, that the cult of St Magnus was used to form religious and national identity in the earldom in the Middle Ages.

The main sources describing the life and miracles of St Magnus are based on a lost Latin *vita*, or life, of St Magnus probably written in the first half of the twelfth century. The life of St Magnus is probably best known from the compilation *Orkneyinga Saga* (OS)². The oldest part of the *Orkneyinga Saga* was probably written in Iceland around 1200 (Pálsson and Edwards 1978 : 9), and is a compilation of individual earls' sagas which together form the *Jarlsaga*, chapters 1-43, 53-56, and 58-112. The OS also contains a version of the lost Latin *Vita Magnus* which forms the Saga of St Magnus, chapters 44-52 (and to some degree chapters 33-40), and a *Jarteinabók* (the book of miracles), chapter 57, including the last sentence of chapter 56 (Taylor 1938 : 8). The second source containing the life and miracles of St Magnus is the *Magnúss Saga Skemmri* (M2)³, or the 'Shorter Saint Magnus Saga'. This manuscript is found in AM 235 fol.. It dates from the fourteenth century and was probably written in Iceland. It is mainly based on earlier manuscripts that preserve the OS (Taylor 1938 : 11). The third source is the *Magnúss Saga Lengri* (M1)⁴, or the 'Longer Saint Magnus Saga'. This saga was most likely composed in Iceland, and the manuscript is found in AM 350 4to. This text is a copy of a thirteenth century manuscript also used for the *Flateyjarbók* (Taylor 1938 : 10-11). The question about the identity of the author of the lost Latin *Vita Magnus*, has been discussed against the background of several references in the M1. This version of the Magnus saga states that the author is one *Meistari Roðbert* who wrote the story in Latin (M1 : I, VIII, XXVII, XXVIII), twenty years after the death of St Magnus (i.e. in 1136/37) (M1 : XXVIII). A date that would coincide with the second translation of the shrine of St Magnus from Birsay to Kirkwall in 1136/37 (Map 7 : XVIII). Master Robert has been identified with a cleric named Robert of Cricklade who composed the *vita* of Thomas á Becket (1170). Cricklade is thought to have visited Scotland, and may have been the author of the lost Latin *vita* of St Magnus. The argument is based on the stylistic similarities between the Magnus saga and the life of Thomas á Becket (Taylor 1938 : 11, 74, Sveinsson 1954 : 280, 282, Guðmundsson 1965 : xlv-xlvi). Within the context of the celebration of St Magnus, the composition of a *vita* is vital in the establishment of the cult. The writing of saints' lives was a major factor in the spread of cults as well as increasing their popularity. If the Latin *vita* of St Magnus was ordered by Earl Rognvald and Bishop William for the occasion of consecration and final translation of the shrine from the church of St Olaf in Kirkwall⁵ to the new cathedral, the platform of the cult of St Magnus would have been complete.

The fourth source of the cult is the *Jarteinabók*, or Miracle Book, as mentioned above. The book is incorporated into the *Orkneyinga Saga*-compilation, and forming a separate chapter. Originally the *Jarteinabók* would have been a separate book, like the *Passio et*

miracula beati Olavi, the miracle book of St Olaf, written by archbishop Eystein. Like the *Vita Magnus*, the *Jarteinabók* would have had a vital role in the establishment of the cult of St Magnus. It contains the descriptions of the miracles performed by the saint and would consequently have functioned as “evidence” for his sanctity.

The rise of the cult of St Magnus is in the present context, first and foremost interpreted as a reaction to, or the outcome of, political circumstances within the earldom in the early-mid twelfth century. The actions of three men were initially decisive for the martyrdom and sanctification of Earl Magnus: *Earl Hákon*, *Bishop William the Old* and *Earl Rognvald*. Their roles in the life and death, martyrdom and sanctification of Earl Magnus will be returned to below, but the creation of a cult is initially and ultimately tied to the presence of, and the proximity to, the *holy*⁶. As mentioned above, the cathedral in Kirkwall dedicated to St Magnus was built to house the shrine of the saint. The cathedral subsequently became the centre of the cult of St Magnus, and the consecrated building became the new religious and physical centre of the earldom. However, the presence of the *holy*, the veneration of saints and making pilgrimages were aspects of Christianity and forms of Christian worship already present in the Northern Isles by the twelfth century. The OS refers to pilgrimages from Orkney to Rome and the Holy Land undertaken by the three earls: Thorfinn, Hákon and Rognvald, as well as Sigurd Fake-Dragon and Bishop William the Old (OS XXXI : 80, LII : 113, LIV : 117, LXXXV-LXXXVI).

The historical context of the sanctification of Magnus Erlendsson, established primarily by the four manuscripts mentioned above, should be interpreted in light of the cults of saints in the North Atlantic. The sagas proclaim the saintliness of a man whose virtues in life have not much in common with e.g. the life and martyrdom of St Olaf in Norway. St Olaf was a warrior king, eager to complete the conversion of Norway. His actions were not always peaceful and he died in battle. St Magnus' character, on the other hand, does not represent physical strength or visionary force to the same degree. He is portrayed as a pious man and the saga uses words like ‘intelligent’, ‘strict virtue’, ‘successful in war’, ‘wise’, ‘eloquent’, ‘generous and magnanimous’, able to give ‘sound advice’ and ‘altogether the most popular of men’. In spite of these excellent virtues he was also ‘uncompromising towards thieves and vikings’ and ‘he believed divine justice to be more important than social distinctions’, so he judged accordingly (OS XLV : 103-104). However, his nephew, Rognvald Kali Kolsson, the son of Magnus' sister, Gunnhild, was also venerated as a saint in the earldom after his death in 1158. Earl Rognvald is described as a passionate man, reigning for twenty-two years during which time he fought battles, he wrote poetry, he made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and he

was an administrator of politics and church-affairs – evident in the foundation of St Magnus Cathedral which marked the transfer of the bishop's seat from Birsay to Kirkwall and boosting the cult of his uncle.

Earl Rognvald did not suffer martyrdom like St Magnus, but he was killed by an enemy at Thurso in Caithness (OS CIII : 278). He was buried in the cathedral in Kirkwall and at his grave many miracles took place. Bishop Bjarni of Orkney (1188-1223) got the Pope's permission to translate the relics of the earldom's second saint in St Magnus Cathedral (OS CIV : 282). But there is no known record of a *vita* or book of miracles written in Earl Rognvald's honour, and there are no known churches or altars dedicated to him. It may seem strange that St Magnus was celebrated with a *vita* and that a cathedral was built in his honour when St Rognvald's popularity did not fall short of his uncle's, at least according to the OS. As argued by Crawford, Earl Rognvald's cult was clearly promoted by Bishop Bjarni who [] 'was in a position to fully appreciate the benefits for the Church in Orkney of Earl Rognvald's energy and foresight with regard to the establishment of Magnus' cult, a development which had resulted in the elevation of Kirkwall to the level of an international pilgrimage centre like Trondheim, the focus of pilgrimage to St Olaf's shrine' (Crawford 1998: 35). It has also been suggested by Crawford that Earl Rognvald's saintly status and the promotion of his cult were sparked by ecclesiastical pressure. This was probably due to Rognvald's efforts to found and build the cathedral in Kirkwall, as well as endowing the Orkney clergy (Crawford 1998 : 35). In spite of Earl Rognvald's popularity in the earldom and his character and profile as a saint, the cult of St Magnus occupied the prime position in the Orcadian Church. This may be due to political circumstances during the lifetime of both Earl Hákon and Earl Rognvald, as well as St Magnus' violent execution which could conveniently be interpreted as a martyrdom.

b) Martyrdom.

Magnus was the son of Earl Erlend and the grandson of Earl Thorfinn Sigurdarson who had 'built and dedicated to Christ a fine minster, the seat of the first bishop of Orkney' at his residence in Birsay⁷ (Pálsson and Edwards 1978 : 75). Earl Erlend jointly ruled the earldom with his brother Pál at the time of the kings Harald Hardradi (Sigurdarson) and Magnus Barelegs (Olafsson). The introduction of Magnus Erlendsson in the history of the earls of Orkney is closely tied with his cousin Hákon Pálsson. King Magnus Barelegs arrived in Orkney in c. 1098 and seized their fathers, Pál and Erlend. He sent them to Norway and made his own son, Sigurd (Jorsalfar), overlord over the islands. Magnus Barelegs made Hákon, Magnus, and his brother, Erling, join his army as they were sailing south to the Hebrides. The king's army attacked and took control of the island of Lewis and in the course of the expedition the king seized the whole of the Hebrides. The army moved south to Wales and fought a battle in the Menai Strait, during which Magnus proclaimed that he refused to fight any more (OS XXXIX : 94-97, M2 III : 313-313, M1 IX : 346-347). Magnus Erlendsson's next move was to flee from the army, and as long as the king was alive he did not return to Orkney. During his exile, he stayed with King Malcolm of Scotland, with friends in England and with a 'certain bishop' in Wales (OS XL : 97-98, M2 IV : 313-314, M1 X : 347-348). The M1 also states that Magnus stayed for some time in Caithness, and there he was received and honoured by everyone, and at once chosen and ennobled with the title of "Earl" (M1 XII : 349).

The earls of Orkney, Pál and Erlend, died while in Norway. Pál was buried in Bergen and Erlend in Nidaros⁸ (OS XLII : 101, M2 V : 315, M1 X : 348). After the death of King Magnus Barelegs, his three sons, Sigurd, Eystein and Olaf were made joint rulers of Norway. The kings of Norway gave Hákon Pálsson the title of earl and the possessions of his birthright. He settled in Orkney and ruled the earldom alone until the return of his cousin, Magnus (OS XLIII : 102, M2 VI : 316, M1 XIII : 350-351). The M1 adds, however, that upon his return to Orkney, Hákon governed the Orkneys 'with such great and aggressive greed that he slew without cause the steward of the King of Norway, who held and governed that part of the islands which the holy Magnus inherited, [...]; for half of the Islands belonged to S. Magnus as his patrimony' (Metcalf 1895, ch. 13 : 336-337). Magnus returned from Scotland, claimed his inheritance, and was well received by the farmers. Since Hákon refused to give up his cousin's part of the earldom, Magnus set off to Norway to meet with King Eystein asking him to settle their differences. At this time King Sigurd was away on his pilgrimage to the Holy Land. In Norway, Magnus was handed his patrimony; half of Orkney and the title of earl. In

Orkney, Magnus was again well received and he and Hákon ruled the earldom together in peace (OS XLIV : 102-103, M2 VI : 315-316, M1 XIV : 351-352).

The peace between the two earls of Orkney was not to last. The sagas describe how malicious tongues set out to destroy the friendship between Magnus and Hákon and that discord was made between the earls (OS XLVI : 104-105, M2 VIII : 317-318, M1 XVII : 354-355). A meeting was organised during Lent in 1116/17 on the Mainland at the place of the Orkney assembly or the Thingstead⁹. The two earls and their men came to an agreement, and a new meeting was arranged to be held on the island of Egilsay, in Orkney (ill. 14, page 119), at Easter in order to confirm the peace-agreement. Both earls were to meet with an agreed number of men. Magnus arrived on Egilsay with two ships. (OS XLVII : 105-106, M2 VIII-IX : 317-318, M1 XXIII-XXIV : 361-364). Hákon, on the other hand, brought an army of eight ships. His intentions were obvious. Magnus realised the outcome of their meeting on Egilsay, and spent the following night in prayer in the church on the island, and had mass sung for himself (OS XLVIII : 107-108, M2 XI : 319-320). The M1 is more elaborate in its description of events, and states that Magnus spent the night in prayer and meditation on his salvation, and in the morning he let mass be sung during which he received the *Corpus Domini* (M1 XXV : 365).

The following morning, Hákon and his men captured Magnus, who made his cousin three offers: to go on a pilgrimage to Rome or even as far as the Holy Land to visit the sacred places, seeking penance for both their souls never to return; to stay under guard in Scotland unable to escape, and; to be mutilated in any way or blinded and locked in a dungeon. Only the last offer was accepted by Earl Hákon, but his men protested and Magnus was unable to save his life (OS IL : 108-109, M2 XII : 320-321, M1 XXVI : 367-368). Earl Magnus received a blow to the head from the front, at his own request for he did not want to be executed like a thief, then his soul passed away to Heaven (OS L : 110-111, M2 XIII : 321-322, M1 XXVII : 368-369).

The martyrdom of St Magnus took place two days after the feast (or mass) of SS Tiburtius and Valerianus¹⁰, seventy-four years¹¹ after the martyrdom of Olaf Haraldson (OS LI : 111) and in the days of Pope Paschal II and Bishop Jón of Hólar in Iceland (M1 XXVII : 369-370). The OS states that the events leading to the martyrdom of Earl Magnus took place at the time when William was the first¹² resident bishop in the islands, when the episcopal seat was at Christ Church in Birsay, and that he was bishop for sixty-six years (OS LII : 113). Earl Hákon ruled the earldom in peace until his death sometime in the period 1120-1130. Although he was directly responsible for the murder of St Magnus, he became a popular ruler and made

a pilgrimage to Rome and the Holy Land where he visited the holy places and bathed in the River Jordan. After Earl Hákon's death, his two sons, Pál and Harald, inherited the title of earl and the earldom was again divided (OS LII-LIII : 113-115, M2 XVI : 323-324, M1 XXX : 373-374). During both Earl Hákon and Earl Pál's reign the sanctity of Magnus was kept quiet, although many miracles were reported. Bishop William called any reports of miracles sheer heresy and refused to acknowledge the sanctity of Magnus (OS LVI : 122, M2 XVI : 324).



Ill. 14. St Magnus Church on the island of Egilsay (Orkney).

The OS, M1 and M2 agree that it was the dispute between Earl Hákon and Earl Magnus over the division of the earldom that led to the martyrdom of Magnus. Although Hákon's role in the martyrdom of St Magnus was sparked by the controversy over the division of the earldom, it probably also reflected the complex situation surrounding the appointment of bishops to Orkney. Until 1152/53 with the establishment of the archbishopric of Nidaros, two bishops were appointed by the rival archbishoprics of Hamburg (and after 1102, the archbishopric of Lund in Sweden) and York. At the height of the controversy between Magnus and Hákon a bishop was appointed to Orkney by the archbishopric of York in the period 1109-1114 (Crawford 1983 : 108). The only Orkney bishop the sagas mention is Bishop William the Old who was appointed by the archbishopric of Hamburg. He was bishop for sixty-six years and died in 1168 and would therefore have been bishop of Orkney at the same time as the bishop appointed by York. William, however, does not feature in the events that took place on Egilsay in 1116/17 although he probably had his residence on this island, something the OS refers to on three occasions¹³. The controversy over the division, or rather the supremacy of the earldom was linked with the two earls' external supporters. The sagas refer to only one occasion when Magnus visited Norway – in connection with his claim for his half of the earldom (OS XLIV : 103, M2 VI : 316, M1 XIV : 351). Magnus preferred to seek refuge, exile and support in Scotland. Hákon, on the other hand, sought acknowledgement and friendship with the kings of Norway (Crawford 1984 : 67). As argued by Crawford, this political tension which led to the murder would have been very much to the advantage of the family and supporters of Magnus 'to foster the belief in his sanctity which could only reflect glory on their branch of the earldom line' (Crawford 1984 : 67). Although it may not have been in Bishop William's interest to acknowledge the growing cult of St Magnus because of his connection with Earl Hákon, he did in the end 'foster the belief' in the sanctity of St Magnus and was the key-figure in the orchestration of the cult and the two translations of the relics.

c) Arrival and installation.

The martyrdom of St Magnus may, on saga evidence, be explained through the political controversy between Earl Hákon and Earl Magnus. The outcome of the murder on the other hand, may be interpreted as a convenient opportunity for the earldom to create a native cult. Sanctification of Earl Magnus would probably have been to the advantage of the family and supporters. It may also be interpreted as an attempt to compete with the cult of St Olaf in Norway, in light of Earl Hákon's political connections with the Norwegian royal court. On the basis of the hagiographic evidence as well as the great cathedral in Kirkwall dedicated to St Magnus, it may be argued that the family and supporters of Earl Magnus succeeded in their attempt. The creation of the cult of St Magnus in the earldom was evidently carefully planned, and it developed through the stages of *martyrdom, acknowledgement and sanctification* and finally *translation*. The martyrdom of St Magnus has been highlighted above. The acknowledgement, sanctification and translation of Earl Magnus, on the other hand, needs a closer examination.

The body of Magnus was brought from Egilsay to Birsay^{13a} to be buried in Christ Church, the seat of the bishops of Orkney, established by Magnus' and Hákon's grandfather, Earl Thorfinn (OS LII : 112, M2 XIV : 323). The body of Earl Magnus remained buried outside the church for twenty-one years (OS LVII : 124, twenty years M2 XVIII : 326). During this time, miracles were reported to have happened and people demanded a translation. William the Old who was still bishop of Orkney, was reluctant to acknowledge the sanctity of Magnus. After the death of Earl Hákon, the earldom remained in the hands of his two sons, Harald and Pál. The earldom was divided between the two until the death of Harald. During the years until the first translation of the relics of St Magnus, Pál Hákonsson was the sole ruler. Earl Hákon's pilgrimage to Rome and the Holy Land during his final years as the Earl of Orkney may be interpreted as a sign of remorse or guilt for his direct involvement in the murder of Earl Magnus. The OS also states that Earl Hákon became well-liked and that he was a 'fine administrator' making new laws for the earldom (OS LII : 113). Bishop William's reluctance to acknowledge the sanctity of Magnus may have been a reflection of his ties with Hákon and his son, Pál. As mentioned above, it took about twenty years for Bishop William to acknowledge the sanctity of Magnus, and this was not until the arrival of a new earl, Earl Rognvald.

Rognvald was the son of Kol from Agder and Gunnhild, St Magnus' sister. King Sigurd of Norway granted Rognvald half the earldom, the share that previously had belonged to his uncle (OS : 61). As discussed by Crawford (1984 : 67), the division of the earldom

between Hákon and Magnus may also have been reflected in their ties with Norway and Scotland respectively. Although Rognvald was of St Magnus' bloodline, it does not seem that he had the same direct ties with Scotland as his famous uncle. Rognvald was born in Norway and received his share from King Sigurd as part of a settlement over a dispute. If King Sigurd favoured Earl Hákon's side of the family it seems unlikely that he would so effortlessly introduce Rognvald into the stable power-balance in the earldom and consequently risking the ripping open of old wounds. After King Sigurd's death in 1130, his son Magnus, became the new king of Norway. King Magnus did not, however, acknowledge the gift of half the earldom to Rognvald that his father had made, but the king did not rule Norway for long. His uncle, Harald Gilli, the half-brother of King Sigurd, challenged King Magnus. Harald Gilli fought his nephew who was taken captive, and Harald became the sole ruler of Norway. Harald Gilli was good friends with Rognvald, and confirmed the gift of half the earldom to him (OS LXII : 142).

Tension grew once again as Earl Pál did not agree in giving Rognvald half the earldom. Rognvald was advised by his father, Kol, to seek support in the areas of the earldom which had belonged to St Magnus, and he found it amongst the people of Shetland (OS LXVIII : 159). As tension grew between Rognvald and Pál, Bishop William was asked by Rognvald to mediate. Bishop William arranged a fortnight's truce during which time a settlement was to be reached. The two earls came to an agreement after which Rognvald went to Mainland and Pál to Rousay (OS LXXIII : 166). Earl Pál was later captured and taken to Scotland where he never returned. Earl Rognvald then became the sole ruler (OS LXXVI : 173-174).

Bishop William's role as a mediator in the conflict between the earls Pál and Rognvald, may suggest that he was not expected to take Earl Pál's side without reservations. The saga states, however, that Bishop William did not pay any attention to the miracles taking place at the grave of St Magnus, as long as Earl Pál was in power. This may indicate that as long as Earl Pál was the sole ruler of the earldom, Bishop William did not want to take part in any promotion of a cult that would favour Earl Magnus' family rather than Earl Pál's. As referred to above, after about twenty years, the body of Earl Magnus was dug up from its grave outside Christ Church. The bones were tested against fire and found worthy by the bishop^{13b}. The relics of St Magnus were then enshrined and placed above the altar on 13 December c. 1136. A law was passed that both this day of translation and the day of St Magnus' martyrdom, 16 April, should be celebrated throughout the bishopric. The acknowledgement and sanctification of St Magnus by Bishop William is explained by a

miracle performed by Magnus which saved the life of the bishop (OS LVII : 123-124, M2 XVII-XVIII : 325-326). The translation of St Magnus in Christ Church may have taken place some time before the capture of Earl Pál¹⁴ in c. 1136, from which time Earl Rognvald was the sole ruler of the earldom.

Bishop William's sudden change of heart after twenty years may have been influenced by Earl Rognvald's new position as well as generosity towards the episcopal seat. When Kol, Rognvald's father, advised his son to seek support in Magnus' section of the earldom. He also asked his son to make a vow to the saint: He should build a stone 'minster' in Kirkwall, dedicated to St Magnus, provide it with all funds needed and move the episcopal seat to this place, *if* the saint was to grant Rognvald his 'family inheritance and his own legacy' (OS LXVIII : 158-159). The saint consented, and the building of the new cathedral in Kirkwall commenced with Earl Rognvald's father, Kol, as supervisor of the construction-work (OS LXXVI : 174).

The second translation of St Magnus' shrine may have happened soon after the first translation in Christ Church. This second move was allegedly initiated by the dream of a farmer named Gunni of Westray. He dreamt that the saint repeatedly appeared before him, demanding that his shrine should be moved from Birsay to Kirkwall. Gunni eventually saw Bishop William about this matter. He told of his dream at mass in front of Bishop William, Earl Pál and the whole congregation. The people present in the church urged for a transfer. Earl Pál showed signs of anger but kept otherwise quiet, and the bishop finally gave in (OS LVII : 124-125, M2 XIX : 326-327). This explanation of the shifting of the shrine from Birsay to Kirkwall may serve as a symbol of Earl Rognvald's increasing influence in the earldom, as well as with the bishop, before the capture of Earl Pál. The move of the episcopal seat and administrative centre of the earldom to new localities further east on the Mainland would strengthen this relationship, a fresh beginning blessed by the arrival and installation of the relics of St Magnus in Kirkwall. The shrine was carried in an imposing procession led by Bishop William east to Kirkwall and installed above the high altar in the church which then stood there¹⁵ (OS LVII : 125, M2 XIX : 327). At the time of the transfer of the relics, the cathedral was presumably therefore not ready for consecration and installation of the shrine.

In this sense, the procession lead by Bishop William symbolises the formal acknowledgement and commencement of the cult of St Magnus. As discussed in chapter 4¹⁶, the movement of relics to the people was a key factor in the spread of the cult of saints. The translation of relics meant that God had favoured the community and given it a sense of amnesty (Brown 1981 : 93). The presence of the shrine could therefore bring the community

together if the cult gained support and was promoted. The cult of St Magnus seems to have received both proper attention and support by the Earl and Bishop, and by the many recorded pilgrimages and subsequent miracles at the shrine. The political motive for promoting the cult of St Magnus is closely connected with Rognvald's fight to gain control over his inheritance – one half of the earldom. His strategy was clear: to seek the support of the farmers in the area of his inheritance, the area which his uncle, St Magnus, governed until the martyrdom. It is therefore significant that the first place Earl Rognvald sought support was with the farmers in Shetland where he was warmly received (OS LXVIII : 158-159). The people of Shetland play an important role in the celebration of St Magnus. Their connection with the saint will be further discussed in part d) *Pilgrimage*, below.

Bishop William's motif for promoting the cult of St Magnus was, on the other hand, a slow process. He showed obvious reluctance in acknowledging the cult because of his ties with Earl Hákon and possible opposition to the counter-bishop appointed to Orkney by the archbishop of York (Crawford 1983 : 108). During the fights between Earl Pál and Earl Rognvald, Bishop William played the role of mediator between the two. This may indicate that the bishop did not take sides in the dispute nor favour one side of the family. Bishop William's reluctance to acknowledge the sanctity of Magnus was perhaps not a sign of allegiance to Earl Hákon and later Earl Pál, but rather an expression of the bishop's position within the earldom. Promoting the cult of St Magnus could be interpreted as *taking sides* in the conflict and a consequence could be the end of Bishop William's career. As Anderson also points out, there must have been a conflict in the appointment of bishops to the Orkney bishopric between the archbishoprics of Hamburg and York. This conflict is not referred to in the OS (Anderson 1873 : lxxi – lxxiv), and may therefore be a sign of the saga-author taking sides, by exclusively focusing on William as the bishop of Orkney¹⁷.

The arrival and installation of the shrine of St Magnus meant that the earldom had established a cult of a native saint. The implications of this event could be many. The cult of St Magnus would have been of considerable importance because of the work and economy involved in completing the cathedral in Kirkwall. The OS states that Earl Rognvald offered to buy the estates, of the farmers in Orkney. They agreed and paid the earl one mark for every piece of ploughland. The money raised ensured the completion of the cathedral (OS LXXVI : 174). It is also significant that the saga points out that Kirkwall was, at the time of the transfer of the shrine from Birsay, a market town with only a few houses (OS LVII : 125). The town grew considerably from c. 1136/37, as the political and ecclesiastical centre of the earldom was from then on located in Kirkwall. The cathedral received admiration for its magnificence

and became a centre of pilgrimage for the cult of St Magnus. In this great shift of political and ecclesiastical focus we sense Bishop William's real motif of new-found interest in St Magnus. He would greatly benefit from the establishment of the cult, whose shrine was to be housed in a cathedral – a new monument to the power and prestige of the earldom (Crawford 1998 : 31).

d) Pilgrimage.

The translation of the shrine of St Magnus involved the arrival of the relics, the installation of the shrine and finally the celebration of the cult. The celebration of saints' cults would, according to Brown, lead to social interaction within the community (Brown 1981 : 93). In the earldom the cult of St Magnus was indeed celebrated: Through the festivals of the saint's martyrdom on 16 April and on 13 December, the date of the first translation in Birsay; and through hagiography, music, poetry¹⁸ and pilgrimage.

The spread of saints' cults would have reached the earldom with the conversion to Christianity. The veneration of cults, and the possession of a shrine or relics, would consequently mean to be in the presence of the *holy*¹⁹. The acknowledgement of the sanctity of Magnus and the subsequent translation of the shrine would for the Church in Orkney mean prestige and wealth, as well as religious focus and attention. The cathedral in Kirkwall was built to house the shrine of St Magnus. This building therefore became the physical space in which the holy was manifested – in the shrine – the place where heaven and earth met. The centre of the celebration of St Magnus was in this place. Making a pilgrimage to the shrine, venerating and celebrating mass would strengthen the individual's proximity to the holy.



Ill. 15. St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall (Orkney).

Only the M2 comments briefly on the final transfer of the shrine to the new cathedral in Kirkwall²⁰. The final reference concerning the translation of the shrine and the grand procession from Birsay to Kirkwall is linked with a church that was there, in Kirkwall, at that time. This church has been identified with St Olaf's Church²¹, and may have been built by Earl Rognvald Brusason as he resided in Kirkwall for some time (OS XXIX : 73). He may also be responsible for dedicating the church to the Norwegian patron saint because of his connections with Olaf Haraldsson, with whom he fought in the Battle of Stiklestad in 1030 (OS XXI : 53).

The celebration of the cult of St Magnus was not only expressed in the writing of a *vita* and poetry or in the celebration of the festivals. The celebration of St Magnus was also expressed through pilgrimage to the shrine; the physical movement of the individual from one place of commencement to a specific goal to receive the blessing of the saint, to be cured, to fulfil vows, or to give thanks for miracles. The recorded pilgrimages to the shrine of St Magnus are found in the Magnus sagas. The OS, the *Jarteinabók*, the M1 and M2 refer to pilgrimages made to the shrine of St Magnus, and all the subsequent miracles taking place are cures for various illnesses. References to miracles and pilgrimage are, however, general traits of hagiographic writing and are therefore not to be understood literally. The *Jarteinabók* in particular (as referred to in part a) above), stands out as the literary "evidence" for the sanctity of Magnus that focuses on the holy deeds of the dead person rather than on his role as an earl of the ruling dynasty of the Orkney islands. As discussed in chapter 4²² the aim of hagiographic writing was to evoke and emphasise what justified the sanctification of the individual as well as serving as an inspiration for the believer to respond actively to the stories told (Cazelles 1991 : 1). The miracles recorded in the *Jarteinabók* were intended to establish the cult and to strengthen it. They were meant to present St Magnus as an exceptional being, constantly able to perform great miracles and highlighting his perfection as a saint. The accounts of miracles and recorded pilgrimages were therefore essential elements included by the author to complete the *vita* of St Magnus within the manner of hagiographic writing. The events did not necessarily take place, but the cult demanded sanctification through hagiographic writing to become further established within the society. It is therefore necessary to point out the following: the majority of the pilgrimages and vows made or vigils kept, recorded in the *Jarteinabók*, include specific individuals and places. This may reflect the author's intention to authenticate the stories of the miracles, i.e. by making the miracles performed by the saint more trustworthy through direct association with specific individuals

and their places of origin. In the sagas (OS LVII, M2 XX, M1 XXXIV) the following names and places occur:

From the north in Shetland: Bergfinn Skatason / Starrison.

Halfdan, Bergfinn's son.

Ogmund / Asmund, Bergfinn's nephew.

Thord Dragon-Jaw (Dreka-Skolptr), a tenant of Bergfinn.

Amundi Illugason.

Sigurd Tandrason, a farmer from Dale.

Sigrid, the daughter of Sigurd of Sand.

Thorbjorn Olafsson.

Thorbjorn Gyrdson, from Shetland.

From the island of Unst: Sigrid Arnfrids-Daughter from the farmstead called Unst.

Sigrid, staying with Thorlak of Baliasta.

From the island of Fetlar: Sigurd, a man.

From Orkney: Thorkel, a farmer.

Groa, a woman from the Mainland.

From Caithness: Gilli, a man.

Sigurd, an alms-man, from a place called Knot-Sand, *Hnotasandi*, made a pilgrimage to the shrine of St Magnus and was healed (M1 XXXIV : 381). There are more examples of pilgrimages made to the shrine of St Magnus although their places of origin are not mentioned.

The carefully recorded names and places of origin or dwelling of many of the pilgrims are presumably intentionally included by the author. There seems to be a particularly high recruitment of pilgrims from Shetland. During the reign of Earl Rognvald, the cult of St Magnus would probably have been promoted throughout the earldom, but the sagas seem to emphasise the popularity of St Magnus amongst the Shetland farmers. One reason for this particular Shetland profile may be explained by the division of the earldom. The OS does not give any clear indication of how the earldom was divided during the periods of joint rule. The M1 says, however, that Earl Magnus and Earl Hákon agreed to divide the earldom of Orkney, Caithness, and Shetland in two halves:

A15 [] *at jarldómri Orkneyja, Kataness ok Hjaltlands skyldi miðlast til hálfis milli þeira Magnúss jarls ok Hákonar; []* (M1 XX : 359).

Earl Rognvald inherited his uncle Magnus' part of the earldom (OS LXI : 140), and later he gathered support amongst the Shetland farmers: When he set out from Norway the first time to claim his inheritance he landed in Shetland, and took shelter in Yell Sound (*Álasund*) where he was given a warm welcome (OS LXIV : 144). When Earl Pál (Hákonsson) arrived in Yell Sound, he attacked Earl Rognvald's men and had them killed. The next day Rognvald challenged Pál to come ashore to fight, but he refused as he did not trust the Shetlanders (OS LXV : 148). Earl Rognvald also got some sound advice from his father, Kol, before his next attempt to claim his inheritance: Kol advised his son to look for support in places where the inhabitants will say that the true owner of the realm – St Magnus – had granted it to Rognvald. The first place Rognvald landed on his second voyage was Shetland, where the people had plenty of news for him about the situation in Orkney (OS LXVIII : 158-159). The three references above may give some indication of how the earldom was divided, and why the cult of St Magnus inspired so many Shetlanders to make pilgrimages to the shrine. The earldom of Orkney was during the periods of joint rule, divided into a south-western and a north-eastern half. The south-western half included the whole of the West Mainland, Orphir, Stromness, Rousay, and the South Isles. The north-eastern part included the East Mainland, Shapinsay, and all the northern isles beyond the Firths of Westray and Stronsay (Clouston 1932 : 34-35). The division of the earldom also included Caithness and Shetland. Caithness was most likely part of the south-western division which was inherited by Earls Pál (Thorfinnsson), Hákon, Pál (Hákonsson), and in turn Harald Maddadarson. The north-eastern division therefore probably included Shetland, the half inherited by Earl Erlend, St Magnus and Earl Rognvald Kali (Clouston 1932 : 35, Crawford 1984 : 71).

Earl Hákon's part of the earldom would have consisted of Birsay, with the earldom's administrative and ecclesiastical centre, and as far south on the Mainland as Orphir (*Ørfjoru*) (Map 7 : XVIII) since his sons, Harald and later Pál, resided there (ill. 16, page 130) (OS LV : 117, LXVI : 150). Rousay (*Hrólfsey*) may have been part of Earl Hákon's half because of Earl Pál's friend and supporter, Sigurd of Westness, who was married to the earl's cousin and lived on this island (OS LIV : 116, LVI : 120). The area of Caithness seems to have played an important part in that family's history. Earl Pál's brother, Harald, held Caithness from the King of Scots and spent much time there (OS LIV : 115). St Magnus family line had a more north-eastern connection: The new administrative and ecclesiastical centre was placed in Kirkwall, and St Magnus' sister, Gunnhild, and their mother, Thora, had a farm in Paplay, south-east of Kirkwall (OS XLII : 101, XLIV : 103). One man involved with the process of

persuading Bishop William to translate the relics of St Magnus to Kirkwall was the farmer named Gunni from the island of Westray (*Vestrey*) (M2 XIX : 326). It was allegedly his dreams in which St Magnus appeared that inspired Bishop William to move the shrine east to Kirkwall. Although the movement of the seats of the earl and bishop was rather a political move by Earl Rognvald, as discussed above, the Westray connection may signal a loyalty to that side of the family. It is also significant that on Rognvald's second expedition to Orkney, he was based in Westray, the people of which, the saga says, accepted Earl Rognvald as their lord and swore allegiance to him (OS LXXI : 163, Crawford 1984 : 71).



Ill. 16. The round church at Orphir (Orkney).

*Possibly inspired by the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem
and built by Earl Hákon after his pilgrimage to Rome and the Holy Land.*

Concerning the Shetland predominance amongst the pilgrims to the shrine of St Magnus, Crawford has pointed out that the chief activist in the veneration of the cult of St Magnus was the blind farmer, Bergfinn Skatason (Crawford 1984), from “the north in Shetland”. He brought two men who were both crippled to the shrine of St Magnus in Birsay where they were healed (M2 XVI : 324). On his second trip to the shrine, this time in Kirkwall, Bergfinn brought his son, Halfdan, who suffered from leprosy, and he was cured by the saint (M2 XIX : 327, M1 XXXIV : 376-377). Bergfinn’s nephew, Amund (Ásmundr) Illugason, was also cured by the saint when he suffered a bad fracture after a cross-beam hit his head. Bergfinn made a vow to the shrine of St Magnus, and after a gift of half a mark of silver, his nephew was healed (M2 XX : 328, M1 XXXIV : 379). Thord, a tenant of Bergfinn’s, had been working on the eve of the festival of the translation of St Magnus²³. Bergfinn told him to stop working, but Thord continued, and when he finished he joined the others at the farm for supper. Thord began drinking, but went insane, and he stayed that way for six days. Bergfinn made a vow on his behalf, offering the shrine of St Magnus half a mark of silver and a three nights vigil should he recover. After this vow was made, Thord recovered his sanity (OS LVII : 126, M2 XX : 327-328, M1 XXXIV : 378). It seems from the recorded pilgrimages and vows made by Bergfinn that he must have played a central role in the cult of St Magnus. As stated by Crawford ‘... it seems fair to say that this man’s involvement in so many miraculous happenings gives him pride of place in the growth of a cult’ (1984 : 72). It is certainly obvious that the author of the *Vita Magnus* wanted to emphasise Bergfinn’s role in the cult of St Magnus as well as focusing on the particular northern popularity of the cult.

The cult of St Magnus was promoted by both earl and bishop who together used the cult to their own benefit – to gain popularity and political control. The shrine had been translated twice, or possibly three times, during the course of a few years. The translation ceremony (from Birsay to Kirkwall) is described as a ‘grand procession’, and an event like this would have put great focus on the cult, possibly increasing its popularity further. This would particularly have been the case amongst Earl Rognvald’s family and supporters. The shrine containing the relics of St Magnus, and the earl’s residence of a “united” earldom, as well as the ecclesiastical centre was moved to Kirkwall, conveniently located within the domain of St Magnus family line. The friends and supporters in Shetland contributed actively in promoting the cult of St Magnus through the many cures they got through making pilgrimages to the shrine, keeping vigil and making vows that sometimes economically benefited the shrine. The platform of the cult of St Magnus was also completed through

bishop William's acknowledgement of the saint's sanctity, especially through his role in the process of translation but also in the decision to celebrate the two festival days, significant in any cult of saints, the day of the martyrdom (16 April) and the day of the translation²⁴ (13 December). The importance of celebrating these festivals is evident in the composing of the *Officium Magni*, hymns, and poetry²⁵. The celebration of the cult of St Magnus in the new cathedral in Kirkwall would have been a magnificent affair, like the building itself, and the relics enshrined in their permanent place somewhere above or near the high altar. On this occasion the *vita* of St Magnus, composed by the same hagiographer who was later to compose the *vita* of St Thomas, would probably have been read loud to the congregation, in the presence of Earl Rognvald, the initiator. Although the *vita* has been lost, its contents have been preserved in the two versions of the Magnus Saga and the Icelandic author of the OS thought it so important that extracts were included in the *Jarlasaga*. The completion of the "platform" of the cult of St Magnus would lead to a continued celebration of the cult, firmly established in the earldom. The annual *celebration* was the third element of the process of translation; the arrival, the installation and the celebration of a saint's cult (Brown 1981 : 93), would lead to social interaction within the community, ultimately bringing unity and concord within the earldom.

e) Concluding remarks.

The cult of St Magnus is first and foremost established in the primary sources of the *Orkneyinga Saga*, *St Magnus Saga Skemmri*, and *St Magnus Saga Lengri*. These sources place St Magnus within a universal context of the cult of saints which originated in the cult of Christian martyrs in late Roman antiquity. The *cultus* of saints in early Christianity was first and foremost centred around the places of burial and veneration of the physical remains and relics of the saints or martyrs. This veneration was ultimately connected with the notion of the presence of the *holy* at the places of burial. Because of the importance of the graves of saints as mediators between heaven and earth, the veneration of the shrine – the adorned coffin or casket – containing the corpse or the relics, became the centre of the cult. This was also the case in the cult of St Magnus. According to Christian customs his body was translated twice in the process of establishing the cult within the earldom. The process of translation may be explained by the three-step model of arrival, installation and celebration. The physical act of translating the dead body of a saint may also be explained by the *elevatio* of the body, or the exhumation of the corpse from the grave and the *depositio*, or the enshrinement of the body within a casket and placed in a prominent position near or above the altar of a church. In the case of St Magnus, the translation of his body from the grave outside Christ Church in Birsay was, as required in this process, tested against fire and found worthy by Bishop William and other clergy / lay-men present on this occasion²⁶.

The primary sources describe the creation of a cult after the universal norm of Christian cults of saints. The piety of Earl Magnus emphasised in the sagas lays the groundwork for the reader to sympathise with his character and the injustice to which he was later subjected. Earl Hákon's character becomes increasingly dislikeable towards the climax (the execution of Magnus on Egilsay). The author tries, though, to amend some of Earl Hákon's wrong-doings by describing him as fine administrator who brought peace to the earldom, perhaps making amends for the murder through his pilgrimage to Rome and the Holy Land later in life (OS LII : 113). The description of St Magnus' character and heroic martyrdom are elements also found in the *vitae* of other royal Nordic saints like St Olaf of Norway, St Knud (*rex*) of Denmark and St Erik of Sweden (Raasted 1961 : 325-326, Vauchez 1990 : 341). It is clear that the hagiographer of the life of St Magnus was familiar with the custom of describing the life and martyrdom of a secular leader as an act of heroism as well as his destiny. In the life of St Magnus the miracles only began *after* his martyrdom²⁷. This being a hagiographic trait of secular saints, whereas biblical and ecclesiastical saints often perform miracles during their lifetime as well as after death. The subsequent miracles performed as

described in the Magnus sagas, seek to establish the sanctity of St Magnus within a universal Christian context, Magnus being just as powerful as any other saints of his time. The sagas also produce supporting “evidence” of pilgrimages made to his shrine to further back-up his sanctity.

Was there a need for the martyrdom and sanctification of Earl Magnus, and why did he become a saint? There are obvious clues laid out in the OS and the M2 pointing in the direction of Earl Rognvald, St Magnus’ nephew. Earl Rognvald was the initiator of the building of St Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall as well as of the joint move of the bishop’s seat and the administrative centre from Birsay to Kirkwall, in his quest for political control of the earldom (although the saga states that the move was singularly St Magnus’ initiative or command (M2 XIX : 326)). However, the cult of St Magnus was not only an “element” in the fulfilment of political aspirations. Nor was it only established for reasons of bringing the earldom religiously up to the same level as Norway or the other Scandinavian kingdoms through the creation of a national Christian cult of great proportions. The cult of St Magnus created a space in which the presence of the *holy* could be experienced, touched and perform miracles. The cult of St Magnus should therefore also be interpreted within the context of religious needs and closeness to the holy. It is not, on the other hand, argued in the present context that the cult of St Magnus emerged as the result of religious needs amongst the Christian clergy and population in the earldom. The establishment of a cult, although founded in political motives, can only gain widespread recognition through willingness to take an active part in the celebration of the cult as well as believing in the saint’s sanctity and abilities to perform miracles. The cult of a saint may within such a constellation of general support actively contribute in everyday life and be an asset for the community as a whole. The cult of a saint provided the community with a physical object and a physical place (the shrine within the church) where the presence of the holy, could be reached and touched. The shrine of St Magnus in its elevated position above the altar in Christ Church in Birsay, in St Olaf’s Church and the cathedral in Kirkwall held this function. Although the hagiographer of the *Vita Magnus* was perhaps bound by the initiator (Earl Rognvald) to emphasise the multitude of miracles performed by St Magnus in order to justify his saintliness, the cult could not have gained widespread support without the *belief* in his *authenticity*.

Notes to chapter 6.

¹ The spread of the cult of St Magnus is discussed in chapter 8.

² The versions used are Guðmundsson, Finnbogi (ed.) 1965: *Íslenzk Fornrit*, vol. XXXIV and Pálsson and Edwards (transl.) 1978: *Orkneyinga Saga. The History of the Earls of Orkney*.

³ The versions used are Guðmundsson, Finnbogi (ed.) 1965 : *Íslenzk Fornrit*, vol. XXXIV and Pálsson and Edwards (transl.) 1996: *Magnus' Saga. The Life of St Magnus, Earl of Orkney 1075 – 1116*.

⁴ The versions used are Guðmundsson, Finnbogi (ed.) 1965: *Íslenzk Fornrit*, vol. XXXIV and Metcalfe, W. M. 1895: *The Life of S. Magnus*.

⁵ Cf. Ch. 7d : 150-151. If the *vita* was written by Master Robert for the consecration of the new cathedral in 1136/37, the pilgrimages mentioned in the text as having *Kirkwall* as their final destination, probably refer to St Olaf's Church where the shrine was kept to await the final translation.

⁶ Cf. Ch. 2a : 8-10 for definition of *the holy*.

⁷ For discussion see ch. 7c : 143ff.

⁸ Cf. Ch 8b : 177.

⁹ The place of the thingstead has not been identified. Flateyrbok names the place *Hrosseyiar*.

¹⁰ The mass of SS Tiburtius and Valerianus (or Tiburti and Valeriani) was celebrated on 14 April. This observation places the martyrdom of St Magnus on 16 April.

¹¹ The year of the martyrdom as referred to in OS and M1 is most likely not correct. Anderson indicates that the year of the martyrdom would have been c. 1115 because the OS states that at the time of Magnus' martyrdom, he and Earl Hákon had ruled the earldom jointly for seven years. King Magnus Barelegs had died in 1103 and King Sigurd's crusade took place in c. 1107. Earl Magus came to Norway to receive his patrimony some time after King Sigurd's departure. This may have been in 1108 which dates the martyrdom to the year 1115 (Anderson 1873 : 66). The M1, on the other hand, states that at the time of St Magnus' martyrdom 'He had then been twelve winters Earl with Hakon' (M1 : 27). If, as according to Andersen, Magnus received his patrimony from King Eystein in Norway in 1107 or 1108 (after Sigurd's departure), the year of the martyrdom would be 1119 or 1120. Bishop Jón of Holar died, however, in 1121.

¹² The sentence implies that none of the earlier bishops had ever resided in Orkney. The OS clearly states that it was Earl Thorfinn, St Magnus' grandfather, who had built Christ Church in Birsay, the seat of the first bishop in Orkney (OS XXXI : 80-81).

¹³ Cf. Ch. 7b : 141, note 8.

^{13a} Cf. Ch. 7c : 143 concerning the burial of St Magnus in Birsay and his mother Thora's role.

^{13b} Cf. Ch. 7c : 143 concerning the first translation of St Magnus.

¹⁴ Earl Pál was present during mass in Christ Church when the congregation demanded a move from Birsay to Kirkwall after the saint had appeared in the dreams of a farmer from Westray (OS LVII : 124-125, M2 XIX : 326-327).

¹⁵ The church in Kirkwall where the shrine was kept *may* have been built by Earl Rognvald Brusason who had taken up residence there (OS : XXIX : 73-75) some time after he had become Earl of Orkney in c. 1035 (Anderson 1873 : xxxvii).

¹⁶ Cf. Ch. 4b : 55-56.

¹⁷ It is also significant that the OS does not mention the presence of any other clergy besides Bishop William in the conflicts between Earl Hákon and Earl Magnus, and Earl Pál and Earl Rognvald. The saga describes a Christmas celebration at Orphir, Earl Pál's estate in Orkney Mainland, which he probably inherited from his brother, Harald (OS LV : 117-118). The celebration took place after the earl's victory over Earl Rognvald: There was a fine church at Orphir, and the saga describes that the family of Earl Pál and people staying at the farm attended Vespers in the evening, Matins in the morning and High Mass before dinner, drinking before Nones and continuing until Vespers in the evening the next day. The saga writer was careful to include the Earl and his family's strict church-attendance during Christmas (OS LXVI : 149-154), but there is no mention of a priest. Nor is there any mention of a priest on Egilsay when Earl Magnus spent the night in the church on the island and celebrated mass and received the *Corpus Domini* (OS XLVIII : 107-108, M2 XI : 319-320, M1 XXV : 365-366).

¹⁸ Cf. Ch. 8f : 188ff.

¹⁹ Cf. Ch. 2a : 8-10.

²⁰ Cf. Ch. 7d : 152.

²¹ Cf. Ch. 7d : 150-151.

²² Cf. Ch. 4b : 56ff.

²³ Cf. Ch. 8f : 194 (A33).

²⁴ The 13th of December commemorates the *first* translation of the exhumed body of Earl Magnus from the grave outside Christ Church in Birsay.

²⁵ Cf. Ch 8f : 188ff.

²⁶ M2 states that Bishop William arranged a great gathering for this first translation of St Magnus. The bones of the saint had almost reached the surface, they were cleaned and a joint of a finger-bone was tested three times in consecrated fire. It did not burn, but took the colour of burnt silver. Some said that the bone ran into the shape of a cross (M2 XVIII : 325-326).

²⁷ The first miracle occurred immediately after his martyrdom on Egilsay, at the place of the execution. This previously rather rocky place overgrown with moss, suddenly turned into a green field (OS LI : 111).

Chapter 7

The Shrine

a) Introduction.

The establishment of a cult in hagiography was as important as the saga-writing of the Norse kings. Through the written word, the establishment of saints' cults became manifested in the physical world, and these physical manifestations became the holy places of the cults. These were places to where pilgrimages were made and miracles occurred. The sagas of St Magnus tie the saint to specific places in the earldom, giving his cult a major advantage: the holy places of his cult may be studied besides the written sources. The physical manifestation and location of the cult in the landscape of Orkney gives the martyrdom, translation and sanctification of Magnus, to some extent, an element of credibility.

The author of the lost Latin *vita*, Master Robert, was certainly well informed of the chronology of St Magnus' life, martyrdom, translation, and sanctification, and where these events had taken place¹. The places first and foremost mentioned in the sagas of St Magnus are the island of Egilsay, Birsay, and Kirkwall, which contribute in *physically* establishing the cult of St Magnus in the Orcadian landscape. These three places represent the primary sites associated with the cult of St Magnus. The places are identified on the basis of the sagas, describing the martyrdom, burial and translations. Chronologically, the places and monuments that physically tie the cult together are Egilsay, the place of his martyrdom; Birsay and Christ Church, the place of his burial and first translation; St Olaf's Church, Kirkwall, where the shrine was kept awaiting the completion of the new cathedral; and St Magnus Cathedral, representing the earldom's new administrative and ecclesiastical centre under Earl Rognvald which became the nucleus of the cult.

b) Egilsey.

In the cult of St Magnus, the island of Egilsay (Map 7 : XVIII) would represent the initial stage of a possible pilgrimage process to the shrine of St Magnus. Here, Earl Magnus spent the night in prayer in the church². There seems, however, to have been some confusion in the actual role of the island in the cult of St Magnus. Sixteenth to nineteenth century writers have presented various interpretations and versions of Egilsay's association with the martyrdom and cult of St Magnus:

Jo. Ben:

A16 *Egilschay, quasi dicas ecclesiae insularum. In longitudine est unum milliare, latitudine autem dimidium; ecclesia hic est Sancto Magno dicata. Quamplurimi insulam hanc pretereuntes vitalia lumina perdunt. Gallinae hic quamplurimo ova deponunt ita ut doliantur foro. Sanctus Magnus in hac insula natus est, et educatus est ab infantia, et dedit domum nutruci suae, nempe messuagium unam terrae, ubi illa sacellum aedificavit, in quo cameram in solo fecit, atque cunabulum, mensam, lectum, et alia domui necessaria ex lapidibus, postea vero dirutum, ubi segetes nunc sunt nihilominus supellectilia adhuc manent (Jo. Ben 1529 : 450-451).*

John Brand:

...Eglesha, a pleasant Isle two Miles long, where a Church much frequented by superstitious People with a high Steeple seen at a great distance, where, (as some would have it,) St. Magnus was buried (Brand 1701 : 60).

George Low:

Near Rousa to the Eastward lies Egilsha a small but fertile island, where St Magnus patron of Orkney was killed about the year 1110 says Torfæus; and buried says some; but this is matter of doubt, as his relics would no question be deposited in the Church which a few years after was built and dedicated to his honour (Low 1773 : 52).

John Tudor:

Crossing over from Sourin, on the eastern side of Rousay, you land at Shelting, which is about a quarter of a mile from the church, On your road to the church you pass a green knoll on which local tradition says Jarl Magnus was executed (Tudor 1883 : 346).

George Barry:

The church dedicated to that saint [St Magnus], which, in its structure, has some marks of antiquity, is said to have been built on the very spot where that infamous deed was perpetrated by his ambitious relation, without provocation (Barry 1867 : 63).

Hugh Marwick, on the other hand, refers to a native of the island who had informed him that there was a grassy spot near the place where the cenotaph now stands, where the children were warned not to play because “blood had been shed there” (Marwick 1951 : 172). There are, however, two churches mentioned in the M2: First of all there is the church in which Earl Magnus spent the night before his martyrdom, and secondly, the saga mentions that a church was built at the place of his martyrdom: *Þar var síðan kirkja gor* (M2 XIII : 322). This seemingly insignificant piece of information may have some impact on the argument for the island of Egilsay being an important place of the cult of St Magnus.



Ill. 17. St Magnus Church, Egilsay.

The island of Egilsay is situated north of Kirkwall, east of the island of Rousay. The present church is dedicated to St Magnus³ and situated in the west of the island (Ill. 17, p. 139). The church has a distinctive round tower, a feature that has inspired archaeologists and architects to first and foremost argue for an early date of the building (P5 : 260). The round tower has been compared and contrasted with similar round towers in Ireland of the early Christian period⁴. It has also been pointed out that St Magnus Church 'is the only survivor of a distinctive group of great round-towered churches in Orkney and Shetland'. At Skail in Deerness, Orkney, the medieval Romanesque parish church had two round towers in its eastern end (Lamb 1987 : 32). The church in Deerness was sketched by George Low in 1774, before it fell into ruin, and Low's sketch show the two circular towers on either side of a vaulted chancel (Low 1774 : 53-54). Another example is found in Tingwall, Shetland (Map 8 : XIX)⁵. This church, also dedicated to St Magnus, had a circular western tower and was architecturally similar to the Egilsay church (Cant 1996 : 170).

In contrast to an early Irish round-tower argument, Fernie has argued that the Egilsay church was most probably built after the Norse conversion to Christianity (c. 995), because churches of this size with towers built in conjunction are 'extremely unusual anywhere in Europe before the middle of the ninth century...' (Ferne 1988 : 140). St Magnus Church was probably built in the period from the late eleventh to the late twelfth centuries because of its Romanesque influences, an architectural style that was popular in Scotland and Norway in this period (Ferne 1988 : 144). In spite of the architectural similarities with some Irish churches, the masonry techniques used in the individual parts of St Magnus Church are difficult to distinguish from other churches in the British Isles. The Irish round towers differ from the Egilsay church-tower in shape, proportion and position (Ferne 1988 : 153). An East Anglian influence is more probable, although more difficult to historically establish, but this region has over a hundred examples of round towers attached to the axis of the facade, and about a dozen of these churches have ground-plans virtually indistinguishable from the church on Egilsay (Ferne 1988 : 156, 158). It is also significant that the materials and techniques used on the Egilsay church equal later building-examples found in Orkney, and thirteenth century masonry in Norwegian churches (Ferne 1988 : 153). Fernie therefore argues for an North Sea origin of the Egilsay church. The East Anglian round-towered churches are similar to the round-towered churches found in north Germany documented as early as the tenth century. Fernie points to the ancient links between the Anglo-Saxons, Schleswig and Saxony, the presence of bishops in East Anglia during the tenth century of presumably German origin,

as well as the great impact of the Holy Roman Empire during the tenth to twelfth centuries. A possible direct contact between Egilsay and the German area seems plausible because of the similarities of building-types and the close links between Orkney and the archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen during the late eleventh to early twelfth centuries⁶ (Ferne 1988 : 158-159). Considering Fernie's arguments for a North Sea origin of the Egilsay church rather than an Irish connection, the dating of the church is brought forward to the eleventh and the twelfth centuries. The reference in the M2 concerning the building of a church at the place where the martyrdom took place may therefore have some importance in the cult of St Magnus. Within this context, the building of the present church can be seen in connection with the translation of the shrine of St Magnus in c. 1136. With the establishment of the cult of St Magnus as part of the movement of the earldom's administrative and ecclesiastical centre from Birsay to Kirkwall, a "commemorative" building of a church at the place of the martyrdom is most probable. The cult's establishment was first and foremost marked by the translation of the shrine and the building of the grand cathedral dedicated to St Magnus in Kirkwall⁷. The great amount of resources dedicated to the promotion of the cult would most certainly have included a particular focus on the places associated with the martyrdom and sainthood of Magnus.

An increased "cultic focus" on the place of the martyrdom would perhaps also have been welcomed by Bishop William because of his connection with Egilsay: The OS states that on three occasions Bishop William resided in Egilsay⁸. Although the bishop's seat was in Birsay, these three references imply that Bishop William resided in Egilsay and that he also used the church there; the bishop celebrated mass on Egilsay and he entertained guests there. But why are there no references in the OS of a new church being built on Egilsay, as there is reason to believe that there was an episcopal residence on the island? It would otherwise be expected that the building of a new church dedicated to the saint would be worth a reference in the sagas, considering the island's importance in the cult of St Magnus, not to mention Bishop William's high profile in the development of the cult. Considering a possible twelfth century date of the church it is reasonable to suggest that Bishop William had the church built as part of his episcopal residence on the island some time after the martyrdom of St Magnus. An episcopal setting of the church would, according to Fernie, 'explain the high quality of the masonry, the techniques of construction and the layout' (1988 : 152). Because of the differences in materials used in the church on Egilsay and the cathedral in Kirkwall, it does not seem likely that the two buildings were built at the same time, during the ten to fifteen years the masons were working on the cathedral in Kirkwall (Ferne 1988 : 153). One would

otherwise expect that if the Egilsay church was built for the translation of the shrine and the movement of the earl and bishop from Birsay to Kirkwall in c. 1136, Kol would have hired the same masons for building the church! For some reason this was not the case.

The question why the building of the round-towered church on Egilsay is not mentioned in the OS remains unanswered, but the M2's reference to a church being built at the place of the martyrdom should be taken into account. Although Egilsay was the residence of Bishop William, he must have accepted or perhaps even suggested that the fatal meeting should take place on the island. If one accepts a twelfth century date for the church, its construction would not have taken place during the twenty years between c. 1116 and c. 1136 when Bishop William was under Earls Hákon and Pál's influence and rule. But as pointed out by Fernie, Bishop William's radical change of heart explained by St Magnus' miraculous interventions favouring the bishop 'are exquisitely apposite examples of the miracle as political symbol, with William changing his allegiance from the ruling Earl Paul to the party of Rognvald' (Fernie 1988 : 145). In this process of changing allegiances after c. 1136, the construction of a new church on Egilsay therefore seems reasonable: Bishop William was given a new church, perhaps in concordance with the bishop's own taste of the North German / North Sea architecture, built as a symbol of unity between Earl Rognvald and the bishop. The cult of St Magnus was thus given a physical presence in the landscape of the martyrdom and the pilgrimage process to the shrine in Kirkwall acquired a place of commencement.

c) Byrgisherað.

After the martyrdom on the island of Egilsay, the body of Earl Magnus was brought to Birsay (Map 7 : XVIII) for burial:

A17 *Siðan var Magnús jarl færðr til Hrosseyjar ok grafinn a Kristkirkju þeiri, er Þorfinnr jarl lét gera (OS LII : 112).*

It was Magnus' mother, Thora, who requested to have her son brought to church for burial. Birsay had been the administrative and ecclesiastical centre of the earldom since St Magnus' grandfather, Earl Thorfinn, had settled and built a church, dedicated to Christ and brought the first bishop to Orkney⁹. Birsay was therefore the obvious place to bring the body of Magnus for burial, which soon became a place of miracles and pilgrimage in the period of Earls Hákon and Pál's rule:

A18 *Því næst gerðu menn ferð sína bæði af Orkneyjum ok Hjaltlandi, þeir er vanheilir váru, ok vokðu at leiði ins helga Magnúss jarls ok tóku bót sinna meina; ... (OS LII : 112)¹⁰.*

The OS emphasises the many miracles performed at the grave of St Magnus, which would have been located in the church-yard outside Christ Church. The remains of St Magnus remained in the grave for twenty-one years before it was translated on St Lucy's Day, on 13 December in the mid 1130s. After Earl Pál's decreasing popularity and Bishop William's new allegiance with the opposite side of the family-branch, the bones were exhumed and tested against fire. When the sanctity of Magnus was established the relics were enshrined and placed above the altar within the church, and Bishop William passed a law which said that both days of martyrdom and translation should be celebrated:

A19 *Vilhjálmr byskup bauð þá heilagt at halda hvárntveggja daginn um allt sitt byskupsdæmi; ... (M2 XVIII : 326).*

The significance of Birsay in the history of the earldom has been commented on by different writers from the sixteenth century onwards, showing varying degree of knowledge of the place as the seat of the bishops of Orkney and as a primary place of the cult of St Magnus:

Jo. Ben:

A20 *Birsa baronia dicitur, ubi palatium est excellens, ubi olim regnabat Rex Orchadiæ; sed Julio Cæsare regnate totum orbem, vi quadam Romæ deferebatur, et subjecta est Orchadia Romanis postea, ut inscriptio unius lapidis testatur. Nomen Regis fuit Gavus (Jo. Ben 1529 : 454).*

George Low:

Of the buildings erected in the age of Thorfinn and Rognvald we can form very little judgement. The foundations may yet be traced near the modern buildings and heaps of ruins now swarded over with green turf (Low 1773 : 51).

And concerning the village of Birsay:

Of the Ecclesiastical buildings there are still such traces left as show us they have [been] strong handsome and spacious. The old church lately pulled down was a neat cross with arches, and if it was not the same Rognvald built, it was far from modern. The foundations of vast buildings are yet to be traced under the Ministers and other gardens strongly built of stone and run lime with the numerous cut free stones proper for gates. &c., yet seen, evidence that these buildings were not intended for ordinary purposes. Add to this the reigning tradition of this being the Bishops palace; all these I say put together, where there is no written evidence will amount almost to a proof that Birsa was the seat of Thorfins Bishoprick;... (Low 1773 : 51).

George Barry:

In a later period, it [the Brough of Birsay] served a very different purpose, as there are in the remains of a chapel, said to have been dedicated to St Peter, which, like its fellow in the burgh of Deerness, was, till of late, a place of pilgrimage, and the receptacle of many devout oblation. Time, operating with other circumstances, has now destroyed the credit of their virtues (Barry 1867 : 33-34).

And

Christ's-Church, in Birsa, was once very famous, and is of very great antiquity; but whether it was the present place of worship that was distinguished by that name, or the chapel in the burgh, the Bergisherad of early times, we are in want of evidence sufficient to determine. That the last is that sacred edifice is most probable, from its being till of late an object of veneration to the people, that they often made vows and offered oblations in it, as they also did in another chapel in Deerness, the two extremities of the Mainland. Though the seat of the bishops was first here, there is no remaining vestige of their palace, unless it stood on the site and was incorporated with that reared by the Sinclairs, which is now in ruins (Barry 1867 : 228).

The quotations above reflect the problem concerning the identification and location of Thorfinn's Christ Church in Birsay. In spite of the many references in the OS as well as the Magnus sagas, the actual location of Earl Thorfinn's Christ Church remains unsolved. The reason being that the place-name Birsay (ON: *Byrgisherað*) may refer both to the village of Birsay and the Brough of Birsay. The sagas do not distinguish between these two places, hence the confusion of the actual location of Christ Church, the bishop's seat and the earl's residence.

The village of Birsay is situated on the north-western coast of Orkney Mainland and the Brough of Birsay is connected with the Mainland by a rocky tidal isthmus. Both the village and the Brough have late Norse ecclesiastical and settlement sites with the ruins of the monastic settlement and twelfth century St Peter's Church on the Brough (Ill. 18, p. 146, P6 : 261) and the present-day parish church in the village dedicated to St Magnus (Ill. 16, p. 140, P7 : 262). A number of excavations have been undertaken in order to establish the different ecclesiastical and settlement-phases of the different structures on the Brough and in the village. Consequently the debate concerning the location and identification of Earl Thorfinn's Christ Church in *Byrgisherað* has been sparked by the medieval Christian presence in both the village and on the Brough:

Radford promoted the Brough as the site of Earl Thorfinn's Christ Church interpreting the associated buildings north of the church-site as the Bishop's palace, and saw the Peter-dedication in connection with Earl Thorfinn's pilgrimage to Rome. In Radford's opinion Earl Thorfinn's Christ Church would have been dedicated both to Christ and to Peter as the earl would probably have brought relics from his pilgrimage to Rome. Radford argued further that 'In the early period, before the twelfth century, Christian churches were dedicated to Christ and named after a Saint the founder or often the principal saint, of whom a relic was enshrined in the building', but in later centuries the first dedication to Christ would have been forgotten and 'the looser phrase dedicated to St Peter would become normal' (Radford 1959 : 11).

Cruden's excavations on the Brough of Birsay uncovered an early Christian Celtic site beneath the church dedicated to St Peter, consisting of a wall positioned at an angle to the south wall of the twelfth century church and parts of a rounded enclosure encircling the church and associated buildings and walls (Cruden 1965 : 23-24). These earlier structures were described as a small ecclesiastical settlement, probably occupied in the period between the eighth and the early ninth centuries. Cruden interpreted these pre-Norse structures as a parallel to Early Christian hermitages like Inchmurray and Kildreenagh in Ireland and Unys

Seiriol in Anglesey (Cruden 1965 : 25). Later Norse structures as well as the church and associated buildings on the Brough were identified as Earl Thorfinn's eleventh century palace, the Bishop's palace and the "cathedral" dedicated to Christ, comparing the site with twelfth century episcopal palace at Gaðrar in Greenland (Cruden 1965 : 29-31).

The extensive archaeological excavations in the Birsay Bay area and on the Brough of Birsay has in recent years produced much information on the pre-Norse and Norse settlement in Birsay. Morris has pointed out that the structures on the Brough underlying the church, previously described as a Celtic church, may by analogy with *Brattahlið* in Greenland and the Brough of Deerness, possibly be dated to the Norse period (Morris 1989 : 14), as also argued by Radford (1983 : 31) and Morris with Emery (1986). However, excavations in the Beachview area in the village of Birsay revealed a major Viking/Late Norse settlement area, turning the question of the location of Earl Thorfinn's Christ Church to focus on the village of Birsay and the present-day parish church dedicated to St Magnus (Morris 1993 : 305). As pointed out by Morris 'the Birsay Parish Church site is the key to any discussion of the *Saga* entries' (Morris 1996 : 4), and on the basis of these excavations 'we are dealing with a balance of probabilities which may suggest that this church is indeed the Christchurch of the *Saga*' (Morris 1996 : 5).



Ill. 18. Structures on the Brough of Birsay.

Barber's excavations at the Birsay village parish church revealed five phases of architectural construction (phases 2-6), phase 1 being non architectural. The present parish church dates back to 1664 and further architectural modifications were carried out in 1760, 1867 and 1903, classified as phases 5 and 6. The first architectural phases revealed the foundations of a stone-built oratory, probably of Irish type, dated to *c.* AD 900 (phase 2). The building was later extended westward to create a larger nave. Phase 3 was therefore recognised as a Romanesque church building with an extension west of the original oratory from the period AD 900-1100. During phase 4 the walls of phases 2 and 3 were rebuilt in the Romanesque tradition in the middle of the twelfth century. This fourth phase may have been in use until the Reformation, after which it fell into disuse, and may consequently have been the ruins Low described in his 1773 account. The excavation did not, however, uncover any traces of Low's reported 'neat cross' or rather cruciform shape of the ground-plan (Barber 1996 : 27-30).



Ill. 19. St Magnus Church, the Village of Birsay.

The main arguments for the location of Earl Thorfinn's Christ Church on the Brough or in the village have been put forward by Crawford and Lamb. Crawford has argued that the substantial architecture on the Brough of Birsay tell us that 'we are here viewing a settlement of the most powerful strata in Norse society in the Orkney isles' (Crawford 1993 : 31). The foundation at the west end of the twelfth century St Peter's Church on the Brough was intended to be a tower and it is therefore 'arguable that this feature provides clinching evidence that this church was the cathedral of Orkney before the move of the bishop to Kirkwall in 1137'. This intended structure or tower indicates that the builder of the church was of a high class that would place the church in the category of cathedral or 'eigenkirche' 'of the highest rank in Scandinavian society' (Crawford 1993 : 33). Lamb, on the other hand, has pointed out that the references in the sagas to the location of Christ Church is *i Byrgisheraði*¹¹, a reference which does not refer to a specific place, but to somewhere in the district of Birsay. This would mean the entire north-western corner of the Mainland (Lamb 1974 : 201, 1983 : 39). Crawford, on the other hand, has pointed out that the district of Birsay, referred to in the sagas, comprises today the two parishes of Birsay and Harray, i.e. quite a large part of the west mainland of Orkney. Because of the unspecific references to the earl's residence and the bishop's seat in Birsay they could in theory be located anywhere within this area, although most likely in the coastal area of the parish, near the village of Birsay (Crawford 1993 : 23). The place-name, Birsay, suggests that the Brough formerly was a headland and not a tidal island. The name seems to derive from the ON *byrgi*, meaning an enclosed place. The term Brough 'indicates a natural defensible site and not specifically a pre-Norse fortification'. If the Brough of Birsay had always been a tidal island, Crawford would expect e.g. the term ON *holmr* used instead of *brough*. If the Brough was formerly a headland and the site of the early earls and bishops of Orkney, a change in the environment could explain an abandonment of the site (Crawford 1993 : 31).

The Peter-dedication on the Brough does not correspond with the place being the centre of the cult of St Magnus, according to Lamb. The Brough has gone through a sequence of secular and then Christian use, but the village has until the sixteenth century been the location of both the bishop's and the earl's palaces (Lamb 1974 : 200, 202). This corresponds with the saga-reference to both earl and bishop residing in Birsay. Lamb also emphasises the element of local tradition in Birsay which maintains that Christ Church was located in the village and not on the Brough. Lamb's main argument for placing Christ Church in the village is *continuity*: Birsay village has for centuries been the home of both earls and bishops, and

their choice of residence would most likely have been at a place that traditionally had been the ruling seat in Orkney (Lamb 1974 : 202).

Although there are valid arguments for locating Earl Thorfinn's residence, Christ Church, and the bishop's seat both on the Brough of Birsay and in the village on the Mainland, the problem will continue to evoke interest and further discussions. Following Fernie's argument, above, that the building of the church on Egilsay in the twelfth century may symbolise the establishment of the cult of St Magnus, the alliance between Earl Rognvald and Bishop William, and their joint move from Birsay to Kirkwall; phase 4 of the Birsay parish church could possibly be interpreted within a similar context. According to Barber, the building of phase 4, the Romanesque church, may have been initiated by an important event like the translation of a shrine (Barber 1996 : 31). Crawford, on the other hand, has suggested that the non-completion of the possible tower at the west end of St Peter's Church on the Brough may be due to that very move from Birsay to Kirkwall (Crawford 1993 : 31). As far as the cult of St Magnus is concerned, Birsay's significance as a primary place of pilgrimage and cultic veneration began with the first translation and enshrinement within Christ Church. The twenty year long process of recognising the sanctity of Earl Magnus and establishing the cult in Birsay was suppressed by the earls Hákon and Pál as well as by Bishop William. The bishop's change of heart, from Earl Pál to Earl Rognvald, with the subsequent move from Birsay to Kirkwall would have lead to an increased focus on the places of significance of the cult: the place of the martyrdom and the place of the burial and translation. It is unlikely that the first seat of the Orkney bishops and Christ Church would fall into decay after the earl's and bishop's move to Kirkwall, unless the settlement on the Brough came to house a monastic order (Crawford 1983 : 115). By analogy with the bishop's seat on the island of Selja in Norway which moved to Bergen in 1170 (Map 2 : XIII)¹², it 'would lead one to expect that when the bishop moved out, a community of monks, probably Benedictine, would have been installed to preserve the religious life' (Crawford 1993 : 33). A continued ecclesiastical use of the site, whether on the Brough or somewhere near or in the village, would certainly encourage and continue the veneration of the cult of St Magnus in Birsay.

d) *Kirkjuvágr*.

A21 *Síðan fór Vilhjálmr byskup austr í Kirkjuvág með virðuligu foruneyti ok flutti þangat helgan dóm Magnúss jarls. Var skrínit sett yfir altari í kirkju þeiri, sem þar var (M2 : XIX, 326-7).*

The church that the M2 refers to may have been the eleventh century church dedicated to St Olaf in Kirkwall (Map 7 : XVIII). At the time of the grand procession led by Bishop William, the town is described as market town with only a few houses, but since the translation of the shrine it grew considerably: *Þá var í Kirkjuvági kaupstaðrinn lítt húsaðr, ok hefir hann mjök síðan eflzk (M2 : XIX, 327).* The church in question, of which only the archway remains, may have been built by Earl Rognvald Brusason, nephew of Earl Thorfinn and the foster-son of St Olaf, to whom the church is dedicated. Earl Rognvald Brusason took up residence in Kirkwall some time after 1035, and the town's ON name *Kirkjuvágr* does not occur in the OS until Brusason settled here (OS XXIX : 73). This may indicate that the first church built in Kirkwall gave its name to the place, *Kirkju-vágr* meaning 'the bay of the church' and that Earl Rognvald Brusason did indeed build the first church in this place, dedicating it to his foster-father, St Olaf, who had been martyred about five years earlier and who was by this time hailed as a saint in the North Atlantic. Kirkwall is the principal town of Orkney, situated in the parish of St Ola, on the *eið*, or portage, between the Bay of Kirkwall and Scapa Bay, on the south-eastern Mainland. The Romanesque archway of St Olaf's Church (Ill. 20, p. 151) is made of carved sandstone and is located in St Olaf's Wynd off Bridge Street. Little is known of the church's original location nor of its early building history, but some early writers did have some knowledge of its earlier existence. Jo. Ben stated that the church had been reduced to ashes by the English and that its burial ground was used for criminals:

Jo. Ben:

A22 *Est etiam hic alia ecclesia, in cineres redacta ab Anglis, nomine St Olais Kirk, ubi nunc sepeliuntur malefactores (Jo. Ben 1529 : 453).*

George Barry:

The county parish, in middle of which the town stands, is named St Ola, which, before the cathedral of St Magnus became the ordinary place of worship, or even perhaps before its foundation, had a church appropriated to it, which it is well known stood near the shore of the road or bay of Kirkwall (Barry 1867 : 22).

Dryden described the church of St Olaf as being much mutilated over the years, so that 'little could be stated of its original style and arrangement'. Dryden planned the church in 1855 (P8 : 262), and described it as a parallelogram with its southern side abutting on the lane, where the original entrance, or archway, is located (Dryden 1896 : 110-111). Inside the remaining archway, east of the entrance, there was a *repositorium*, or niche, possibly containing the *aspersorium* i.e. a bowl containing holy water (RCAHMS 1946, Orkney, vol. II, no. 400 : 141). Burials were identified outside the walls of the church which 'makes it probable that this was the parish church; not a chapel of ease or of private endowment' (Dryden 1896 : 111). St Olaf's Church may therefore have been the first church built in Kirkwall, or built on the site of an earlier church, as no other churchyards of an earlier date have been identified in Kirkwall (Mooney 1939 : 75).

Ill. 20. The doorway of
St Olaf's Church, Kirkwall.



St Magnus Cathedral

In the cult of St Magnus the church in Kirkwall only plays an intermediate role as the keeper of the shrine. The third translation from St Olaf's to the new cathedral is not given any emphasis by the author of the original *vita* although this was probably the more important and final instalment of the shrine. In light of the Latin *vita* by Master Robert possibly being written for the inauguration of the cathedral, it is curious that the sagas do not put any emphasis on miracles performed by the saint in connection with this translation. The final transfer from the *kirkju þeiri, sem þar var* (St Olaf's Church) to the cathedral, is rather uneventfully described in the M2 only. The ground-plan for the cathedral was drawn by Earl Rognvald and *Síðan var þangat fluttr heilagur dómr Magnúss jarls, ok verða þar margar jarteinir at hans helgum dómi* (M2 XX : 330). If the *vita* was written by Master Robert for this event, then a possible procession would not have taken place yet, and the many miracles were yet to be performed. This rather insignificantly described event would not have been so insignificant! The paragraph lacks the elaborate description of the removal of the shrine from St Olaf's Church, the grand procession led by Earl Rognvald and Bishop William, and it lacks a description of the installation of the shrine on or above the altar in the new cathedral. The word *fluttr* (moved) is not adequate for the grandeur of this situation – this final and most significant *translatio* of the shrine of St Magnus. A possible explanation may be that Master Robert did not include in his *vita* events that were yet to take place and/or that later translators possibly added this inconclusive sentence, which again may explain why the event is included in the *Magnúss Saga Skemmri* only.

The new cathedral in Kirkwall (Ill. 21, p. 155) was built to house the shrine of St Magnus (P9 : 263)¹³. The magnificent twelfth century building is situated in a high position within a churchyard and has an extraordinary colour-scheme of red and white ashlar. The first phase of the building may be ascribed to masons of the Durham school as the ultimate inspiration, perhaps through an intermediary. But its size and proportion is best compared with Dunfermline Abbey (Cruden 1977 : 88, Cambridge 1988 : 114, Fawcett 1988 : 88-89, 94, RCAHMS 1946, Orkney vol. II, no. 339 : 113). In 1151 Earl Rognvald and Bishop William embarked on their two-year pilgrimage to Byzantium and the Holy Land where they visited all the holy places and bathed in the River Jordan (OS LXXXVIII : 231). As pointed out by Cruden, it is unlikely that the earl and the bishop would have left Kirkwall before the choir was completed and the shrine had been installed (Cruden 1986 : 118-119). The importance of the cathedral as the new symbol of the earldom and the bishopric as well as the centre of the cult speaks against this. The first phase would therefore have been completed by

1151, perhaps as early as 1142 since the OS describes that during the progress of work, more was being done during the first year than in the following four or five:

A23 ... *ok fór svá mikit fram verkinu á þeim misserum, at minna gekk á fjórum eða fimm þaðan í frá* (OS LXXVI : 176).

The building was extended in the period c. 1142 / 1151 – 1250, the transepts were completed and major changes were made in the design of the cathedral.

The foundations of the first phase were evidently laid out as a single operation, and the walls and piers were started from the eastern end and proceeded westwards. The choir, transepts, and a central semi-circular apse were built in the Romanesque style. After the first building-phase there was a break in the continuity of the construction. According to Fawcett, the cathedral probably started off on a tight budget that became less restricted as the work progressed, showing greater richness of detail in the architecture (Fawcett 1988 : 89, 94). It is therefore interesting that the OS describes how Earl Rognvald increased the building capital some years into the construction-process: he summoned the farmers and offered them the chance to buy their estates. The farmers agreed and after that there was no shortage in money for completing the cathedral (OS LXXVI : 176).

Although the original twelfth century apse was demolished during the second building-phase, Cruden argues that the surviving evidence ‘suggests the influence of the cult of relics upon its plan and design’: The space between the two easternmost bays of the original choir are particularly narrow and made up of massive rectangular piers. This uncommonly narrow space between the high altar and the original rounded apse may indicate that it was intended to function as a passage across the choir, from one bay to the other, passing behind the high altar in front of the apse (Cruden 1986 : 121, also Mooney 1925 : 74). This possible passage between the high altar and the apse may have been constructed for the circulation of pilgrims, depending on the shrine being placed in the original apse: ‘With the development of the cult of relics and the consequent need to provide circulation for pilgrims within the church the apse ceased to be the synthronon and became the repository of the shrine’ (Cruden 1977 : 93 and 1988 : 86).

The next major building phase began some time after the deaths of both Earl Rognvald and Bishop William¹⁴. This increased effort would have involved new infusion of funds, and may correspond with the election of Bishop Bjarni Kolbeinsson in 1188. The work involved the extension of both choir and nave, as well as a new crossing and enlarged transept chapels.

A rectangular eastward extension of the choir was quite common in the greater churches in the British Isles, at the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This allowed the clergy to be held separate from the transepts and nave (Fawcett 1988 : 97-98). During this phase, the presbytery was completed, but probably not until the second quarter of the thirteenth century. Work on the nave was not given the same priority, but it advanced at the hands of less skilled masons than those working on the eastern limb. Towards the middle of the thirteenth century, the central tower had been completed, and work in general stopped. The final work-phase of the cathedral probably began two to three hundred years later, and the west end of the nave was completed (Fawcett 1988 : 103-105, 109).

Concerning the Cathedral's architectural links, Cambridge has stated that 'Given the church's close links with Anglo-Norman Romanesque, initial comparisons must be to English work. There can be little doubt that, from this perspective, St Magnus is on a lesser scale: almost exactly a half-scale version of Durham []' (Cambridge 1988 : 122). Although the Cathedral is built on a lesser scale in an Anglo-Norman context, its architectural intentions reveal a closer link with the major, contemporary Romanesque churches of Scandinavia and Scotland. Within this context the Cathedral's cultural links therefore become more obvious, as expressed by Cambridge: 'Comparison with those areas with which the earls of Orkney had direct contact, in particular Scotland and Scandinavia, may, therefore, be more appropriate' (Cambridge 1988 : 122). This point will, however, be returned to in chapter 9.

The extension of the cathedral during the early thirteenth century, and the enlargement of the choir in particular, points in the direction of an increased need for space. This may also be an indication of increased cultic activity as the cathedral came to house the shrines of two saints. Earl Rognvald also became venerated in Orkney, though probably not to the same degree as St Magnus. Earl Rognvald did not suffer a martyr-like death, though violent¹⁵, and his body was buried in the cathedral and later translated by Bishop Bjarni¹⁶. The OS describes that Earl Rognvald had been much loved and was deeply mourned throughout the earldom:

A24 *Andlátsdagur Rognvalds jarl Kala er fimm nóttum eptir Márlumessu ina fyrri um sumarit¹⁷ [the Feast of the Assumption]. Fóru þeir Haraldr jarl þaðan út í Orkneyar með líkit með fogru foruneyti ok veittu gropt at Magnúskirkju, ok hvildi hann þat, til þess er guð birtti hans verðleika með morgum ok stórum jarsteinum, en Bjarni byskup lét upp taka helgan dóm hans at leyfi páfans (OS CIV : 282).*

The saga establishes his sanctity in the many miracles performed at his grave in the cathedral, and some time between Earl Rognvald's death in 1158 and the bishop's own death on 15 September in 1223 (DN 17B : 297), the relics of the earl were translated. As the relics of Earl

Rognvald must have been translated before 1223, the extension of the new, square-ended choir is given another dimension, set within the tradition of the cult of saints. According to Crawford, the cathedral 'is the result of the political activism of Rognvald and his father, and it is testimony to the wealth and cultural achievements of the earldom dynasty in the mid-twelfth century' (Crawford 1998 : 32). It was this effort to found, build and endow the body of clergy in the cathedral that earned him the sainly status. The promotion of his cult was rooted in ecclesiastical pressure headed by Bishop Bjarni. With the promotion of St Magnus, the status of the Orcadian Bishop's office increased, and Bishop Bjarni...

[] was in a position to fully appreciate the benefits for the Church in Orkney of Earl Rognvald's energy and foresight with regard to the establishment of Magnus' cult, a development which had resulted in the elevation of Kirkwall to the level of an international pilgrimage centre like Trondheim, the focus of pilgrimage to St Olaf's shrine (Crawford 1998 : 35).

Ill. 21. St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall, from the east.



The cathedral has a complex history of construction and the facade was not completed until the fifteenth century. In 1441 Bishop Thomas de Tolach of Orkney received a letter from Pope Eugene IV. The letter was a confirmation from the Pope, upon the bishop's application, granting St Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall the privilege of issuing a seven-year indulgence for those who sought the cathedral on the feast of St John the Baptist and on the two feasts of St Magnus:

A25 ...[] *omnibus et singulis christifidelibus vere confessis vere contritis qui dictam ecclesiam deuote visitauerint annuatim et pro preparacione et conservacione illius pias elemosinas dederint irrogauerint seu ad hoc manus adiutrices porrexerint videlicet in festo beati Johannis baptiste ac ipsius beati Magni martiris passione et translacione [] ... (DN XVII : 443, no. 552).*

There are no records revealing whether the indulgences granted to the penitents during the middle of the fifteenth century led to a more intensified pilgrimage process to the shrine of St Magnus. Although the letter clearly states that a great number of pilgrims yearly flocked to the cathedral, the prospect of receiving indulgences was most likely intended to stimulate and continue this process. The document implies that there was a need for an increased focus on the shrine in order to raise money for its furnishing and upkeep. The bishop's intention may have been to raise money in order to complete the facade of the cathedral, which was, indeed, not finished until the fifteenth century (RCAHMS 1946, Orkney, vol. II, no. 399 : 114). The bishop's request to the Pope may also have been based on a reduced income of tithe. During the fourteenth century there are records of annual gift being paid by the authorities of Aberdeen to the cathedral in Kirkwall for the upkeep of bread and wine to the sacrament of the altar for the years 1331, 1342, 1343, and 1393¹⁸.

A26 *Et episcopo Orcadie, pro vno dolio vini et tribus celdris frumenti, ad ecclesiam Sancti Magni Orcadie, [] (DN XIX : 658, no. 534).*

The Pope's answer to Bishop Thomas de Tolach's letter contains the only reference, apart from the saga-descriptions, to a pilgrimage process specifically associated with St Magnus. Although Brand stated that St Magnus Church on Egilsay was much frequented by 'superstitious people' and that St Peter's Church on the Brough of Birsay used to be a place of pilgrimage, according to Barry, these references do not directly tie the pilgrimage process mentioned in Pope Eugene's letter or the sagas with St Magnus. Pope Eugene's letter specifies the dates of preferred pilgrimage which would grant indulgences: on the *passio* and the *translatio* of St Magnus, as well as on the feast of John the Baptist (24 June). The letter does not, however, refer to indulgences possible to obtain on other feast-days of the Church, which similarly would have been a considerable factor in attracting pilgrimages to the shrine in Kirkwall as well as being a source of income for the church¹⁹. A pilgrimage process, such as that referred to in Pope Eugene's letter, would consequently have contributed in raising funds to complete the cathedral throughout the latter half of the Middle Ages.

e) *Skrín yfir altar.*

The Magnus saga, give several references to pilgrims coming to the shrine to venerate or to receive a cure, and they correspond well in their accounts of persons, their places of origin and to where they were headed. The majority of pilgrimages made were ... *til staðar ins heilaga Magnúss jarls*, or ... *at skrini ins heilaga Magnúss jarls* (e.g. from M1 XXXIV : 378-379). The M1 has also three references to pilgrimages made specifically to Kirkwall: Bergfinn Skatason brought his son, Halfdan ..., *til Kirkjuvágs, ok vöktu þeir báðir feðgar at helgum dómi Magnúss jarls* (M1 XXXIV : 376); A lot was thrown that Sigrid, who was working for Thorlak at Baliasta in Unst, Shetland, was to ... *sækja til Kirkjuvágs helgan dóm ins heilaga Magnúss jarls* (M1 XXXIV : 380). Finally, Groa, from the Mainland who was possessed by an evil spirit ... *fór til Kirkjuvágs til ins heilaga Magnúss jarls* where she got a cure (M1 XXXIV : 380). The M1 also contains a reference to a man named Asmund who was injured. A lot was cast whether he should make pilgrimage to Rome or ... *gefa fé til Magnúskirkju* (M1 XXXIV : 379). The two Magnus sagas do not specifically mention pilgrimages to the shrine of St Magnus in Birsay, but soon after the burial of St Magnus in Birsay

A27 ...*sýndisk opt himneskt ljós um nætr yfir grepti Magnúss jarls. Síðan tóku menn at helta á hann í nauðsynjum sínum, ef í háska váru staddir, ok greiddisk þegar mál þeira, sem þeir beiddu. Jafnan var kenndr himneskr ilmr yfir grof hans, ok fengu menn heilsu þaðan. Því næst fóru menn af Hjaltlandi ok Orkneyjum, þeir sem vanhelilir váru, ok vokðu menn þar at leiði hans of fengu þar bót meina sinna* (M2 XV : 323).

This paragraph refers specifically to the twenty year period when St Magnus was buried outside Christ Church in Birsay. There are, however, no references to pilgrimages made to Egilsay, the place of the martyrdom. This may be seen in connection with the twenty-year period until Magnus was translated in Birsay. During this period, the sagas point out that Bishop William was reluctant to acknowledge the cult of St Magnus which was rapidly growing. The OS also says that Bishop William resided in Egilsay while earls Hákon and Pál were still alive²⁰, which in turn may explain the lack of pilgrimage references to this island. As long as the earls in Orkney were opposed to the cult of St Magnus, Bishop William would probably not have allowed any form of cultic worship taking place on Egilsay, which would otherwise have been an important site for the cult.

The sagas reveal that the pilgrimage process triggered by the miracles attributed St Magnus was first and foremost focusing on Kirkwall, and Birsay to some degree. More specifically, the pilgrimage process was focusing on the *shrine* in which the body of the saint

was kept. All references to pilgrimages made in the sagas are made to the shrine itself. Nowhere are any specific routes mentioned, nor that the pilgrims stopped at any other places along the way. The translations of the relics represented major breakthroughs in the development of the cult of St Magnus. These were the occasions when the cult was acknowledged and elevated in society, both physically and religiously. The acknowledgement of the cult gave it focus and space in which it was allowed to grow, and the physical shrine placed in an elevated position gave it rank next to the altar of Christ. It is not known exactly where the shrine was placed, only that it was installed above the altar: *Siðan tóku lærðir menn helgan dóminn ok logðu í skrin ok settu yfir altari* [in Birsay] (M2 XVIII : 326), and *Var skrinitt sett yfir altari í kirkju þeiri [in Kirkwall], sem þar var* (M2 XIX : 327). These two paragraphs refer to the two first translations that happened as results of miraculous “interventions” by the saint. The shrine was placed *yfir* (above) the altar on both occasions and the importance of the altar in a church or temple is implicit: It is the *sanctum sanctorum* of the consecrated building. The installation of the shrine of St Magnus above the altar was therefore the final and ultimate recognition of the sainthood and the cult.

As referred to above, only the M2 mentions the final translation from St Olaf’s Church to the cathedral²¹. This sentence stating that many miracles took place at his shrine in the new cathedral does not reveal the actual location of the shrine. As far as Christ Church and St Olaf’s Church are concerned, the shrine is described as being placed *yfir altari* – above the altar. If the shrine of St Magnus was placed in the original rounded apse of the cathedral, a possible description of its location would have been behind or east of the altar. Although some corporal remains may have been distributed elsewhere²² the relics would have taken up some space considering these were the skeletal remains of a grown man. The coffin may have been placed within an adorned metal or stone container – the shrine. One speculation may be that such a shrine was made for the relics of St Magnus for this occasion, and grand enough to be located (on the floor) in the apse behind the high altar, rather than in an elevated position, somewhere above it.

In comparison with other medieval saints’ shrines, it is astonishing that the author of the *vita* did not include a description of the shrine and its location within the new cathedral, as the location of the shrine of St Magnus would indeed be centrally placed. Upon translation of a saint, the location of the shrine would normally be associated with the *sanctuary*, the most sacred place in the church, either the high altar itself or the apse further east in the church. At Christ Church in Trondheim (Nidaros) (Map 2 : XIII), the shrine of St Olaf was probably placed upon the high altar located within the octagonal apse (P3 : 258). This eight-pillared

octagon formed an ambulatory that may have served to direct the stream of pilgrims passing the shrine (Fischer 1965 : 22). At Christ Church in Canterbury (Map 6 : XVII), the shrine of St Thomas á Becket was located in the crypt below the chancel. In 1218 the rebuilding of the choir and the eastern chapels of the cathedral were near completion. To mark this occasion the Archbishop proclaimed that on 7 July 1220, the shrine of St Thomas would be translated to a new position, centrally placed in the new apse behind the high altar (Loxton 1978 : 88-90). In St Andrews, the shrine containing relics of that apostle was enshrined within a reliquary chapel located behind the high altar – the focal point of the whole cathedral. The altar was set against a screen which enclosed the Chapel of the Relics (Lamont-Brown 1989 : 38).

The location of the shrine and the high altar, and the procession of pilgrims within the church building is modelled on the sacred places in Jerusalem. Pilgrimage to the Holy Land was indeed ‘a pilgrimage within a pilgrimage’. The route to the Holy Land was the physical, temporal journey and the City of Jerusalem the immediate goal. On the next level the pilgrimage restarted at the gates of the Holy City and the journey proceeded to include all the holy places associated with Christ and Christianity such as the Holy Sepulchre (P1 : 256), the Temple of the Lord and Mount Sion. Indeed ‘the topography of Jerusalem was experienced liturgically as a historical narrative of the Passion’ (Coleman and Elsner 1995 : 88). In its final stage the pilgrimage process began yet again at the entrance to the Church of Holy Sepulchre enshrining the Tomb of Christ and ‘the centre of the world’. The completed building, dedicated in 1149, also housed a series of chapels that served as stations on the way to the Tomb of Christ, commemorating the crowning and dressing of Christ; the stripping of his garments; the place where the Wood of the Cross was said to have been discovered by the Empress Helena; and Christ’s Prison (Wilkinson, Hill and Ryan 1988 : 33-34).

For St Magnus Cathedral, the shrine was the centre of the cult and the centre of the building, and it is reasonable to assume that pilgrims in procession would have had access to the shrine of St Magnus. This could have been reached by way of the western entrance and proceeding along the southern and northern aisles (Cruden 1977 : 93 and 1988 : 86). When reaching the chancel, the pilgrims would have turned left and crossed from the southern to the northern side of the chancel in the passage between the high altar and the sanctuary where the shrine was located; the southern and northern aisles and the passage between the high altar and the shrine would then form an ambulatory ensuring a controlled flow of pilgrims not disturbing services or violating the sanctity of the high altar. The last reference to the shrine of St Magnus is in the saga of King Hákon Hákonsson. During the winter of 1263 King Hákon spent his last days at the Bishop’s Palace in Kirkwall. The king was fatally ill and when he

died, his body was lain in a coffin which was placed in front of the high altar²³ (*Håkon Håkonssons saga* : 337-339).

During the Reformation in the middle of the sixteenth century, all “papistic” objects and traditions were abolished by the reformed Church. The veneration of saints and cultic rituals were suppressed and destroyed. This was also the situation in Orkney. The shrines of St Magnus and St Rognvald would have been destroyed and the relics removed from the cathedral. However, during construction-work in 1919, a wooden box containing human bones was found inside one of the southern pillars thought to have been part of the twelfth century apse. The skull was analysed and it was concluded that the cause of death was a blow to the head by a sharp object, probably an axe. This was an extraordinary find, in light of the explicitly described martyrdom of St Magnus. The man buried inside the south pillar was probably a person of importance, since his remains had been centrally placed, or rather hidden, in the cathedral. Some decades earlier, the remains of another male had been found in a similar position within the opposite northern pillar, and according to Mooney ‘There had been a tradition in Kirkwall that the tomb of St Magnus was on one side of the altar and that of St Rognvald on the other; but it was not known whether that referred to the altar in the apse or the later one at the east end of the extended choir’ (Mooney 1947 : 85-87). In 1848 a stone tomb was discovered beneath one of the northern arches of the extended choir. The tomb contained the remains of Bishop William the Old who died in 1168. In the tomb a staff-head of bone and iron as well as a leaden plate were found. The leaden plate was engraved on either sides and read:

H REQVIESCIT WILLIAMVS SENEX FELICIS MEMORIE

and

P(RI)MVS EPIS(COPVS) (RCAHMS 1946, Orkney, vol. II, no. 339 : 126)

Harald the Young, the son of Earl Rognvald’s daughter, Ingrid, received in 1176 the title of earl and half of the Orkneys from King Magnus Erlingsson, as well as half of Caithness from King William the Lion. Shortly after he was slain by Earl Harald Maddadarson, and the OS describes that a great light could be seen where his blood had been spilt. The people of Caithness thought of him as a true saint and a church was built at the site of his murder:

A28 *Haraldr jarl ungi fell við torfgrafir nokkurar. Var þá þegar um nóttina sét ljós mikit, þar er bloðit hafði niðr komit. Þeir kalla jarlinn sannhelgan, ok er þar nú kirkja, sem hann fell, ok er hann þar jaðaðr á nesinu. Ok gerask ótoluligar jarteinir fyrir hans verðleik af guði, ok vitrar þat jafnan, at han vildi yfir til Orkneyja til Mágnúss jarls ok Rognvalds, frænda sinna (OS CIX : 292-293).*

This entry in the OS describes that Earl (and saint) Harald the Young desired to go to Orkney, to his join his kinsmen, Earls Magnus and Rognvald, in Kirkwall. A translation of his relics is not described as having taken place. Although the OS does not further establish the degree of Harald the Young's veneration in the earldom, the reference above expresses an understated notion that the cathedral in Kirkwall was the cultic hub of the North Atlantic.



Ill. 22. St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall. Interior view from the west.

f) Indulgences and pilgrimage.

The Christian conversion brought the perception of the *holy* to the Northern Isles. During the Middle Ages, St Magnus became the personified holy, and his shrine a holy place. What is known about the St Magnus pilgrimage process is essentially based on the information deduced from the sagas: The people, the places, and the events described in the sagas are tied with a specific landscape. The sagas are consequently the main sources for recognising St Magnus as a holy man, and the cathedral in Kirkwall – the holy place manifested in the Northern Isles.

The pilgrimage process of St Magnus is ultimately linked with the primary sites of the cult as described above. Egilsay, Birsay and Kirkwall formed the nucleuses of the cultic veneration of St Magnus. The pilgrimage process to the shrine would have included these three places, either as forming a circle of sacred places visited in a chronological order, or visited separately on specific festivals. Thirteen to fifteen century papal and episcopal documents confirm that penitents were encouraged to seek the holy places on particular saints' festivals to receive indulgences. The prospect of obtaining indulgences became an important factor in generating pilgrimage during the Middle Ages²⁴, and contributed in focusing on the festivals of saints within the Church. Indulgence, of Lat. *indulgentia*, is defined as...

[] the extra-sacramental remission of the temporal punishment due, in God's justice, to sin that has been forgiven, which remission is granted by the Church in the exercise of the power of the keys, through the application of the superabundant merits of Christ and the saints, and for some just and reasonable motive (Kent 1910 : 1).

The letters of indulgences granted, listed in Appendix B, are examples of local indulgences, as opposed to universal indulgences. The universal indulgences could be gained in any part of the world, but the local indulgences could only be gained in a specific place, in a church or at an altar etc.. A further distinction is between the perpetual and the temporary indulgences. The perpetual indulgences could be gained at any time in contrast to the temporary indulgences that were granted on certain days such as saints' festivals and church anniversaries, or within specific periods such as during Easter or Lent. The examples in Appendix B are all temporary indulgences granted to churches and altars for penitents seeking these places on anniversaries and particular festivals. Only the Pope and the bishops could grant indulgences, but in 1215 Pope Innocent III restricted the bishops' privilege to one year at the dedication of churches and forty days on other occasions and on the anniversary of

dedication (Kent 1910 : 2, 6). B1-2, B4-5, B13-15, B17-19, and B21-23 are examples of the maximum amount of forty days granted by bishops and archbishops within the Archbishopric of Nidaros in the period 1275-1466. The Popes' unlimited privilege is, though modestly, reflected in B6-10. In the period 1290 to 1371 indulgences were set at a maximum of one year and forty days at important churches in the Archbishopric of Nidaros. The example B20 concerning the cathedral in Kirkwall is, in contrast, an example of a generous amount of seven years granted in 1441 to penitents seeking the cathedral on the festivals of the martyrdom and translation of St Magnus, as well as on the festival of John the Baptist (24 June).

As mentioned above, indulgences were granted at specific churches, particularly in connection with saints' festivals. Likewise, individual altars could also be visited on specific festivals in order to receive indulgence. In 1442 there were two altars in St Swithun's Cathedral in Stavanger, dedicated to the Holy Cross and to St Vincent (B16). Penitents making pilgrimages to these two altars on any of the c. 25 separate church-festivals, would have been granted indulgences for a maximum of forty days by each of the archbishops and bishops listed. The amount of church-festivals commemorated in the letters of indulgences therefore give some indication of which saints that were venerated in specific churches in certain periods. Examples B1-6 show the amount of indulgences granted to St Swithun's Cathedral in Stavanger during a period of twelve years, from 1278-1290. Apart from the anniversary of the cathedral's dedication, the following saints appears to have been important in that church: St Swithun, St Vincent, St Michael, St Andrew, St Olaf, St Nicholas, St Anskar, and St Mark. In B4 St Mark is replaced by St Catherine. B5, on the other hand, is a letter favouring the festivals of biblical saints including the patron saint of the cathedral. The indulgence granted upon visitation to the altar of the Holy Spirit in the same cathedral in 1297 (B15) included both St Benedict and St Margaret on the list of festivals. The late document concerning indulgences granted at the two altars referred to above (B16), includes the festivals of St Lawrence, St Stephen, St Halvard, St Martin, and St Agatha. The detailed letters of indulgences granted to St Swithun's Cathedral by the Archbishop of Nidaros and the bishops of Orkney, Oslo and Hamar, stand in sharp contrast to the papal letters of indulgences granted to the churches in the bishoprics of Stavanger (B6), Bergen (B7-8), Nidaros (B9-10), and Kirkwall (B20). These letters only mention a limited number of church-festivals, mainly focusing on the main festivals of Christ, Mary and John the Baptist as well as the festivals of the individual church-dedications /patron saints. The reason for this modest amount of church-festivals was probably that Rome chose to focus on the great church-festivals of Christ and

Mary, Easter and Pentecost etc. as well as the patron saints, rather than on the great number of individual saints venerated in the different churches and dioceses.

Parish churches such as examples B11-14, B17-19, B21-22 were similarly visited by penitents who were granted indulgences by the archbishops. Particularly the later letters of indulgences granted during the early- to mid-fifteenth century contain extensive lists of festivals that were encouraged to be celebrated in the churches. It is in the late medieval documents that the commemorations of St Magnus appear (B17-B23). In the period 1395-1466 indulgences were granted at seven churches and one hospital in the Archbishopric of Nidaros, and one church in the Archbishopric of Lund (B22), all at the maximum of forty days. If the indulgences granted on saints' festivals reflect the local veneration of these saints, documents B17-B23 are consequently evidence for a late revival of the cult of St Magnus in the eastern parts of the Archbishopric of Nidaros.

Unfortunately, these documents do not contain any information that specify the dates of the saints' festivals (*natale, passio, martyrio, translatio* etc.). The dates of the festivals appear to be generally known, and specification was therefore unnecessary. The letters of indulgences containing the festival of St Magnus would either have related to the martyrdom (16 April) or to the translation (13 December²⁵). Another saint by the name of Magnus Tranensis was venerated in parts of Denmark, and commemorated on 19 August²⁶ (De Geer 1985 : 114-115), but the Old Norwegian Church Laws and the liturgical sources of the Archbishopric of Nidaros all place the Magnus-festivals in April and December²⁷.

In document B20, which positively refers to Magnus of Orkney, *Magni* is entered both as *sancti Magni martiris* and *beati Magni martiris*²⁸. In documents B18-19 and B21, *Magni* is described along with other saints as *sanctorum martirum*, in B22 as *sancti Magni*, and in B17 and B23 as *beatorum martirum*²⁹. The name, *Magni*, is in all documents placed in the same context as other important Norse and Scandinavian saints³⁰: St Olaf, St Halvard, St Sunniva (and the Seljumen), St Eric, and St Knut. This association places the indulgences granted on the festival of St Magnus in a wider context, as part of the group of important Scandinavian cults. It is therefore reasonable to suggest that the *sancti Magni* referred to in the letters is indeed St Magnus of Orkney.

The examples referred to (B1-23) are only a fraction of existing documents concerning indulgences. These have been included in the present context to highlight *how* pilgrimage may have been stimulated in order to increase or renew the focus on *the holy*, i.e. a church, an altar, or the cult of a saint. The centre of the cult of St Magnus was Orkney, and the initial pilgrimage process was, according to the sagas, generated by miracles. If one accepts that the

Magni referred to in these documents is St Magnus of Orkney, the letters of indulgences prove that the cult and festival of St Magnus was celebrated in these churches in the period 1395 to 1466. It is similarly deduced that pilgrimage was encouraged in honour of St Magnus (on either of the two festivals of martyrdom and translation) to achieve indulgences. The letters of indulgences (B17-23) also reveal that the festival of St Magnus was as highly regarded as the main festivals of the Church as well as the festivals of other important saints such as those of e.g. St Olaf, St Clement, and St Lawrence.

The pilgrimage process of St Magnus was in its first stage encouraged by earl and bishop through the physical establishment of a cult-centre in Kirkwall. The cult won the attention of the people of Orkney and Shetland who are described as having made regular pilgrimages to the shrine. But this is saga information and not documented evidence. In 1441 the pilgrimage process to the shrine of St Magnus became a matter of episcopal concern (A25). Pope Eugene IV's letter to Bishop Thomas de Tolach confirms that pilgrimage to Kirkwall is still an ongoing, yearly process, but that the prospect of indulgences would probably further increase the amount of pilgrims. Another reason for the Pope to grant such a generous privilege to the cathedral in Orkney may have to do with an event which was to take place in late summer 1441. On 30 August Pope Eugene gave Bishop Thomas permission to hold the Archdeaconry of *Laudonie*³¹, in the bishopric of St Andrews in Scotland (Map 6 : XVII), with the Bishopric of Orkney (DN XVII : 450, no. 561). On one hand, these events may have been two separate arrangements made by Bishop Thomas since he was at the curia. Could this, on the other hand, have been the cause of celebration that was marked by the seven-year indulgence in order to draw the attention of potential Scottish pilgrims?

The letters of indulgences, B1-23, disclose that not only were the patron saints venerated in the different churches or at the altars. Other saints' festivals were celebrated and considered important enough to grant indulgences to remove the temporal punishment due to sin – already forgiven through confession. A25 and B20 show that not only were indulgences granted at St Magnus Cathedral on the festivals of martyrdom and translation. Pilgrimages made to the cathedral on 24 June, the festival of John the Baptist, was considered similarly important.

In an earlier document dated 28 June 1419, Pope Martin V granted, upon application, the chaplaincy of St Lawrence Altar in St Magnus Cathedral to John Patrickson: ... *et etiam quia de capellania sine cura ad altare sancti Laurentij in dicta Orcadensi ecclesia ...* (DN XVII : 301, no. 391). The fact that St Lawrence was celebrated with an altar in the cathedral suggests that also this cult was present in Orkney, next to St Magnus and John the Baptist.

Throughout the period from the establishment of the cathedral until the Reformation, many such altars were consecrated in the cathedral. The example below, from St Swithun's Cathedral in Stavanger, give some indication of the number of consecrated altars present in a relatively small twelfth century cathedral in Norway (P4 : 259). The document is the will of Bishop Alf of Stavanger from 1478, states that gifts were bequeathed to: the altars of St Gilles, Our Lady, St Michael, the Trinity, the Holy Cross, and Higher Altar of the Holy Cross (DN IV : 724-725, no. 987). There were other altars in St Magnus' recorded by Hossack (1900). His list contains fourteen altars dedicated to the following saints, including that of St Lawrence, but Hossack points out that there were possibly others:

St Barbara's Altar	The altar belonged to at least one house in Kirkwall.
St Christopher's Altar	The altar with land and a house in the Laverock, near the Bishop's Palace in Kirkwall.
St Duthac's Altar	The wealthiest altar. St Duthac also had a chapel in the cathedral.
St Katherine's Altar	The altar was supported by rents from farms chiefly in St Ola, Holm and Shapinsay
St Magnus' Altar	A richly endowed altar.
St Ninian's Altar	In the mid-sixteenth century Malcolm Sinclair, Shetland, was chaplain to this altar.
St Mary's Altar	These altars were endowed with land.
St Columba's Altar	
St John the Evangelist's Altar	
St Lawrence's Altar	
St Peter's Altar	
St Augustine's Altar	
St Salvator's Altar	
St James's Altar	(Hossack 1900 : 39)

Hossack pointed out that the popularity of the obscure saint, Duthac, could not be easily accounted for. The lack of a St Rognvald's Altar, on the other hand, is similarly odd. Since Earl Rognvald was hailed as a saint in the earldom and translated to a prominent position within the cathedral by Bishop Bjarni, there would most likely have been an altar dedicated to him. This potential altar may have been placed in the northern part of the cathedral, possibly in the choir, reflecting an approximate position of his relics placed in the norther pillar in the choir. The extension of the choir during the early thirteenth century supports the theory of an increased need of space, and the new extended choir may have been designed to facilitate the cult of the second saint of the earldom.

g) Concluding remarks.

In light of the material presented in this chapter, the shrine and cult of St Magnus remained the principal focus of pilgrimage throughout the Middle Ages in the Northern Isles, with particularly increased attention in certain periods. Primarily the final translation to the cathedral in c. 1137, and the saga-descriptions of pilgrimages made to ...*Kirkjuvágs helgan dóm ins heilaga Magnúss jarls...* The architectural alterations of the cathedral's choir in the early thirteenth century may point to the cult of St Rognvald, but this enlargement of sacred space would probably have facilitated the processional access to both shrines. Not until Pope Eugene IV's document of 1441 does the pilgrimage process to Kirkwall again become the focus of attention. Evidence for pilgrimage to the shrine of St Magnus is absent in the period between c. 1223 and 1441. However, pilgrimage to seek indulgences on the festival(s) of St Magnus was encouraged in eastern Norway in 1395, in the bishopric of Oslo (B17-18 and B23). The indulgences granted in the period 1395 to 1466 (B17-23) should consequently be interpreted as expressions of the cult of St Magnus outside the earldom, a theme which will be further explored in the following chapter³².

The St Magnus pilgrimage process is consequently defined by the following material:

1. *The primary sources:* The sagas' descriptions of the place of martyrdom (Egilsay) and the translations of the relics. The sagas' descriptions of miracles taking place at the shrine when located in Birsay and in Kirkwall, and the subsequent pilgrimages made to the shrine of St Magnus. The building of a cathedral in Kirkwall to house the shrine of St Magnus.
2. *The physical evidence:* The presence of twelfth to thirteenth century churches in Orkney dedicated to and associated with the martyrdom, the grave, and the translations of St Magnus (Egilsay, Birsay, and Kirkwall). The twelfth century cathedral in Kirkwall which dedication, plan, and enlargement strongly suggest the presence of *cultus*.
3. *The papal document:* Pope Eugene IV's document of 10 May 1441, which confirm that pilgrimage to the cathedral had been an ongoing process until this date. Its continuance was encouraged through extensive indulgences granted to pilgrims on the two festivals of St Magnus and on the festival of John the Baptist.

With the absence of historical and documentary evidence of *cultus* and pilgrimage during the approximate two-hundred year period from the enlargement of the choir until the letter of indulgence of 1441, the cult and pilgrimage of St Magnus is not, on the other hand, interpreted as discontinued. On the contrary, the extension of the choir during the early- to mid-thirteenth century may rather be interpreted as the prospect of future pilgrimage. The

Church in the earldom expected an increased pilgrimage process to the shrines of the two saints, Magnus and Rognvald. The document of 1441, on the other hand, reflects this past pilgrimage process, referring to the many pilgrims who yearly flocked in devotion to the cathedral from many parts of the kingdom – to seek the many venerable relics, of St Magnus as well as of other saints (A25). The many “venerable relics” referred to in the letter of indulgence are not specified, except for the relics of St Magnus. The relics of St Rognvald would certainly have been amongst these, and some of the altars would possibly have contained relics, installed in cavities at the time of consecration and dedication of the altar³³. The indulgences granted at the festival of John the Baptist imply that the cathedral also kept relics (most likely *brandea*) of this saint.

At this point it is appropriate to stop and recapture traditions associated with pilgrimage sites in Orkney, Shetland, and Norway. The sites referred to in chapter 5, parts c) and d) were places of pilgrimage, or at least places with associated pilgrimage traditions³⁴. A common and striking feature is the deposition of objects, especially coins, in or around the site. The information concerning such depositions was either recorded in secondary sources, or uncovered during excavation. It has been suggested that the deposition of the thirty-two coins in the chapel of Deerness in Orkney may be interpreted as a thank-offering, or as a payment to reinforce ‘the prayer for relief or positive good’³⁵ (Stevenson 1986 : 345). This suggestion seems reasonable in light of finds interpreted as pre-Christian votive offers deposited in particular (or sacred) places, as well as the numerous offers paid to the Church. Money, given as alms, was at times the unfortunate side to the granting of indulgences. Although the doctrine itself had no connection with pecuniary profit, alms-giving to either the Church or the poor came to hold a conspicuous place. There was always the danger of regarding the payment as the price of the indulgence (Kent 1910 : 7). Several pilgrimage sites in Orkney, Shetland, and Norway are either associated with traditions of coin-deposition, or coins were recovered from the sites³⁶. The deposition of coins at places held sacred, or traditions of coin-deposition, may be interpreted within the tradition of alms-giving in return of indulgences, redemption from temporal punishment or purgatory due to sin. Although the coins found at Deerness date to the post-Reformation, their presence point to Jo. Ben’s earlier description of men performing penance-rituals, throwing stones and water behind their backs (A13). Coins found at places of pilgrimage are consequently associated with rituals of redemption; penance, or rituals performed on saints’ festivals were relieved by the giving of alms. The local reference to Weisdale Church (Map 8 : XIX) in Shetland as the ‘*aamis-kirk*’ undoubtedly means ‘alms-church’ (Cant 1975 : 18, RCAHMS III, no. 1524). Performing

'works of penance' at this church and by paying alms could, 'for a small sum', 'clear off scores', as described by Low (Low 1774 : 79-80).

Although the historical sources, the documents, the churches and the cathedral clearly define the cult and pilgrimage of St Magnus within a particular historical setting, only parts of the pilgrimage process is revealed. Archaeological artefacts related to the St Magnus pilgrimage process, e.g. coin-depositions, pilgrims' badges or ampoules containing holy water, are yet to be found. A crucifix mould found in or near the cathedral in Kirkwall (Yeoman 1999 : 97, ill. no. 75) may have been used to produce souvenirs for pilgrims. Pilgrims' souvenirs, badges in particular, from the shrine of St Magnus would, however, be recognised by the saint's individual symbol or attributes³⁷. These would have been bought at the shrine and worn on the clothes as proof of pilgrimage (Hauglid 1938 : 117). By analogy to the many pilgrims' badges that have been found, particularly in medieval churches and cemeteries around Europe and their rather uniform typology, the crucifix mould from Kirkwall cannot positively be identified as a badge mould used to produce crucifixes to the pilgrims. A positive crucifix matching this mould or a proper badge depicting St Magnus holding his attribute (possibly a sword?) found outside Orkney, would have added a new dimension to our understanding of the St Magnus pilgrimage process.

Although the pilgrimage process to the shrine of St Magnus is illuminated by the evidence outlined above, the *cultus* had two dimensions: on one hand, it encompassed the pilgrimage process to Orkney and the internal veneration of and focus on the cult. On the other hand, it proceeded to influence the cultic landscape abroad³⁸. In light of the indulgences granted by Norwegian archbishops and bishops on the festivals of St Magnus during the period 1395 to 1466, the following chapter will further investigate the spread of the cult of St Magnus in the North Atlantic, where he was celebrated and commemorated, as well as the various forms of cultic expression.

Notes to chapter 7.

¹ Cf. Ch. 6a : 114. Master Robert had probably been to Scotland.

² Cf. Ch. 6b : 118.

³ A dedication that can only be traced back to the first half of the sixteenth century in Jo. Ben's description of Egilsay A16 p.138, above.

⁴ See e.g. Dryden 1896 : 135, Radford 1983 : 27, Fawcett 1985 : 34 and Cruden 1986 : 10.

⁵ Cf. Ch. 8b : 173.

⁶ Cf. Ch. 5b : 84, (Crawford 1983 : 105-109).

⁷ Cf. Ch. 5b : 89, and 7d : 152ff.

⁸ 'Next morning Blann ferried him [Svein Asleifarson] north to Bishop William on Egilsay, where on their arrival the bishop was saying mass' (OS 1978, 66 : 127).

'Then Sigurd sent messengers to Egilsay, reporting to the bishop [William] what had happened' (OS 1978, 76 : 140).

'Next morning the bishop celebrated an early Mass, then went off to see Bishop William on Egilsay and stayed there till the tenth day of Christmas, after which the two bishops set out in a grand procession to see Earl Rognvald and state their mission' (OS 1978, 77 : 143).

⁹ Cf. Ch. 5b : 84-85.

¹⁰ See quotation A19 from the M2, below.

¹¹ Cf. Ch. 5b : 84.

¹² Cf. Ch. 5b : 87-88.

¹³ Cf. Ch. 6d : 126.

¹⁴ Cf. 7e : 160, for Bishop William.

¹⁵ Earl Rognvald was killed by a spear in Thurso, Caithness.

¹⁶ Bjarni skáld Kolbeinsson hrugu of Wire (Orkney), was consecrated bishop of Orkney in 1188 after the death of Bishop Vilhjálmr [II] (William the Second) (DN XVII B : 297).

¹⁷ Probably on 20 August, five days after the feast of the Assumption in 1158.

¹⁸ DN XIX : 658, no. 534, : 681, no. 561, : 684, no. 565, : 736 no. 623.

¹⁹ Cf. part 7f : 162ff.

²⁰ Cf. note 8.

²¹ Cf. p, 152.

²² Cf. Ch. 8d : 181ff.

²³ Cf. Ch. 2b : 12ff.

²⁴ Cf. Ch. 4c : 65.

²⁵ 13 December was also the festival of St Lucy of Syracuse whose cult was not observed in the Archbishopric of Nidaros until after the Reformation.

²⁶ Cf. Ch. 8a : 172.

²⁷ Cf. Ch. 8f : 188.

²⁸ Cf. Appendix A, A25.

²⁹ The distinction between *sanctus* and *beatus* is in this context irrelevant. However, *sanctus* is normally used to announce that a dead person has been canonized. *Beatus*, on the other hand, is normally used to announce that a dead person is amongst 'the Blessed' (being in a state of supreme happiness next to God), which is the first step before canonization.

³⁰ Cf. Ch. 5b : 84 ff for other Norse and Scandinavian saints.

³¹ The Archdeaconry of Lothian.

³² Cf. Ch. 8b : 173ff.

³³ Cf. Ch. 2b : 12ff

³⁴ Cf. Ch. 5c : 91ff, and 5d : 105ff.

³⁵ Cf. Ch. 5c : 102.

³⁶ See note 34, above. Orkney: St Tredwell's Chapel in Papey, and The Brough of Deerness. Shetland: Weisdale Church in Tingwall, Cross Kirk in Eshaness, and Cross Kirk at Clibberswick in Unst. Concerning holy wells: Heljabörn in Unst, Shetland and eight of the thirty-four holy wells included in Bang's list (Bang 1885 : 1-9, no. 1,3, 4, 6, 8, 13, 16, and 30).

³⁷ Cf. Ch. 8g : 198ff.

³⁸ Cf. Ch. 3c : 43ff, for discussion on the "impact-area" of cultus.

Chapter 8

Cultus

a) Introduction.

The cult of St Magnus, as discussed in chapters 6 and 7, is first and foremost tied to the saga-descriptions of his life, martyrdom and translations. The places and monuments associated with the cult in the sagas are based in Orkney, i.e. Egilsay, Birsay and Kirkwall. As discussed earlier¹, the sagas reveal a strong northern focus of the cultic veneration of St Magnus. The majority of individuals making pilgrimages to the shrine were from Shetland. Viewing the cult of St Magnus from a different perspective, its spread and veneration covers an even larger area; the North Atlantic. Until the Reformation churches were being dedicated² to St Magnus, and wooden carved images of the saint were placed on altars³. The dates of the martyrdom and translation⁴ were celebrated in the Mass, composed for these occasions, and poetry describing his life was written. These elements are interpreted as expressions of *cultus* and describe different aspects of veneration. Although the cult was popular and certainly well known throughout the North Atlantic, it is impossible to determine the actual influx of pilgrims to the shrine of St Magnus in Kirkwall during the early stages of the cult. By the end of the twelfth century the life, martyrdom, and sainthood of Magnus had been firmly established in the earldom, through hagiography, the building and dedication of ecclesiastical monuments, and the celebration of the two feasts. His sanctity was certainly well known by people outside the Northern Isles as stated in the *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*:

A29 Suðrey(ing)ar segja. at þesir menn er konungi syndyz voru þeir. hinn heilagi Olaf ok Magnus Jarl ok kolumbás (*Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* 1977 : 149).

The expressions of *cultus* described below are identified with St Magnus, Earl of Orkney, but the name is also associated with another saint included in liturgical calendars. Relics ascribed to St Magnus of Orkney, was believed to have been translated to St Vitus Cathedral in Prague and to Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen) (Mooney 1928 : 33-34), and the name “Magnus” occur in certain church calendars, missals and breviaries. Some of these entries do

not refer to St Magnus, Earl of Orkney, but rather to an earlier saint of the same name, St Magnus Tranensis, whose feast was celebrated on 19 August (De Geer 1985 : 114-115, 121, 123). Little is known of the identity of this saint, but the entries concerning St Magnus on the festivals of martyrdom and translation in April and December indicate that it is St Magnus of Orkney that is intended.

The spread of, and the expressions of, the cult of St Magnus have been divided into eight categories comprising parts b) – i). The criteria for selection is determined by the fundamental element of the spread of saints' cults, i.e. the movement of relics to people – the *translatio*. The translation of relics was usually characterised by the arrival, the installation, and the annual celebration of relics⁵. The translation meant that the sanctity and protection contained in the relics were transferred to new places, sometimes far from the cult centre. The arrival and installation of new relics was further established through the annual celebration of the festivals of the saints. The translation of relics had therefore two principal goals:

- 1) To ritually elevate the dead into sainthood, e.g. when St Magnus was recognised as holy, he was physically removed from the grave outside Earl Thorfinn's Christ Church in Birsay, and installed within the church in an elevated position above the altar.
- 2) To physically transfer relics to other societies (away from the cult-centre), which could either mean the introduction of a new cult, or act as an encouragement to continue the veneration of a particular saint.

Dedications, relics, place-names, liturgical sources etc. are hence interpreted as the result of the spread of the cult of St Magnus. Amongst the catalogue of expressions of *cultus*, below, which is for the most part based on secondary information, part e) Dating legal documents, should therefore be especially noted. The eleven documents included contain references to the festivals of St Magnus, and as far as it has been possible to establish, this information has not been previously discussed.

b) Dedications.

The dedications to St Magnus as expression of *cultus* have been identified in Orkney, Shetland, Caithness, the Faeroes, Iceland, Norway and England. These are associated with two cathedrals, several churches of various ranks, one hospital and one altar. In the medieval Roman Church the act of dedication or consecration would normally include the translation / installation of relics or a shrine in the church or on the altar.

Orkney.

(Map 7 : XVIII)

Egilsay: St Magnus Church⁶.

Birsay: St Magnus Church⁷.

Kirkwall: St Magnus Cathedral⁸.

Stronsay: Magnus-dedication to possibly a chapel in the northern part of the island. The dedication is marked on fifteenth and seventeenth century maps such as Mercator (1595) and Speed (1610). This possible chapel-site has not been archaeologically identified.

Shetland

(Map 8 : XIX)

Tingwall: St Magnus Church (Ill. 23, page 175). This was the central church in Shetland and the seat of the archdeacon. The church, of which now only a vaulted chamber remains was known as the '*steeple-kirk*', and had a western cylindrical tower like St Magnus Church on Egilsay, however, built to a much larger scale. The medieval church survived until 1788 when it was replaced by the present church located north of the old church-site, overlooking the Loch of Tingwall with the site of the Ting Holm, the *Althing*, of Shetland. There were two other head-churches within the parish of Tingwall; Weisdale Church dedicated to St Mary and the church of Whiteness at Kirkhouse dedicated to St Olaf (Goudie 1904 : 163-164, Cant 1975 : 18, 49, 1996 : 170, Crawford 1984 : 75).

Yell: St Magnus Church. Head-church of Hamnavoe parish in South Yell. No visible structures remain within the graveyard enclosing the modern church. There were two other head-churches in Yell; St Olaf's Church at Breckon in North Yell and St John's Church at Reafirthin Mid Yell (Goudie 1904 : 164, Cant 1975 : 15, 50).

Northmavine: St Magnus Church. North Roe was earlier known as 'St Magnus parish', and it was thought that the graveyard site at Houll was dedicated to St Magnus (Cant 1975 : 17, 48). The church dedicated to St Magnus was, however, located at Ollaberry (Crawford 1984 : 77), but no structures remain at this graveyard site. There were two other dedications in Northmavine, to St Gregory and to St Olaf. Both may have been head-churches within the parish, and one was probably the graveyard site at Hillswick (Goudie 1904 : 164, Cant 1975 : 17, 48),

Delting: St Magnus Church. Probably located at Laxobigging, but no structures remain at the site believed to be the grave-yard near the head of Garths Voe. In Delting there were two head-churches; at Scatsta, dedicated to St Paul, and at Voe (Olnafirth) dedicated to St Olaf (Goudie 1904 : 164, Cant 1975 : 17, 47).

Dunrossness: St Magnus Church. Head-church of former 'mid parish' of Sandwick. The church-site is located at the head of the sandy *vik* which gives its name to the parish. There were three other head-churches in Dunrossness; at the churchyard-site at Mail dedicated to St Columba and St Paul, at Quendale dedicated to the Holy Cross, and at Papil, dedicated to the Holy Cross and St Bartholomew (Goudie 1904 : 163, Cant 1975 : 19, 47-48). The church has been reduced to a graveyard site, however, the central part of the graveyard is visibly raised possibly concealing the medieval structures.

Without archaeological excavation to determine structure and architecture of the five dedications to St Magnus in Shetland, their dates are difficult to determine. St Magnus at Tingwall is the exception; its plan was almost identical with St Magnus Church on Egilsay, only on a slightly larger scale. The origin of the Tingwall-church with the Romanesque choir and circular western tower would indicate a mid-twelfth to mid-thirteenth century date. The remains of the other four churches are, on the other hand, fragmentary and their dates remain inconclusive.



Ill. 23. The vaulted chamber of St Magnus Church, Tingwall.

Caithness.

(Map 6 : XVII)

Shebster Reay / Spittal: A hospital and adjacent chapel dedicated to St Magnus. The foundation was first recorded in a charter dated 14 December 1476, and in 1547 it was recorded in another charter where it is referred to as a 'rectory of the church called the hospital of St Magnus' (Easson 1957 : 155). The hospital is also referred to in the Sheriff Court Books at Wick (1634-1641) mentioning both the hospital and the chapel dedicated to St Magnus (Mowat 1937 : 39-40). The hospital may have been part of a northbound pilgrimage route to Kirkwall (Crawford 1982 : 63, 1990 : 15).

Watten: A fair was held at Watten-Wester on 16 April on the 'Magnusmas' (Barrett 1914 : 182-183). Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, about twenty statutory fairs were being held in Caithness which names suggest a tradition going back to pre-Reformation times (e.g. Candlemas, Petersmas, Marymas, Roodsmas, and Lukesmas). One of these fairs was called *Magnamas* (Mowat 1933 : 226).

Halkirk: A *St Magnus Fair* used to be held in Halkirk every December (Mooney 1935 : 275).

Dunbeath: In 1624, John Sinclair of Geanies was given a royal licence to establish a trading burgh at Inver, Dunbeath. This trading burgh was to be called "*Magnusburgh*". This possible Magnus-dedication, as well as the combined St Ninian/St Magnus statue in Dunbeath Castle (see 8g, p. 198), suggest that there was a continued and localised Magnus-cult into the late medieval period in Dunbeath (Crawford 1990 : 15-16).

The Faeroes.

(Map 4 : XV)

Kirkjubøur: St Magnus Cathedral. The ruins of the cathedral are situated at the bishop's seat of Kirkjubøur in Streymoy (P12 : 265). The cathedral is situated next to the Bishop's palace and was built in the Gothic style during the second half of the thirteenth century. Though never completed, the installation of relics⁹, the eight consecration crosses in nave of the cathedral (P13 : 265), and the dedication to St Magnus would normally indicate that the cathedral had been consecrated, but investigations revealed that an altar never had been installed (Dahl 1968 : 188). The cathedral was probably founded by bishop Erlend who was bishop of the Faeroes from 1269 to 1308. The cathedral was never finished, apparently because of the heavy burden of tax and work laid on the Faeroese people in completing the building. Archaeological excavations in the nearby medieval church dedicated to St Olaf, have revealed two graves, one most certainly a bishop's grave containing a wooden crozier with a gilded head (Dahl 1968 : 190).

Iceland.

(Map 3 : XIV)

In Iceland there were five churches dedicated to St Magnus before the fifteenth century recorded in the Icelandic *máldagar*¹⁰. Dedications to St Magnus only occur as co-dedications of the churches:

Kolbeinsstaðir: Diocese of Skálholdt. St Magnus was co-patron with St Mary, St Peter, St Catherine and St Dominic. St Nicolas was the primary patron. The church was consecrated between 1323 and 1397 (Cormack 1994 : 119, 205).

Nes, Selvogur: Diocese of Skálholdt. St Magnus was co-patron with St Mary, St Þorlákr and St Catherine (Cormack 1994 : 119, 212).

Sæból: Diocese of Skálholdt. St Magnus was co-patron with St Mary, St John (the Evangelist), St Þorlákr and St Catherine (Cormack 1994 : 119, 226).

Þykkvaskógur: Diocese of Skálholdt. St Magnus was co-patron with St Mary (Cormack 1994 : 119, 233).

Þönglabakki: Diocese of Hólar. St Magnus was co-patron with St Peter, St Andrew and St Nicholas. St Olaf was the patron of the church (Cormack 1994 : 119, 233).

Norway.

(Map 2 : XIII, P3 : 257)

Nidaros: There are no churches dedicated to St Magnus in Norway, but an altar was dedicated to St Magnus in Christ Church in Nidaros: The altar was referred to in 1430 (REF NGL see Mooney) and later in 1433 as ... *sancti Magnus altare som er j Nidroos domkirkiu* ... concerning the payment of *Michels korn* and *Olafs fe* (Michael's-grain and Olaf's-cattle) (DN V : 444-447, no. 631, 632, 633, 634). There were several altars in Christ Church referred to in the period 1430-1514, amongst these were altars dedicated to:

St Andrew (DN V : 441-441, no. 627)

St Blasius (DN III : 653-654, no. 898)

St Halvard (DN V : 441, no. 626)

St Jørgen / Ørjan (DN V : 732, no. 1015)

St Olaf (DN V : 421-422, no. 601)

The Magi (DN V : 464, no. 651)

St Michael (DN V : 421, no. 600)

St Theobald (DN V : 438-439, no. 623-624)

St Thomas (DN V : 419-429, no. 598, : 437-438, no. 622).

The references to the altar and chapel dedicated to St Magnus in Christ Church are late medieval, and Frostathingslova of Nidaros is the only law that includes St Magnus Mass on 16 April¹¹. On this background it may be reasonable to suggest that the cult of St Magnus was observed, to some degree, in this part of Norway. There is also a reference in the OS to St Magnus' father, Erlend, who died in Norway, at some time in the period c. 1098 to 1103. King Magnus seized earls Erlend and Pál in 1098 and sent them to Norway and in 1103 King Magnus was slain in Ireland. Earl Pál was buried in Bergen and Earl Erlend was buried in Nidaros:

A30 *Þar spurði hann [Magnús konungr] andlát Erlends jarls austan um haf; hann hafði andazk vart í Niðarósi ok var þar jarðaðr, en Páll jarl í Björgvin* (OS XLII : 101).

Although Earl Erlend died and was buried in Nidaros (perhaps in Christ Church) ten to fifteen years before the martyrdom of St Magnus, it is possible that there may be a later veneration of his son, the saint, in Nidaros.

Urnes: In Urnes stavkirke, in Sogn and Fjordane County, there is a runic inscription on one of the posts in the nave reading: *Mag [nus] hin helg [i]* interpreted as 'Magnus the Holy' (Bugge and Olsen 1908 : 133-134).

England.

(Map 6 : XVII)

London: There is a church dedicated to St Magnus the Martyr on the south side of the Old London Bridge. The present church, built in 1676 replaced an earlier church also dedicated to St Magnus. The earlier church and Magnus-dedication precedes the birth of the Orkney-saint, so the dedication in London would originally have related to another Magnus. On the other side of the bridge was a church dedicated to St Olaf, to whom many churches were dedicated in London. It is therefore possible that the St Magnus Church by the bridge may at some stage have been re-dedicated to the Orcadian St Magnus (Bull 1914 : 138-139, Mooney 1935 : 280-283).

Yorkshire and Dorset: Churches were dedicated to St Magnus at Bessingby in East Riding, Yorkshire, and at Moreton in Dorset (Bull 1914 : 138-139, Dickins 1935 : 52, Mooney 1935 : 280). The authenticity of these dedications has not been established.

c) Place-names.

The name "Magnus" occur in some place-names in Orkney and Shetland. Although these place-names may relate to other persons named "Magnus" (common in Norse place-names, e.g. Haroldswick in Unst, South and North Ronaldsay, Egilsay in Orkney and in Weisdale Voe in Shetland), the examples below point strongly in the favour of the saint. The naming of a place is not associated with the act of dedication, but as part of the cultus, the name "Magnus" became commemorated in the landscape of Orkney and Shetland.

Orkney

Rousay: South-west on the island of Rousay there is a place called *Mansmas Hill* or Mansemass Hill. The name signifies the feast or Mass of St Magnus. The nearest church where a possible Mass of St Magnus could have been celebrated is the medieval parish church at Skail (Lady Kirk) on the south-west coast of Rousay. On the western slope of Mansmas Hill there was a site locally called Bonie Hole or ON *bænar-hóll*, interpreted as 'prayer-hill' (Marwick 1924 : 19-20).

Egilsay: South-east of St Magnus Church, there is a small lake called *Manse Loch*. It is possible that the name signifies a commemoration of the saint martyred on the island.

Shetland

St Magnus Bay (Ill. 24, page 180): The name is applied to the whole area between Sandness in the south and Eshaness in the north. On Blaeu's Dutch navigation chart *The Light of Navigation* (1612) the name *S. Magni foort*, most likely meaning St Magnus' Fjord, is marked as an anchorage on the western coast of Shetland (Brill 1983 : 36). A possible location of *S. Magni Foort* is Swarbacks Minn, south of Muckle Roe, leading to the three deep and sheltered fjords of Busta Voe, Olna Firth and Aith Voe (voe ON *vagr*, firth ON *fjorðr*). On the same chart the name *S. Magni* is marked north of *S. Magni foort*. This name would indicate the location of a church or chapel dedicated to St Magnus (Crawford 1984 : 75-77). The two nearest Magnus-dedications are at Laxobigging in Delting and at North Roe in Northmavine, as described above (Cant 1975 : 17, 47-48). North of Muckle Roe and Mavis Grind there is, however, the place-name Mangaster and Mangaster Voe which might mean 'Magnúsar-setr' or 'Magns-setr' (Magni from Magnús, farm ON *setr*) (Jakobsen 1936 : 157).

Papa Stour: A letter addressed to the *Bürgermeister* and *Rat* of Bremen, refers to a Bremen ship that had entered Baltasound, Unst, in August, 1562, intending to trade there. The skipper requested permission to trade in Baltasound, but was refused. The ship was directed to eight principal havens in Shetland – areas that needed merchandise and victuals. One of the listed principal havens was *Sunte Mangens Eiland*, somewhere near the Mainland, but not amongst the northern isles of Unst, Yell and Fetlar that were well provided for (Brill 1983 : 36). Being a principal haven, *Sunte Mangens Eiland*, could have been the island of Papa Stour in St Magnus Bay. This was a trading station at a later date, but no Magnus-dedications are known from this island. The name ‘Mauns Hill’ occurs, however, both on Papa Stour and on Mucle Roe (Crawford 1984 : 77).



Ill. 24. View of St Magnus Bay from Eshaness.

d) Relics.

A principal indicator of cultus is the possession of relics. As discussed earlier, the distribution and trade in relics was closely connected with the translation and relocation of the graves of the martyrs in Rome during the mid-eighth century¹². The possession of relics equalled the possession of the *holy*. Although relics could be in private possession, the acquiring of relics is first and foremost associated with the dedication of a church or an altar. The dedications listed in part b) above, would indicate the deposition of relics of St Magnus in these places as part of the ritual of consecration. These would either be bones from his body, his personal possessions or *brandea* – contact relics. Neither the OS nor the M1 and M2 refer to the possible distribution of the relics of St Magnus. The only description of direct contact with the corporal remains of St Magnus is in connection with the first translation of the body in Birsay, about twenty years after his death. Bishop William the Old exhumed the corrupted body from the grave and had it washed. A knuckle bone was tested three times in consecrated fire:

A31 *Lét byskup þá þvá beinumum, ok váru allvel lit. Hann lét þá taka einn koggul ok reynir í vígðum eldi þrysvar, ok brann eigi, heldr varð hann álits sem gull. Þat er sumra manna sogn, at hann væri þá runninn í kross (OS LVII : 124).*

The OS reports that the knuckle bone tested in consecrated fire shone like gold and took the shape of a cross. The M2, on the other hand, states that the knuckle bone took the colour of burnt silver:

A32 *Hann [Vilhjálmr byskup] lét þvá beinin ok taka koggul ok reyndi í vígðum eldi þrysvar. En hann brann eigi, heldr varð hann svá sem brennt silfr. Þat er sumra manna sogn, at hann rynni í kross (M2 XVIII : 326).*

The exhumation of the body of St Magnus took place in 1136 or 1137, about twenty years after the martyrdom on Egilsay. Shortly after the bones of St Magnus were enshrined and translated. The exhumation and enshrinement of the body would have been a suitable occasion for separating selected bones from the rest of the body for translation and installation to churches and altars elsewhere.

Orkney.

Kirkwall: As referred to in chapter 7, the possible relics of St Magnus were found inside one of the southern pillars in the choir during construction-work in inside St Magnus Cathedral in 1919¹³. The bones were contained in an oaken box. Upon examination, the most striking

feature connecting the bones to St Magnus was a clean cut hole in the skull, probably caused by a fatal blow of an axe. On 2 April 1919, the bones were examined and some were found to be missing, e.g. only two pieces of rib were found (Mooney 1925 : 76).

Iceland.

The following Icelandic Annals contain entries for the year 1298 concerning relics of St Magnus obtained by the bishopric of Skálholt (Cormack 1994 : 119):

IV *Annales regii*: kom af helgum domi Magnus jarls i Skalholti
(Storm 1888 : 145)

V *Skálholts-Annaler*: kom af helgum domi Magnus Eyia jarls i Skala holti
(Storm 1888 : 198)

IX *Flatøbogens Annaler*: kom af helgum domi Magnus jarls til Skalholti
(Storm 1888 : 386)

The Faeroes.

Kirkjubøur:

On the eastern external wall of the choir of the St Magnus Cathedral in Kirkjubøur there is a steatite stone tablet with Gothic-style depictions including the figure of Christ between the Virgin and Mary Magdalene (Dahl 1968 : 188). The Latin inscription on the tablet reads:

HEC : EST : HABITACIO : HARVM : S(an)C(t)A

RVM : RELIQUARIUM : DE : LIGNO : DOMINI

DE : HOSTIO : ECCE : I(l)a VIRGO : MARIA : S(an)cta

--- OSSA : B(eat)I MAGNI : M(arty)R(is) ---

DE : TVMVLO S(anc)TI ÞORLACI

The translation reads:

“This is the abode of the following relics: a piece of the True Cross, of the sacrificial lamb, and behold the Virgin Mary - - - and bones of St Magnus the Martyr - - - from the grave of St Þorlákur” (Bruun 1929 : 62, transl.).

The stone tablet was removed in 1905 and it was found to conceal a niche containing a lead-box. The lead-box contained seven small packets made of silk and leather. Some of the packets were opened revealing small pieces of wood and some bones (Bruun 1929 : 64-65). The fact that the reliquary had been placed in the external wall of the cathedral, and not inside in the choir, indicate that the building was never consecrated. The most probable reason for placing the reliquary in the external eastern wall of the building is that the cathedral was never consecrated, and ritual involving the installation of relics in the high altar or somewhere in the choir. The location of the reliquary on the external eastern wall would have been carefully chosen – in the outer wall of the most sacred part of the building.

e) Dating legal documents.

Legal documents, concerning sales-agreements, testaments, divisions of inheritance, lists of travel-expenses, and witness-statements, may further throw some light on the level of general awareness regarding the festivals of St Magnus and the celebration of his cult in Norway and Iceland in the period c. 1331-1550. Ten documents are from Norway, south of Nidaros, and one document is from Iceland (9). The documents do not directly reveal a coherent presence of a Magnus-cult in the Archbishopric of Nidaros, since their distribution span over two-hundred years. The entries are rather interpreted as evidence for the celebration of the festivals of St Magnus in Norway and Iceland in this period since the references to St Magnus were used to date the documents.

- (1) [] *a mandaghen nesta firir Magni ok martires a tolfra* []
(DN V : 81-82, no. 89).

[] on the Monday before Magnus and the martyr on the twelfth [].

Date: 15 April¹⁴
Year: 1331
Place: Dolin
Bishopric: Oslo

- (2) [] *sunnudaghen næsta æftir festum Magni martiris* [] (DN XIV : 6, no. 6).

[] on the following Sunday after the festival of Magnus the Martyr [].

Date: 6 May
Year: 1345
Place: Stavanger
Bishopric: Stavanger

- (3) [] *þetta bref er gort var j Stafuangre laugardaghen nesta eftir Magni comidis Orcadensis* [] (DN IV : 378, no. 499).

[] this letter was written in Stavanger on the following Saturday after Magnus Earl of Orkney [].

Date: 19 April
Year: 1371
Place: Stavanger
Bishopric: Stavanger

- (4) [] *þetta bref er gort var a Stedhiu in festo Magni martiris* []
(DN IV : 492, no. 665).

[] this letter was written at Stedje on the festival of Magnus the Martyr [].

Date: 16 April
Year: 1396
Place: Stedje
Bishopric: Bergen

- (5) [] *fore þetta bref er giort var j Oslo feria proxima post festum sancti Magni martyris* [] (DN IV : 631, no. 863).

[] because this letter was written in Oslo on the holiday just after the festival of St Magnus the Martyr [].

Date: 18 April
Year: 1437
Place: Oslo
Bishopric: Oslo

- (6) [] *fore thetta breff er gjort was a Trandeme anno domini mcdliiijo die beati Magni martiris* (DN I : 607, no. 829).

[] because this letter was written in Trondheim in the year of the Lord 1454 on the day of the Blessed Magnus the Martyr.

Date: 16 April
Year: 1454
Place: Trondheim
Bishopric: Nidaros

- (7) [] *for dette bref, som var giort paa Flatteqval die Sti Magni Martyris Anno 1455* [] (DN XVI : 200, no. 187).

[] because this letter, which was written at Flatehval on the day of St Magnus the Martyr in 1455 [].

Date: 16 April
Year: 1455
Place: Flatehval
Bishopric: Bergen

- (8) [] *vm fredaghin neest efther sancti Magni martiris dagh* []
(DN II : 640, no. 856).

[] on the Friday after the day of St Magnus the Martyr []

Date: 19 April
Year: 1465
Place: Oslo
Bishopric: Oslo

- (9) [] *for thetta breff er skriffuath var Mandaghen nesthan efter Magni martiris et comitis orchadensis vm voreth* [] (DN XXI : 509, no. 672).

[] because this letter was written on the Monday just after Magnus the Martyr and Earl of Orkney in the spring [].

Date: 17 April
Year: 1497
Place: Torsnes
Bishopric: Hólar

- (10) [] *for thetta breff gjorth war a Skiaberghe die sancti Magni* []
(DN XV : 111-112, no. 133).

[] because this letter was written at Skjeberg on the day of St Magnus [].

Date: 16 April
Year: 1504
Place: Skjeberg
Bishopric: Oslo

- (11) [] *for thette breff som gyortt war pa All ipso die sancte Magni martyris* []
(DN IV : 828, no. 1125).

[] because this letter which was written at Ål on the day of St Magnus the Martyr [].

Date: 16 April
Year: 1548
Place: Ål (probably in Hallingdal)
Bishopric: Bergen

The references to St Magnus are exclusively used to date the documents, e.g. “on the Monday just before” (1), or “on the following Saturday” (2). Documents (3) and (9) clearly identify St Magnus of Orkney: (3) [] *Magni comidis Orchadensis* [], and (9) [] *Magni martiris et comitis orchadensis* []. The title *comes* – earl, and the place *Orchadensis* – Orkney, reveal that it is the festival of the Orkney earl the documents refer to. (9) further states that the festival in question is the spring-festival, *vm voreth*, i.e. 16 April. Documents (2) and (4-5), combine the festival of St Magnus *and* the martyrdom, i.e.: ...*festum/festo (sancti) Magni martiris...*, which is similarly 16 April. Documents (6-8) and (10-11), on the other hand, use ‘day’ (Lat. *die* or Norse *dagh*) instead of ‘festival’. In contrast to the documents which include the word *martiris* (except (3) and (10)), document (1) *may* be referring to the festival of translation in December¹⁵.

f) Liturgy and poetry.

Feasts or festivals celebrated in honour of St Magnus have been recorded in church calendars, breviaries and liturgical texts. The feasts were celebrated on the days of the year commemorating the martyrdom and first translation of the saint, on 16 April and on 13 December. Saints' feasts were classified according to rank and celebrated with or without preceding or succeeding fasts and vigils. The liturgical source-material is scarce and to some degree fragmentary throughout the North Atlantic and north-west Europe. The Reformation abolished the old catholic church liturgy therefore destroying vast quantities of liturgical books, manuscripts, calendars, breviaries etc.. As extensively investigated by De Geer (1985), the Norse saints¹⁶ were venerated in the Mass with hymns, sequences, and antiphons written in their honour:

In many cases the cults of these early Norse saints were doubtless comparatively soon provided with fairly extensive liturgies, and their feasts will have been celebrated with the greatest possible lustre, in accordance with their – worldly and heavenly – standing. There is no reason to assume that the cult of St. Magnus should have differed in this respect (De Geer 1985 : 117).

Some fragments have survived as well as some liturgical books such as the *Missale Nidrosiense*, the *Breviarium Nidrosiense* and the *Ordo Nidrosiensis ecclesiae* from Norway and the Scottish *Breviarium Aberdonense* (De Geer 1985 : 104-109). References to St Magnus in The Old Church Laws of Norway and the Icelandic Annals have also been included in the following.

Scotland.

- *Breviarium Aberdonense*: The Aberdeen Breviary was printed in Edinburgh in 1509-1510 and was intended to supersede the Scottish *Sarum Usus* (the Use, or custom, of Salisbury), the most important secular liturgy in the British Isles which was in use in the Scottish Church by the twelfth century. The breviary incorporates legends and hymns as well as a calendar of local Scottish and Celtic saints, and in 'all probability the Aberdeen Breviary gives evidence of older Scottish liturgical use, including that of the Orkney diocese' (De Geer 1985 : 121). The material in the hymns for the *Passio* are based on the Magnus Saga or the lost Latin *vita*, but the remaining parts of the church lessons have less specific references. The calendar of the Aberdeen Breviary, *Kalendarium Breviarii Aberdonensis*, contains two entries commemorating the martyrdom and translation of St Magnus (De Geer 1985 : 120-122, Forbes 1872 : 115, 123):

16 April : *Magni m[art]y[r]is ma[jor] dup[lex] ix l[e]c[t]iones*

13 December : *me[m]o[ria] de tra[n]s[lat]ione magni mar[ty]ris*

The Aberdeen Breviary also contains an extended and carefully prepared St. Magnus liturgy with Latin services as well as rhyming Offices for the feasts. The martyrdom (*Passio*) of St Magnus is celebrated with a double feast (*festum duplex*), but the *Translatio* is a memorial only.

The lessons for the *Passio* contain:

Legenda : *Legenda de Sancto Magno*
(closely related to the Magnus Saga)

Oratio : *Deus cuius nutu absque sanctorum solatio*
(for Laudes)

Oratio : *Sancti Magni martyris tui Domine merita preciosa nos tueant*
(for 1. Vespers)

Hymnus : *Hymnus perdulcibus Magni praeconia*
(for 1. Vespers and Matins)

Hymnus : *Exultemus concrepantes sonora melodia*
(for Laudes and 2. Vespers)

Hymnus : *Magnus ex prosapia magna procreatus*
(hymn formed by the antiphones of Matins and Laudes)

Hymnus : *Nova mundus resultet gloria sancti magni plaudens victoria*
(hymn formed by the responses of Matins)

The lessons for the *Translatio* contain:

Oratio : *Sancti Magni martyris tui translationem [...]*

Antiphona : *Dulce melos in hoc solenni*

- Missal from *the Church of St Nicholas, Aberdeen*, printed in 1506. The *Translatio* is celebrated as a memorial on 12 December:

: *[Ma]gni martiris duplex festum* (De Geer 1985 : 122-123)

- *Liber Ecclesiae Beati Terranani de Arbuthnot*, St Andrews, from 1491/1492. In this missal the *Translatio* is commemorated on the 14th instead of 13 December and the feast of the *Passio* is on 16 April (De Geer 1985 : 123).

England.

- The BL MS Harley 745 is an English Psalter with a thirteenth century calendar that includes the martyrdom of St Magnus on 16 April : *Magni ducis m..* The calendar also commemorates St Halvard, *sanctorum in selio* (Selja, St Sunniva and the Seljumen) and St Olaf (De Geer 1985 : 123).

Iceland.

The feast of St Magnus on 13 December was adopted by the dioceses of Hólar and Skálholt in 1326, but was probably locally celebrated before this time. The feast of the translation was to be considered of the same class as Sunday and to be preceded by vigils and fasting (Mooney 1935 : 277, Cormack 1994 : 20).

- The AM 670f 4° is an Icelandic manuscript containing a copy of the complete liturgy for the mass celebrating the *Translatio* of St Magnus, a sequence, and a copy of a *Legenda* (De Geer 1985 : 124).

- The *Missale Scardense* of Skard in western Iceland was probably written in the second half of the fifteenth century. The missal contains the Mass of the Translation of St Magnus (for 13 December) and a sequence to St Magnus, *Comitis generosi militis gloriosi*, but the music notation was missing. The same sequence, with notations, was identified in the fragment AM Acc. 7aa, fol. 29v, and proved to have been part of the lost *Missale Scardense*. This fragment contained the heading ‘*in festo Magni ducis m[artiris]*’ (De Geer 1985 : 124-125).
- A part of the mass of St Magnus’ translation is found in another Icelandic missal from the fifteenth century, the AM 98 II 8° (De Geer 1985 : 125).
- The Icelandic Annals edited by Gustav Storm (1888) contains ten annals, seven of which refer to St Magnus of Orkney in the year 1116:

1116:

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|--|
| (I) <i>Annales Reseniani</i> | : | Vig Magnus Jarls ens helga (Storm 1888 : 19) |
| (III) <i>Henrik Høyers Annaler</i> | : | Vig (Magnus) helga jarls i Orkneyium (Storm 1888 : 59) |
| (IV) <i>Annales regii</i> | : | Passio <i>sancti</i> Magni ducis (Storm 1888 : 112) |
| (VII) <i>Lögmanns-Annáll</i> | : | Drap Magnus iarls (for the year 1101) |
| | : | <i>et sanctus Magnus comes Orchadie secundum quosdam</i>
(Storm 1888 : 251) |
| (VIII) <i>Gottskalks Annaler</i> | : | Passio <i>sancti</i> Magni ducis (Storm 1888 : 320) |
| (X) <i>Oddveria Annall</i> | : | Ano 1116 pijning Magnusar Eyia jalls
(Storm 1888 : 473) |

Norway.

- The *Missale Nidrosiense* from 1519 is a liturgical book which use was intended for the Archbishopric of Nidaros. The missal contains a calendar with two entries for the feasts of St Magnus (De Geer 1985 : 126):

16 April : *Magni martiris. Duplex*

13 December : *Tra[n]sl[at]io magni mar[tiris] co[m]memoria]*

- The *Breviarium Nidrosiense* from 1519 is, like the *Missale Nidrosiense*, a liturgical book which use was intended for the Archbishopric of Nidaros. The breviary has two calendar-entries on St Magnus (De Geer 1985 : 126-127):

16 April : *Magni martyris duplex*

13 December : *Transl[at]io magni m[artyris] com[m]emoria]*

- The *Ordo Nidrosiensis ecclesiae* probably originate from the period 1205-1224 and gives general directions concerning choir-song and altar service used in the Archbishopric of Nidaros (Gjerløw 1968 : 29ff and De Geer 1985 : 106, 127). Both feasts of St Magnus are commemorated in the *Ordo*, but only as marginal notes to the main text. The note for the feast of the translation is entered on 12 December and is probably a late fifteenth century addition. The note for the feast of the martyrdom on 16 April has been mistaken for the *Natale*, i.e. the birthday of St Magnus, and is probably an earlier entry (Gjerløw 1968 : 300n, 331n and De Geer 1985 : 127-128).

Natale : *In natale beati Magni martiris*

Translatio : *In translatione beati magni martiris*

According to Gjerløw, the feast of the *translatio* of St Magnus originally had a sequence, *Iocundemur*, indicated in the *Ordo*, which seems to be lost (Gjerløw 1968 : 300n, 432).

- The *Codex Tunsbergensis*, Tunsberg (mod. Tønsberg), contains a calendar which commemorated St Magnus. The codex dates from the fourteenth century and may originate from Orkney. There is evidence for contact between Tunsberg and Orkney in the early thirteenth century. The successor of Bishop Bjarne of Orkney, who translated the relics of Earl Rognvald¹⁷, Bishop Jofrey (*Jófrejrr*), had been the provost of Tunsberg in the period 1218 to 1223 (DN XVII B : 297 and De Geer 1985 : 128, 276 note 317). The partly damaged calendar has two entries for St Magnus on the *Passio* and *Translatio*:

16 April : *S[an]c[t] i magni*

13 December : *Be[a]t[o] m[agno]m[ar]tir[is]*

- The *Manuale Norvegicum*, based on three other manuscripts, from the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries contain references to a St Magnus: *Sancte Magne ora [pro nobis]*, but it is impossible to establish from the context if it is the Orcadian St Magnus that was intended (De Geer 1985 : 128-129).
- Two of the four medieval Church laws of Norway; the Old Church Laws of Eidsivathing and Frostathing, from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries respectively, includes the Mass of St Magnus on 16 April:

Eidsivathing : *Magnus messo um uaret*

This indicates the Mass of St Magnus in the spring i.e. 16 April (NGL I 1846 : 378, 396).

Frostathing : *Magnus messa*

: *Um tha messo daga er eigi er non [nonhaelgr] firir*

The Old Church Law of Frostathing specifies, like the Old Church Law of Eidsivathing, that this mass, amongst other masses (St Paul, St Mathew, St Gregory, SS Philip and Jacob, the Monday of Whitsun-week, St Botolph, St Swithun, St Margaret, St Jacob, St Bartholomew, The Holy Cross (24 September), St Mathew, SS Simon and Judas, St Martin, St Clement, and St Thomas), are placed amongst the lower class of masses (NGL I 1846 : 139). The celebration of the lower class of masses meant that the holiday eve was not observed and

there was no required fasting before the mass. The higher class of masses, in contrast, were celebrated with *nonhaelgr* starting at 03.00 PM the day before the mass. During the *nonhaelgr*-period there were heavy restrictions to what kind of work that could be performed and to the consumption of food (fasts)¹⁸ (De Geer 1985 : 114, Dybdahl 1999 : 15-16). In the Old Church Law of Frostathing, the Mass of St Magnus on 16 April belongs within the category of masses of the lower class, i.e. a mass-celebration without a preceding fast or vigil. The sagas of St Magnus contain a common story about the farmer, Bergfinn Skatason, in Shetland and his tenant, Thord Dragon-Jaw, who refused to observe the *nonhaelgr* on the eve of the Mass of St Magnus on 13 December:

A33 *Þórðr hét maðr, er fallaðr var drekaskoltr; hann var leigumaðr Bergfinns af Hjaltlandi; hann barði korn af hálmi í bygghúsi inn næsta dag fyrir Magnúsmessu ok Lúclu. En at oðrum lit dags þá gekk Bergfinnr búandi út þangat í húsit ok bað hann hætta verkinu. Þórðr segir: "Þat er sjaldnast, at þér þykki ek of lengi vinna." Bergfinnr mælti: "Magnúsmessa er á morgin, er vér eigum at halda með slíkri dýrð allri sem vér kunnun bazi." Þá gekk Bergfinnr í brot, en Þórðr vann þá allra sýsligast. En er skammt var frá liðit, þá fór Bergfinnr í annat sinn ok mælti við Þórð af reiði mikilli: "Fjándskapr þykki mér í því, er þú vinnr nú á helgum tíðum, ok lát nú af þegar!" (OS LVII : 126).*

The passage above illustrates the importance of observing the *nonhaelgr* before a mass, and that the Mass of the Translation of St Magnus was indeed celebrated as a higher class of mass in Shetland i.e. with a preceding *nonhaelgr*.

The General Church Law by Archbishop Jón from c. 1275 also has the Mass of St Magnus on 16 April included in the catalogue. The Mass of St Magnus belong similarly to the lower class of masses (NGL II 1848 : 358):

: *Magnus messa. er firir thessom aengi fasta*

Denmark.

- The *Breviarium Roskildense*, Roskilde, printed in 1517, has an entry for a St Magnus on 19 August only to *Magni mar[tyris]*, a date of commemoration normally ascribed to St Magnus Tranensis. The Office, however, corresponds with some differences to the *Breviarium Aberdonense*. This indicates that it was the Orcadian St Magnus that was intended (De Geer 1985 : 129-130).

- The *Breviarium Lundense*, Lund, printed in 1517, commemorates a St Magnus on 26 August in its calendar. The Office of St Magnus of Orkney is, however, printed at the end of the breviary in the appendices (De Geer 1985 : 130-131).
- The *Breviarium Arusiense*, Århus, printed in 1519, commemorates like the *Breviarium Lundense* a St Magnus on 26 August. The indications that the St Magnus of Orkney was intended are the references in the breviary to Orkney, to Hákon (his cousin), and to the marriage of St Magnus¹⁹ (De Geer 1985 : 131).

Finland.

- The *Missale Aboense*, Åbo, printed in 1488, contains a later addition in its calendar on 16 April to *Magni [Regis?] et martyris*. There are no other entries in the missal referring to St Magnus, nor are there any indications that the Orcadian St Magnus was venerated in Finland (De Geer 1985 : 133).

Nobilis humilis.

In 1911 Oluf Kolsrud discovered two previously unnoticed songs in the MS *Codex Upsalensis C 233 4°* in the library of Uppsala University in Sweden. The two hymns in Latin; *Ex te lux oritur*, fol. 50^v - 51^r, commemorates the marriage between Princess Margaret of Scotland and King Erik Magnusson of Norway in 1281, and *Nobilis humilis*, fol. 19^v - 20^r, celebrates St Magnus of Orkney. Kolsrud suggested that the codex was written in a Minorite monastery in Orkney and later came in the possession of Bishop Arne of Bergen. The codex was in Griefswald, Germany, in c. 1470 and was brought to Sweden by a Swedish Franciscan friar. Kolsrud also suggested a thirteenth century date for the manuscript (Kolsrud and Reiss 1913 : 17ff, 26ff, 34-35).

De Geer (1985 ch. V), on the other hand, has investigated the hymns and suggests that they are of either Norwegian or Scottish (or English) provenance because of the topic of the *Ex te lux oritur*. The hymn or *conductus*, *Nobilis humilis*, dates to the second half of the thirteenth century and the text belongs to the English influence sphere. The melody is a rare example of early polyphony of Norse music culture, and belongs within a northern French or British influence sphere. The overall assumption is that the hymn is of Orkney provenance and the closest correspondence of the text is found in the Aberdeen Breviary. The performance setting of the hymn was probably a religious order or a larger church/cathedral organisation. It is therefore possible that the hymn was used in St Magnus Cathedral in

Kirkwall, but not necessarily intended for it originally (De Geer 1985 : 208, 210-211 and 1988 : 241ff).

A34 *Nobilis humilis*

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <i>Nobilis, humilis, Magne martir stabilis,
habilis, utilis, comes uenerabilis
et tutor laudabilis, tuos subditos
serua carnis fragilis mole positos.</i> | 5) <i>Gravia, tedia, ferens pro iusticia,
raperis, traheris, demum ictu funeris,
ab ymis extolleris, ad celestia,
sic Xpisto coniungeris per supplicia.</i> |
| 2) <i>Preditus celitus dono sancti spiritus
uiuere temere summo caues opere;
carnis motus premere studes penitus,
ut carnis in carcere regnet spiritus.</i> | 6) <i>Eya gloria signorum frequencia,
canitur, agitur, Xpistus benedicatur,
et tibi laus redditur in ecclesia,
o quam felix cernitur hinc Orcadia.</i> |
| 3) <i>Socita regia tibi uiri nescia
traditur, subditur, casta casto iungitur;
nam neuter illudatur sic decennio,
rubus non comburitur in incendio.</i> | 7) <i>Omnibus laudibus tuis insistentibus,
graciam veniam et eternam gloriam,
precum per instanciam pater optine,
hanc slavans familiam a discrimine.</i> |
| 4) <i>Turbidus, inuidus hostis Haco callidus
sternere, terere, tua sibi subdere,
te cupit et perdere doli spiculo,
iuncto fraudis federe pacis osculo.</i> | <i>Amen.</i> |

(Kolsrud and Reiss 1913 : 38-40, Mooney 1935 : 291-292)

O Mhanuis mo ruin

O Mhanuis mo ruin is a Gaelic poem and is part of a collection of Gaelic poems and hymns collected by Alexander Carmichael during the second half of the nineteenth century. The poem would originally have been sung, perhaps recited in a similar fashion to the Gregorian chants (Carmichael 1900 : xxviii). The two most famous poets of the Orkney earldom were Earl Rognvald Kali and Bishop Bjarne²⁰. Their poems are secular in character unlike the *O Mhanuis mo ruin*, below, which expression is first and foremost religious love to the saint. The poem, whose author is unknown, is of Celtic provenance, but of uncertain date and origin, and shows that cultural influence passed between Norse and Celtic territories. From a musicological perspective:

It may be possible for the musicologist to say, as in the case of the Orkney Earldom, that all indications point to the likelihood of influx of musical influence from Celtic territory, also in the secular sphere: the historical / political and personal contacts, [] ecclesiastical relations – [were] important transmitters also of secular music – , [] (De Geer 1985 : 244).

The poem is a unique example of the invocation of St Magnus, probably sung or recited in a secular or private sphere. Religious love is proclaimed to the saint, he is praised for his heroism, and he is called upon for comfort and protection – for the people, for the domestic animals – and he is invoked to bring growth and fertility to fields and plants:

A35 *O Mhanuis mo ruin,*

- 1) *O Mhanuis mo ruin,
Is tu dheanadh dhuinn iul,
A chuirp chubhraidh nan dul,
Cuimhnich oirn*
- 2) *Cuimhnich a naoimh nam buadh,
A chomraig 's a chomhn an sluagh,
Cobhair oirnne 'n ar truaigh,
'S na treig sinn.*
- 3) *Tog ar seilbh mach ri leirg,
Casg coin ghioirr is coin dheirg,
Cum uaim fuath, fath, feirg,
Agus foirne.*
- 4) *Cuartaich tan agus buar,
Cuartaich caor agus uan;
Cum uap an shamh-bhual,
'S an luch-fheoir.*
- 5) *Crath an druchd o'n speur air crodh,
Thor fas air feur, deis, agus snodh,
Dubhrach, lus-feidh, ceis, meacan-dogh,
Agus neoinean.*
- 6) *O Mhanuis nan glonn,
Air bharca nan sonn,
Air bharra nan tonn,
Air sala no fonn,
Comhn agus gleidh sinn.*

(From Pálsson and Edwards 1996 : 50-51
after Carmichael 1900 : 180f)

g) Iconography.

The origin of iconography, the visual depiction of biblical persona and Christian saints in religious art, can be traced back to the fourth century. Depictions of biblical persona and saints were often used in the Church service to visualise and explain biblical events and the lives of saints, and were usually murals painted on the walls and ceilings of churches, wooden statues, altarpieces, or pictures painted on altar-frontals. The saints were not naturalistically depicted, but were recognised through their various attributes, i.e. the characteristic symbols associated with the saints. This feature of the iconography did not become popular in Western Christianity until the thirteenth century. The attributes would be representations or symbols of the instrument, object, or weapon etc. causing the death or martyrdom of the saint or other symbols of class and rank. E.g. the Virgin Mary was usually depicted with long hair and uncovered head, but as the Mother of Christ her hair would be covered. The attribute of St Thomas á Becket was the characteristic headpiece of an archbishop, and St Olaf of Norway is always depicted with an axe, the weapon by which he was killed, and with the beard of a king (Lundén 1961 : 354-357, Lange 1961 : 363-364).

The attributes of St Magnus are, however, rather difficult to establish because of the limited number of depiction. His main attribute would most likely be the weapon causing his death, either a sword or an axe. Only the M1 specifically says that the executor, Lifolf, used an axe:

A36 *Eptir þat signdi Magnús jarl sik ok laut undir höggit, en Lifólfr hjó í höfuð honum mikit högg með öxi* (M1 XXVII : 369).

On this background it is reasonable to assume that one attribute of St Magnus would have been either an axe, as stated in the M1, or possibly a sword. The few depictions of St Magnus are late medieval and present Magnus as a young man (he was probably in his thirties when he was martyred), with clean-shaven face and a sword in his hand. It has been argued that the shaven face represents his title of earl as well as the head-band adorned with flowers (Blindheim 1988 : 165ff). St Magnus title, *jarl* (earl, duke, Lat. *dux* or count, Lat. *comes*), is sometimes translated as “*dux*” in some of the late medieval sources referring to St Magnus. This is a misinterpretation of the title “*jarl*” and the correct Latin title for the Orkney earls is “*comes*” (De Geer 1985 : 125). The main examples of St Magnus in iconography are found in Orkney and Norway, although there are depictions of the saint in Caithness, Iceland and possibly in Denmark:

Orkney: The most interesting depiction in Orkney of the saint is that of the Seal of the Chapter of Orkney, probably of late medieval origin (see illustration, p. 286). The seal is reprinted on the title-page in Craven's book *History of the Church in Orkney*, 1901, and show St Magnus holding a sword in his right hand. The sword is pointing upwards. He is wearing a cloak over his left shoulder, he is bare-headed and possibly shaven. There are two monks kneeling on either side of St Magnus. The monks are in prayer, but are facing St Magnus as if they are directing their prayers to him. Above the saint, there is a representation of a building which resembles a house-shrine with a tiled roof. The building may represent the shrine of St Magnus, and in a broader sense, also representing the Cathedral. Around the edge of the circular seal there is an inscription reading:

SIGILLVM CAPITVLI ORKADANSIS ECCLESIE SMCTIMAGNI

(Craven 1901 : title-page, III)

From the Cathedral there is also a sandstone-relief believed to represent St Magnus, of late medieval, probably fifteenth century origin. St Magnus is depicted with a sword in his right hand, also pointing upwards (Blindheim 1988 : 166).

Caithness: Among the items listed in the 1501 goods-inventory of Dunbeath Castle, there was a statue of St Ninian and St Magnus. The inventory does not give any description of how St Magnus was represented (Crawford 1990 : 15).

Norway: In Norway there are three wooden statues, pieces belonging to altar-frontals, in the two churches of Lurøy and Andenes in Nordland County (in northern Norway) and at Onsøy Church in Østfold County (in eastern Norway). The altarpieces from Norway are late medieval and St Magnus is again depicted as a young man with shaved face. Only the altarpiece from Onsøy has an intact attribute – a sword pointing downwards. On the altarpiece from Andenes, only the shaft of a sword pointing downwards is intact, but on the altarpiece from Lurøy the possible sword-attribute is missing (Lárusson 1966 : 221, Crawford 1988 : 51, 174, 242). On this background it can not be concluded that the attribute of St Magnus was a sword, because of the scarce number of material, but the medieval depictions of St Magnus from Orkney and Norway show a clear tendency to equip him with this weapon.

h) *Cultus superfluus?*

The cult of St Magnus was, as seen above, first and foremost associated with church-dedications, relics, the celebration of his martyrdom and translation as part of the liturgical year, and the subject of music, poetry and art. “Acts of improper worship”, such as the popular celebration of holy places, shrines, wells etc. termed *cultus superfluus*²¹, associated with St Magnus are limited and possibly also of recent date. The few examples below may, to some degree, rather be labelled expressions of eighteenth and nineteenth century misunderstanding or lack of knowledge. The legends or traditions referred to below are recorded in this or the last century, are local in character, and their origin is impossible to determine. Local customs and traditions always are. To a large extent the memory and existence of a great number of holy wells, trees, and legends etc. attributed to medieval saints survived the Reformation. The few examples below may in this respect represent the only traces left of *cultus superfluus* of St Magnus.

St Magnus Cup and Chalice.

In *Scapha* about a Mile from *Kirkwal* to South-West, it is said there was kept a large and ancient Cup, which they say, belonged to *St Magnus King of Norway*, who first instructed them in the Principles of the *Christian Religion* and founded the *Church of Kirkwal*, with which full of some strong drink their Bishops at their first Landing were presented; which if he drank out, they highly praised him, and made themselves to beleive, that they should have many good and fruitful Years in his time (Brand 1701 : 70).

In 1506 a ‘*chalice of St Magnus*’ was reported to have belonged to St Magnus Church at Tingwall²² in Shetland, probably made of silver (Cant 1975 : 29, 45 n. 28).

The Ladykirk Stone.

In St Mary’s Church (Ladykirk) at Burwick in South Ronaldsay, Orkney, there is a stone (approx. 43 by 24 inches) to which there are two legends of St Magnus attached. The origin of the legends as well as of the stone has been discussed by William P. L. Thomson (Thomson 2002). On the stone there are a pair of footprints engraved, and the two legends of St Magnus concerns 1) St Magnus using the stone to cross the Pentland Firth to bring news to the Orcadians of Bannockburn, and 2) that the footprints on the stone are those of St Magnus. A third legend concerns a sea-monster, and does not involve the saint. The origin of the Ladykirk stone should, however, be interpreted within a context of ceremonial usage. Thomson does exactly that, and ties its original function to the legend. He suggests that the

legend of the footprints being those of St Magnus may hold an element of truth, arguing for a ceremonial usage during the inauguration of kings in a pre-Norse society. These ceremonies may have continued into the Norse Period as well. This argument is based on accounts that are well attested concerning footprints carved in stone connected with inauguration ceremonies, particularly in the Western Isles. There is a similar pair of engraved footprints at the entrance of Clickhimin Broch in Sheltand, but there is no legend attached to this slab (Hamilton 1968 : 155). Thomson, however, concludes that ‘The presence of the inauguration stone within this Norse earldom estate suggests that Burwick was even older, and that the Norse earls took over a royal estate from their Pictish predecessors’ (Thomson 2002 : 42). Within this frame of interpretation it may be room to connect the Norse earls with the Ladykirk Stone.

St Magnus funeral route.

After the martyrdom on Egilsay the body of Earl Magnus was brought to Birsay and was buried there in Christ Church²³. Mooney, however, refers to a tradition concerning the route the funeral procession took from Egilsay to Birsay:

[] according to tradition, it [the body] was landed at Evie and carried from there to Christchurch, in consequence, probably, of a heavy swell in the Atlantic or a strong contrary wind or tide. At the north-west corner of Swanney Loch is a spot known as Mansie’s Grip; tradition points to this as a resting-place of the funeral procession. The last rest taken is said to have been at Crustan on the ridge where the Birsay Church came in sight. [], Crustan was an appropriate place for a halt, for the name suggests that a cross stood here in early Christian times; the stump of a standing stone may still be seen on a mound there (Mooney 1935 : 202).

The Reverend Goodfellow of Birsay writing in 1903 referred to the same tradition with particular attention to the site at the north-west corner of Swannay Loch:

As the funeral procession was wending its way in that far-off April day in 1116, the mourners became somewhat wearied with the journey and the burden, and were glad to rest the corpse on a large stone near the end of Swannay Loch. As this was done, some one with an evident sigh of relief exclaimed, “We’re in Birsay now, lads!” And ever since this sigh of relief was uttered that stone has been regarded as the boundary between the two parishes of Birsay and Evie. It is now known as the “Mans Stane,” and forms not the present but the ancient boundary of the parishes (Goodfellow 1903 : 187).

On a personal note he added:

Here is a shrine for all Popish and Protestant pilgrims to visit! Here the pilgrims may “rest and be thankful,” refreshing their bodies with an abundant supply of fresh air, regaling their souls with stores of ancient sanctity! (Goodfellow 1903 : 187).

The funeral procession made, according to tradition, a final rest in Birsay before proceeding to Christ Church. The site was a holy well dedicated to St Magnus known as “Man’s Well”, located near the road ‘leading from the vicinity of the Mill of the Boardhouse to Kirbister’:

Traditionally, it is said to have been the last resting-place of the company that carried the remains of the good Jarl Magnus on the final stage of the journey from Egilsay to Christ Church (Fraser 1925 : 26).

As late as 1970 Hugh Marwick reported that:

Manse Well [ma’ns]: a well that never dries up at the edge of road close to Mill Cottage at Broadhouse.

Legend has it that the corpse of St. Magnus was washed with water from this well, but what basis that legend may have no one can tell today. It may be noted, however, that Mans (pronounced like English *manse*) or Mons is the common Norwegian contraction of the name Magnus, just as is the Orkney Mansie. And the fact that this well is called Manse Well and not Mansie’s Well would imply that the name is not of very recent origin (Marwick 1970 : 32).

i) Concluding remarks.

The fundamental element in the spread of saints' cults was the *translatio*. Translation did not only include the movement of relics, but also influenced aspects of religious life such as church-dedications, the liturgy of the Church, poetry and art. The expressions of the cult of St Magnus are in this respect numerous and differentiated, and does to some extent reveal its degree and period of popularity outside the earldom²⁴.

The cult of St Magnus was officially acknowledged and instituted in the earldom from c. 1137 when the cathedral was built and dedicated to him in Kirkwall. Less than twenty years later, in 1153, the new Archbishopric of Nidaros was established in Norway and the Bishopric of Orkney became part of the new Church-province. With this tighter administrative and religious focus on the Norse region, the cult of St Magnus may have been given an additional reason to expand. First and foremost to Shetland: Shetland was most likely part of St Magnus' half of the earldom, and the descriptions of pilgrims in the sagas indicate that his cult had reached Shetland by the final translation to Kirkwall. At the founding of the new Archbishopric, Shetland became an Archdeaconry under the Bishop of Orkney. The Archdeacon of Shetland presided over the Cathedral Chapter, and by 1247 this chapter was found electing the bishop (Cant 1975 : 11). In 1153 Earl Rognvald and Bishop William were still ruling the earldom, and the founding of the Archdeaconry in Shetland at this time may be one explanation for the dedication to St Magnus at Tingwall as well as the circular western tower: St Magnus Church at Tingwall was built to celebrate the new Archdeaconry under Earl Rognvald, Bishop William the Old (who resided in Egilsay), and in honour of St Magnus.

The evidence of a Magnus-cult in Caithness clearly points towards the realm of the Orkney earldom. As discussed in chapter 6, p. 129, Caithness probably belonged to the southwestern division of the earldom that was inherited by Earls Pál (Thorfinnsson), Hákon and Pál (Hákonsson), i.e. of the opposing family lineage. The fact that Caithness was part of the earldom explains the localised cultic expressions, although the earls of Orkney lost control over the area in the thirteenth century. Connections with the earldom and would still have continued, particularly in connection with the cult and the pilgrimage to Kirkwall.

After the establishment of the Archbishopric of Nidaros, the cult of St Magnus spread to the Faeroes, Iceland, and Norway during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The dedication of Kirkjubœur Cathedral as well as the translation of relics to Iceland and the Faeroes towards the end of the thirteenth century strongly suggest that the cult of St Magnus had become part of the calendars of saints celebrated in these places. The documents referring to the Magnus-altar dedication in Norway is in this respect late, but the payment of Michael's-

grain and Olaf's-cattle was probably an older arrangement predating 1430. The legal documents are in comparison a clearer expression of *cultus* in Norway and Iceland within a period of more than two-hundred years, although they do not function as direct evidence for the presence of the cult of St Magnus. The legal documents reveal that the festivals of St Magnus were generally known in Norway and Iceland in this period, and that they were probably celebrated in the Church as part of the ecclesiastical year. Although the entry for St Magnus in the *Ordo Nidrosiensis Ecclesiae* is only a marginal note, the documents (e) 1-11 confirm that the celebration of the festivals of St Magnus were included in the Norwegian *primstafr*²⁵.

As discussed in chapter 7, Pope Eugene gave in 1441 permission to hold the Archdeaconry, under the Archbishopric of St Andrews in Scotland, with the Orkney Church²⁶. The granting of indulgences to the cathedral in Kirkwall could possibly be seen in connection with this new arrangement, and the cult of St Magnus may consequently have been promoted in this part of Scotland. The Aberdeen Breviary contains the *festum duplex* of the martyrdom of St Magnus. Although the breviary was printed in the first decade of the sixteenth century, the inclusion of the feast of St Magnus indicates that his festival was celebrated in the Scottish Church on 16 April at an earlier period.

There are some indications that the cult of St Magnus spread further south and east. Although the church-dedications in England may have been originally intended for another Magnus, the association with other Norwegian saints, and the thirteenth century calendar entry, make the Orkney-connection more probable. The liturgical evidence for *cultus* in Denmark and Finland is scarce as well as late. The August festival-dates may indicate that his cult was introduced to limited parts of Denmark, and possible Finland, and became re-associated with an earlier saint's cult.

The place-names containing the elements *Magnus*, *Magni*, *Mans*, *Magns*, and *Mauns*, are difficult to link with the cult of St Magnus, except the great area in the west of Shetland called St Magnus Bay. The male-name "Magnus" (Lat. meaning *great*) had been frequently used as a king's name in Norway after the conversion to Christianity, prior to the twelfth century. St Magnus was the first earl by this name amongst the Earls of Orkney, but the cult may have influenced the popularity of this name amongst the inhabitants of Orkney and Shetland. It is therefore impossible to relate the Magnus-names to that saint, except the aforementioned St Magnus Bay in Shetland and possibly Mansmas Hill in Rousay, Orkney.

The Latin hymn *Nobilis habilis* (A34) and the Gaelic poem *O Mhamuis mo ruin* (A35), are two examples of how St Magnus was venerated through music. The songs contain the

common elements of *invocation*, *glorification*, and *intercession*. Both songs were primarily intended for an ecclesiastical setting, although the Gaelic poem appears to be influenced either by the desires of the laity, or by the hagiographic-poetic tradition of Celtic Christianity, which spirituality emphasised a sensitivity towards nature and animals (Sheldrake 1995 : 70). The Latin hymn, in contrast, focuses on the chastity of St Magnus in marriage, a topic highly praised and indeed glorified by the medieval Church. The Latin hymn would have been sung during Mass, on one or both of the festivals of St Magnus. A Norse or Orcadian origin of the hymn was suggested by both Kolsrud and De Geer. Since the lost Latin *Vita Magnus* was possibly written for the occasion of the founding of the new Bishop's Seat in Kirkwall, the composition of a hymn to celebrate the extension of the choir in the mid-thirteenth century seems likely. The origin of the Gaelic poem or song is more difficult to establish. Until 1266 Sodor had been part of the Norwegian Church-province, but from this year it became part of the *ecclesia Scoticana*, and was taxed by the Scottish Church. Being the principal saint of the Archbishopric of Nidaros, St Olaf was celebrated in Sodor²⁷. A cultural-religious exchange, or influence, between Sodor and Orkney is therefore possible: 'Quite an efficient iron curtain would, in fact, have been needed in order to keep that influence out' (De Geer 1985 : 244).

The Norse "death-mentality" as conveyed through the saga-tradition, focusing on heroism, deeds, and violent death, may explain why the festival of the martyrdom was the more popular celebration. The annual celebration focused on the martyrdom: his death and miracles, and in life his deeds and chastity. The cult was celebrated in the Church, but was simultaneously celebrated in society; on the border between the sacred and the profane spheres. These spheres included the consecration and dedication of churches and altars to St Magnus and fairs held on "Magnamas"; folk-tradition or legends, places, and objects associated with the saint, and hymns sung during the Mass. The cult of St Magnus consequently appears to be widespread both in the geographical sense as well as in the sense of cultic expression. Although the martyrdom of St Magnus was celebrated with a double feast, it was the *translatio* of his shrine and relics that renewed the focus on the saint and contributed to the spread of *cultus*.

Notes to chapter 8.

¹ Cf. Ch. 6d : 128ff.

² Cf. Ch. 2b : 11ff.

³ Cf. Ch. 2b : 13-14.

⁴ Cf. Ch. 6 note 11 (martyrdom) and ch. 6c : 121 (translation).

⁵ Cf. Ch. 4b : 55.

⁶ Cf. Ch. 7b : 138ff.

⁷ Cf. Ch. 7c : 143ff.

⁸ Cf. Ch. 7d : 152ff.

⁹ Cf. p. 182-183.

¹⁰ Cf. Ch. 5b : 86.

¹¹ Cf. Ch. 6 note 11, concerning the martyrdom.

¹² Cf. Ch. 4c : 64-65.

¹³ Cf. Ch. 7e : 160.

¹⁴ In the DN, the document is dated to 15 April 1331, the day before the festival of the martyrdom. The date may, on the other hand, be the 12th (*tolfta*), the day before St Magnus festival on the 13th. In that case the month would most likely be December, i.e. the festival of the translation.

¹⁵ Cf. note 14 above, and ch. 6c : 121ff.

¹⁶ Cf. Ch. 5b : 86-90.

¹⁷ Cf. Ch 7d : 154 and notes 15 and 16.

¹⁸ The *translatio* of St Magnus was celebrated as a mass of the higher class in Shetland, with a fast at the eve of the Mass (OS : LVII : 126), see ON quote A33.

¹⁹ An aspect of the legend of St Magnus referred to in Magnúss Saga Lengri only (M1 : XVI, pp. 353-354).

²⁰ Cf. Ch. 7 notes 15 and 16.

²¹ Cf. Ch. 4d : 71.

²² Cf. p. 173, above.

²³ Cf. Ch. 7c : 143ff.

²⁴ Cf. Ch. 3c : 43ff, for discussion on the "impact-area" of cultus.

²⁵ ON *Primstafr* – a wooden staff with carved symbols indicating the festivals of the Church during the ecclesiastical year. The symbols are usually the saints' attributes.

²⁶ Cf. Ch. 7f : 165.

²⁷ Cf. Ch. 5b : 85.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

a) Motive and objective.

The presence of the cult of St Magnus in the North Atlantic during the Middle Ages was first and foremost established by the writing of the *vita* of St Magnus during the twelfth century. The desire to establish a Christian native cult in the earldom is also evident in the building of the twelfth century cathedral dedicated to St Magnus in Kirkwall. But these factors alone do not create a pilgrimage process to the shrine of St Magnus. In order to establish a pilgrimage tradition and a great miracle-attraction at the shrine, the “creators” of the cult had to be part of, and familiar with, a universal tradition of pilgrimage and saints’ cults.

The creation of the cult and pilgrimage tradition at the shrine of St Magnus is consequently summed up in two aspects of: a *political motive* and a *religious objective*.

The political motive had an inward focus upon the earldom. In the tension between the two family-lines, the martyrdom of St Magnus was used to favour one side and conquer the other. Earl Rognvald’s political strategy to unite the divided earldom and place himself at the centre was, perhaps, only possible through strong political leadership (Rognvald himself and his father, Kol), ecclesiastical support by the highest authority of the Orkney Church (Bishop William the Old), and the blessing and favours from “above” (St Magnus).

Between St Magnus’ death in c. 1116 and Earl Rognvald receiving the inherited part of the earldom in c. 1136 the saint’s popularity was suppressed by earls Hákon and Pál. Although the sagas claim that many miracles took place at the grave during this twenty-year period, it is probably more accurate to see the miraculous activity at the grave in Birsay in connection with Earl Rognvald’s inheritance in c. 1136, helped by farmers and friends (e.g. the farmer Gunni from Westray) in his part of the divided earldom. The arrival of Earl Rognvald stirred the political equilibrium in the earldom under Earl Pál, as there was no room for more than one earl. If Earl Rognvald did have the intention to divide and rule, this

intention was certainly camouflaged by the author of *Orkneyinga Saga*, explained by the convenient presence and support from his martyred uncle.

Bishop William's support of Earl Rognvald's mission to unite the earldom was indeed favourable to both earl and bishop. Rognvald got the blessing of the Orkney Church and its riches, and the Orkney bishopric was given a new and better residence in Kirkwall with the magnificent cathedral. Bishop William's personal motives, on the other hand, as presented in the sagas seem vague. Bishop William's presence was not recorded in the sagas during the turmoil of spring 1116 when the peace-meeting between Hákon and Magnus was arranged at the Thingstead on the Mainland, nor later at the fatal meeting to confirm this agreement on Egilsay in April. Why was he not mentioned in the sagas, particularly during the meeting on Egilsay, the island where the bishop had his residence, and why was he reluctant to acknowledge the sanctity of St Magnus? Through the absence and reluctance of Bishop William the Old, the sagas of St Magnus do not seek to paint an exclusively positive picture of the bishop and his role in the immediate events surrounding the peace-meetings and martyrdom of St Magnus.

About twenty years later, when Earl Rognvald entered the scene, the bishop changed his mind. A miracle performed by the saint saved the bishop's life, according to the sagas. The body of St Magnus was exhumed, tested against fire, found worthy, and finally translated by Bishop William. Although the bishop did not figure in the conflict between Magnus and Hákon, he did arrange the fortnight's truce between Rognvald and Pál about twenty years later, during which a settlement was to be reached. By this time Earl Rognvald's plans to establish a new political and ecclesiastical centre in Kirkwall may already have been on the table, a most generous offer that the Bishop of Orkney hardly could turn down. The outcome of the conflict between Rognvald and Pál was a united earldom, a joint political and ecclesiastical centre in Kirkwall, and the establishment of an 'earldom-cult' which served as a collective and religious symbol of this unity. The cult of St Magnus was free to be celebrated and miracles and pilgrimages were encouraged. The many miracles attributed to St Magnus, and pilgrimages made to his shrine included in the *Vita Magnus* served to further establish and encourage his sanctity and his cult. The great resources spent on building a cathedral to house the shrine of St Magnus and the writing of a *vita* to document his sanctity, were testimonies of an earldom willing and able to bring its society and its Church closer to the cultural and religious mainstream of Rome.

The religious objective had an outward focus towards the Universal Church centred at the papal Seat in Rome. The graves and the cults of the early Christian martyrs of Rome were the ideal for saints' shrines and cults throughout Christianity in the Middle Ages¹. The cult of St Magnus in the North Atlantic was not an exception. The religious objective of the cult of St Magnus was tied to the universal notion of the *sacred* and the *holy*². The shrine and the cult reflected the desire to create a sacred space dedicated to the holy, and set apart from ordinary and profane activities. Although the prospect of great miracles being performed at the shrine would have been a motive of income, the building of a cathedral was still an act of creating a sacred and consecrated space in Kirkwall.

The most sacred place within the cathedral in Kirkwall was the high altar – the *altare Dei*³. This altar was dedicated to Christ, and may have housed the shrine of St Magnus, or it may have been located immediately above it or behind it in the sanctuary⁴. Although only the *Magnúss Saga Skemmri* refers to the shrine being installed in the new cathedral⁵, the translation and installation of the shrine would probably have taken place in connection with the solemn act of consecrating the cathedral and the high altar. The installation of St Magnus' relics would have been an essential part of this religious rite. By translating and installing the relics, the cathedral became dedicated to St Magnus. The cultic veneration could thus continue, such as pilgrimage and the annual celebration of the *passio* and the *translatio*. The consecrated building became a sanctuary, a protected place, and a religious focal point in the earldom.

The creation of the cult of St Magnus was not only an instrument for the twelfth century earls. It also proved that the Northern Isles did have the desire and resources to establish a cult of proportions and that this area was indeed part of Western Christianity. The first bishopric, established by Earl Thorfinn in c. 1050⁶, linked the earldom with the Archbishop's seat at Hamburg-Bremen. This connection transferred religious impulses such as the cult of saints, relics, and pilgrimage to Orkney and Shetland. The Christian notion of the *sacred* had reached this area about fifty years earlier. About a century and a half after the conversion of the Norse, the earldom had established a native cult, built an impressive shrine, and had become a centre of pilgrimage.

b) Tracing the cult.

As concluded above, the cult of St Magnus may be summed up in two aspects; a political motive and a religious objective. These two aspects were *present* in the earldom by the middle of the twelfth century. The cult of St Magnus in particular should also be seen in connection with the cult of saints in general. As discussed in chapter 4, the origin of Christian cults may be traced back to the late antiquity, to the centres of Roman power and to the great cemeteries located outside the walls of Roman cities. In the pre-Christian Roman society, the dead and the cemeteries were perceived as unclean, something that the society needed to be protected from. In early Christianity, on the other hand, basilicas were erected on top of the graves of the martyrs, outside the city-walls. As the cult of martyrs and the notion of their proximity to God developed, the graves and the saints' shrines became privileged places and boundaries between heaven and earth⁷.

In order to discuss the relatively scarce evidence for a pilgrimage process to the shrine of St Magnus (apart from the saga-descriptions), the universality of Christian pilgrimage is the paramount starting-point. The Holy Land and Rome were the prime centres of Christianity throughout the early Christian period and the Middle Ages. Although these pilgrimages have dominated the pilgrimage process throughout Christianity, new cults and holy places were recognised during the Middle Ages. Regional and local cults and shrines were modelled on Rome and the Holy Land, and the perception of the holy was distributed to places far away from the Christian centres. The cult and pilgrimage process of St Magnus in Orkney was consequently a reflection of this distribution of the holy, as were the cults and pilgrimages of e.g. St Olaf in Norway, St Andrew in Scotland, St Martin in France, and St James in Spain. Universal Christian traditions concerning the veneration of the holy were adopted, but developed separately for each cult. The Middle Ages consequently saw the rise of a considerable number of regional and local cults, varying in popularity and in function. These were the underlying factors for the development of the cult of St Magnus. The political circumstances in the earldom were its superstructure.

The cult of St Magnus developed from the spread of the cults of saints and relics to the North Atlantic with the conversion to Christianity. From the conversion of the Northern Isles, until c. 1116, saints and the act of pilgrimage were already familiar to this society. One such example is St Magnus' grandfather, Thorfinn, who made a pilgrimage to Rome and visited the Pope before his death in 1064. After his return to Orkney, he established the bishop's seat in Birsay. Earl Thorfinn's pilgrimage reflects that this society was familiar with the sacred places and the authority of Rome.

The evidence for a cult of St Magnus may be further sought in the expressions of *cultus* throughout the North Atlantic. Dedications of churches and cathedrals, place-names associated with the saint, the distribution of relics, and liturgical sources etc., are, in general, indicators of the extent of a cult's popularity. As discussed in chapters 6 and 7, the primary historical sources tie his martyrdom and sainthood to specific places in Orkney⁸. His cult was also particularly popular amongst the Shetland population⁹. The primary places associated with the cult in Orkney (Egilsay, Birsay, and Kirkwall) were the cultic centres, but the popularity of Magnus' sainthood spread throughout the North Atlantic during the high and later Middle Ages. The distribution of relics, the dedication of churches, place-names associated with St Magnus, the liturgical sources commemorating and celebrating the saint, art, and poetry are the *expressions* of the cult of St Magnus and is the evidence for the extent of the cult's popularity and how it was celebrated.

The veneration of the saint began, according to the sagas, immediately after St Magnus' death in c. 1116, although it became actively promoted by the Earl and the Church from c. 1136 onwards with the move of the bishopric and the earldom's administrative centre. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, churches were built and dedicated to St Magnus in Orkney as well as in Shetland. The unfinished cathedral in Kirkjubøur¹⁰, in the Faeroes, probably dates to the middle of the thirteenth century, and the church-dedications in Iceland are most likely thirteenth to fourteenth century. In Iceland, St Magnus only occurs as a co-patron, and four of these five churches belong to the bishopric of Skálholt¹¹. Dedications to St Magnus as cultic indicators consequently seem to have had a central North Atlantic focus, from Orkney and Shetland to the Faeroes and Iceland. The altar-dedication in Nidaros Cathedral¹², Norway, was referred to in documents as late as 1430, although the dedication is probably of an earlier date. There is also a late hospital-dedication in Caithness, recorded in 1476¹³. The authenticity of the church-dedications in England is uncertain, but the church in London may have been re-dedicated or re-associated with the Orcadian Magnus as this part of London along the Thames used to be called the "Scandinavian quarter", and many churches were dedicated to St Olaf in this area.

The evidence for the translation of relics, on the other hand, in connection with the dedication of the churches is scarce. There is only one record of the translation of *helgum domi Magnus jarls*, to Skálholt in Iceland in the year 1298¹⁴. This *helgum domi*, or "sacred thing" would most likely have been relics of the saint, received from the cathedral in Kirkwall. These relics were probably installed in the cathedral of Skálholt as part of the bishopric's own collection of relics, and not intended to be installed in any of the churches to

which St Magnus was a co-patron. The installation of the relics of St Magnus in the eastern exterior wall of Kirkjubøur Cathedral is, on the other hand, a strong indication of an interrupted consecration of that building¹⁵. The dedication of the new cathedral in Kirkjubøur to St Magnus rather than to St Þorlákr of Iceland (whose relics were also installed in the wall-reliquary) may reflect a stronger contact between the bishoprics of the Faeroes and Orkney during the latter half of the thirteenth century.

The cult of St Magnus would have been celebrated throughout the North Atlantic according to the medieval customs of the Church, and in accordance with the worldly and heavenly standing of the saint. The liturgical material is scarce and fragmentary, due to the destructions during the sixteenth century Church-reformation. The evidence for the celebration of the cult of St Magnus indicates a veneration or commemoration throughout the North Atlantic in the Mass or as memorials. The *Breviarium Aberdonense* indicates that the martyrdom of St Magnus was the more important of the two feasts, and was celebrated with a double feast. This is also indicated in the early sixteenth century *Missale* and *Breviarium Nidrosiense* in Norway. The translation, on the other hand, was a memorial only. This in contrast to Iceland where the translation of St Magnus appears to have been the more important of the two Church-feasts. In Norway the *passio* and *translatio* were only commemorated in the early thirteenth century *Ordo* of Nidaros as marginal notes to the main text. This may indicate that the feasts of St Magnus were at an earlier stage only commemorated and not celebrated with complete masses. This is again reflected in the Old Church Laws of Norway, where the feasts of St Magnus are placed amongst the lower class of saints' festivals which did not require an observation of the holiday eve or fasting. Another element which may explain why St Magnus was placed amongst the lower class of saints in Norway is the distinction between *sanctus* and *beatus*¹⁶. Only the *Codex Tunsbergensis* (and possibly the *Manuale Norvegicum*) refers to Magnus as a saint in its *passio* calendar-entry. In all other commemorations in the Norwegian liturgical sources, Magnus is referred to as *beati* or simply as *martir*. St Magnus was never canonised by papal decree, but his sanctity was established through local and episcopal recognition. The tendency in the Norwegian liturgical sources to address Magnus as *beati* and not as *sancti* may reflect an attitude of recognition towards the earldom-cult, but it was not considered equal in status to the patron saint and cult of Norway.

The Danish breviaries commemorate Magnus the martyr in August, which would initially point in the direction of another saint of the same name, possibly St Magnus Tranensis. A re-association with the Orcadian St Magnus during the Later Middle Ages is,

however, possible. The spread and veneration of the cult of St Magnus was consequently centred in the North Atlantic. During the early period, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the cult was venerated throughout the Northern Isles and had some influence in the Faeroes, Iceland, and Norway, but its popularity seems to have been limited compared to Orkney and Shetland. In Norway the three late medieval altar-frontals from northern and eastern Norway are not alone evidence of a late revival of the cult of St Magnus, but may rather reflect local connections with the earldom. This may also be the case with the commemorations of St Magnus in Denmark.

The celebration and commemoration of the festivals of St Magnus as accounted for in the liturgical sources are again reflected in the dating of documents. The overall impression is that the festival of the martyrdom in April was well known, at least by officials of the church, and used as dating-references in documents. Legal documents were often written by church-officials for lay-members of the society who were either unskilled in the art of writing or to authenticate/certify the documents. To document when the documents were written, saints festivals were used as points of reference. The eleven legal documents from Norway and Iceland from a period of more than two-hundred years reveal that particularly the festival of the martyrdom was generally recognised to a degree which made it safe to use as a date of reference.

At this point it is therefore useful to ask *why* the cult of St Magnus was popular in the North Atlantic. The cathedral may give us an important clue, as it was the physical establishment of the cult in the earldom. It was...

[] not just intended as an appropriate setting for a dynastic cult centre-cum-mausoleum and a bishop's seat, but perhaps also a quite deliberate attempt on the part of the earls of Orkney to express how they themselves perceived both their considerable standing and their independence in the northern world. From this perspective, it is surely not coincidental that nothing like Kirkwall is to be found in any of the other Norse colonies and, equally, that its comparanda are to be found exclusively among the greatest contemporary Scandinavian churches, erected under royal patronage (Cambridge 1988 : 123-124).

In this setting, the cult of St Magnus and its cult centre would have served as the earldom's counterweight to the powerful and royal cult of St Olaf in Norway. Brunsden (2002) uses the political tension between Norway and Iceland in the mid thirteenth century to explain this possible scenario, when the Free State fell and the supremacy of the Norse Crown was established. In this situation the political message of the cult of St Magnus would have been a more powerful symbol for the inhabitants of the North Atlantic islands than the supremacy of the Crown and the cult of St Olaf (Brunsden 2002 : 75). The popularity of the cult of St

Magnus in the North Atlantic was consequently dependent on the internal political situation in the earldom, as well as benefitting from the external tension surrounding the Norse Crown and royal cult. Likewise, the cathedral was a great symbol in the North Atlantic of religious, political and cultural independence and ability.

The sagas of St Magnus, dedications of churches, the translation of relics, as well as celebrations and commemorations of his feasts, reveal a successful cult of a regional, secular saint. The cult's initial intention was to bring focus on the earldom as an administrative and ecclesiastical power during the twelfth century. Although the evidence for the cult does not reveal that there was an intensive and extended tradition for the veneration of the Orkney saint throughout the North Atlantic, its main motive and objective became first and foremost fulfilled *within* the Northern Isles. Veneration throughout the North Atlantic was to some degree achieved, but does not seem to have been a main objective but rather a consequence. The Latin *Vita Magnus* was within one hundred years translated into Old Norse, possibly by Icelandic scholars appointed by the Orkney Church. The translation of this manuscript would have made the cult of St Magnus more widely known and available, and the stories of his life, martyrdom, and miracles would have further generated the pilgrimage process to his shrine. The writing of a *vita* of St Magnus secured the continued veneration and celebration of his cult. The lost *Vita Magnus* on which the sagas of St Magnus are based¹⁷ is classified as a typical hagiographical work in *Latin* which was written for a liturgical purpose¹⁸. The *vita* would have been read and presented within an ecclesiastical context, probably on the celebrations of the martyrdom and the translation. The life of St Magnus which has mainly survived in the three texts of the *Orkneyinga Saga*, *Magnúss Saga Lengri*, and *Magnúss Saga Skemmri*, contain the "documented facts" regarding his early years, martyrdom, and sainthood. As hagiologic documents, they generally mediate two distinct and complementary aims; to call upon the facts and events that may account for the sanctity of Magnus, and to serve as an inspiration for the individual believer to actively respond to the exemplary stories of his life¹⁹.

c) Tracing pilgrimage.

The Christian saints enjoyed a privileged position and intimacy with God and could therefore protect the living. The graves of the saints and martyrs were protected space, sanctuaries, and sacred places, mediating *the holy* between heaven and earth. The proximity to the holy in life and in death was an important aspect of medieval religious life, and could be sought through the possession of relics, pilgrimage, or through burial *ad sanctos*. The medieval pilgrimage process was tied with this universal Christian notion of sacred space and places. The medieval Church encouraged the cultic veneration of saints through the distribution of relics and pilgrimages to saints' shrine to achieve some kind of religious relief. As described by Brown:

The devotees who flocked out of Rome to the shrine of Saint Lawrence, to ask for his favor or to place their dead near his grave, were not merely going to a place; they were going to a place to meet a person – *ad dominum Laurentium* (Brown 1981 : 88).

To this may be added that they were going to a *sacred place*, to seek divine relief, to repent, and to seek cures. The persons, the occupants of the tombs or shrines,

[] were “holy” because they made *available* [my emphasis] to the faithful around their tombs on earth a measure of the power and mercy in which they might have taken their rest in the Above (Brown 1981 : 3).

This availability of power and mercy at the graves of the holy women and men generated pilgrimage as well as the cults of relics and saints. The proximity to the holy had therefore, in essence, two aspects:

Translation – the movement of relics to people, and *pilgrimage* – the movement of people to relics (Brown 1981 : 88).

The translation of relics, or the translation of shrines, involved the notion of elevation – of the cult, of the individual possessor of the relic, and of the church / the parish. The translation of the shrine of St Magnus, as described in the sagas, was a major force elevating his cult, the earldom, and ultimately generating miracles. Like most other secular saints, Magnus was not a holy man alive, but became a holy man dead. Although he is described in the sagas as a pious man throughout his life, the miracles did not occur until his death. Of the number of miraculous stories ascribed St Magnus in the sagas, two groups of miracles are distinct: The miracles performed in connection with pilgrimages to, followed by cures at the shrine, and

miracles in connection with the translations of the shrine. Firstly, the number of pilgrimages made to the shrine of St Magnus, followed by cures, were deliberately emphasised by the author of the *Vita Magnus* to focus on the greatness of the cult and the shrine (i.e. Kirkwall) in order to continuously attract pilgrims. The miracle-stories concerned cures of illnesses obtained through pilgrimage and the keeping of vigil at the shrine. The circulation of such reports of miraculous cures would have inspired a continued pilgrimage to Kirkwall and to the shrine. Secondly, the miracles performed in connection with the translations are of a different type, and these did not have a medicinal motivation. The shrine of St Magnus was translated thrice; once in Birsay, once from Birsay to Kirkwall, and finally the translation to the new cathedral. Miraculous appearances were reported in the sagas in connection with the two first translations, and these two translations represent the great elevation of the cult of St Magnus: the recognition by the earl and the bishop, and the joining of ecclesiastical and secular power. The third translation, from St Olaf's Church to the new cathedral, was, for some reason, not given any emphasis in the OS and the M1. Only the M2 gives a brief reference to this event²⁰. The Latin *vita* may have been written for this final transfer to the cathedral, and this may therefore account for the lack of an elaborate description of a grand translation. Although the majority of the pilgrimages were made, rather imprecisely described, to the 'shrine of St Magnus', the pilgrims' goal was indeed the shrine in Kirkwall. In conclusion, the miracles performed by the saint at the shrine as well as the focus on the translations of the shrine served to encourage pilgrimage and to ensure a continued pilgrimage process to the shrine in Kirkwall.

Analysing the pilgrimage process of the cult of St Magnus from the perspective of the historical sources only, the sagas give the impression that the pilgrims went straight to the shrine, located either in Birsay or in Kirkwall. An additional, or rather complementary, view is to analyse the pilgrimage process, as a religious ritual in general terms, and within this category as a rite of passage, as a liminal stage, and as a process of movement and constants. Within the process of pilgrimage as a religious ritual lies the notion that the individual pilgrim was conscious of the landscape through which he or she moved. This implies that the movement from e.g. home to the shrine was directed according to a set pattern, and not by random²¹. The sagas of St Magnus do not describe the pilgrimages of Bergfinn Skatason, Thorkel, Sigrid, and Groa, only that they went to the *shrine* and were cured. The pilgrimage process to the shrine of St Magnus as a religious ritual, on the other hand, was not only focusing on the shrine in Kirkwall, but also on the sacred places associated with the martyrdom and sanctification of Magnus, i.e. Egilsay and Birsay. The pilgrimage route of the

cult of St Magnus would initially have been modelled on the great Christian pilgrimages to the Holy Land and to Rome, and secondly it would have been modelled on the movement of St Magnus' corpse: From Egilsay, via Birsay, to Kirkwall. These are the historical, primary sites of the cult of St Magnus, making the pilgrimage route to Kirkwall an extended ritual²². Because these places were given significance through his martyrdom, sanctification, and finally through his translation, these places became *sacred*.

As discussed in chapter 7f, indulgences were granted to churches (B17-23) in the period 1395-1466 on the festival of St Magnus. The major indulgence granted in 1441 to St Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall on both festivals as well as the festival of St John (A25/B20) was explicitly granted to further attract pilgrims. This document is the only other reference, except the sagas, which refer to a pilgrimage tradition to St Magnus' shrine in Orkney. Documents B17-23 (except B20), on the other hand, reveal that the festival of St Magnus of Orkney was indeed popular outside the earldom during the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries, and important enough to let indulgences of up to forty days be granted on his festival (probably the martyrdom). The implication of these documents is profound: They throw new light on the cult and pilgrimage process to the shrine of St Magnus. The cult and the pilgrimage have traditionally been based on the information given by the sagas as well as the implicit cultic expressions conveyed by the monuments such as the cathedral in Kirkwall. The indulgences, on the other hand, confirm the presence of the cult of St Magnus, particularly in eastern Norway during the later Middle Ages. They also refer to a veneration of St Magnus already present in this area, as well as the desire to continue this custom. This retrospective information is particularly evident in the seven-year indulgence granted to the cathedral. The Pope had clearly been enlightened by Bishop Thomas of the declining number of pilgrims to Kirkwall in the preceding years and that this trend needed to be changed. A possible late revival of the cult of St Magnus may consequently have been the result. The prospect of receiving indulgences would certainly have stimulated and possibly reinforced a pilgrimage tradition to the shrine.

The proximity to the holy was as significant in the North Atlantic as anywhere else in Christianity. Like the presence of God was manifested in the landscape and monuments of the Holy Land, so were the martyrdom and sanctity of Magnus manifested in the earldom. The establishment of the cult of St Magnus through the written word of hagiography was in turn reflected in the landscape of Orkney. The pilgrimage routes to the shrine of St Olaf in Nidaros, as well as to Lady Richeldis' "Nazareth" in Walsingham, were *representations* of the pilgrimage process to the Holy Land²³. This would similarly have been the case with the

pilgrimage route to the shrine of St Magnus in Orkney. The “distance” covered by the North Atlantic pilgrims was between the *familiar* and the *other*²⁴: From the North Atlantic farmstead to those special and sacred places of martyrdom, sanctification, translation, and ultimately leading to miracles. Although there is no historical evidence for a pilgrimage route connecting Egilsay, Birsay and Kirkwall, these places are nevertheless connected by analogy with the process of pilgrimage during early Christianity and the Middle Ages.

To the North Atlantic pilgrim, the *skrin yfir altari* in Birsay and in Kirkwall, was the *axis mundi*, the place where the contrasted poles of heaven and earth met. The pilgrims went to experience a religious process, and they came to visit a person and to be in the proximity to the holy – *ad sanctos*. Like the process of the burial of a corpse culminating in the protected space of the grave, so did the pilgrims to the shrine of St Magnus enter the sanctuaries of the churches in Egilsay, Birsay and Kirkwall. The desire to continuously establish the sanctity of Magnus, as well as Kirkwall as a major centre of pilgrimage, is probably most evident in the period between Earl Rognvald’s death in 1158 and the translation of his relics by Bishop Bjarni before 1223. The decision to extend the choir of St Magnus Cathedral may have been due to an increase in pilgrimage activity to the shrines of two saints; Magnus *and* Rognvald²⁵. The earldom was again reminded in 1176 of this family’s sanctity when Earl Harald the Young was slain in Caithness²⁶. Heavenly light was followed by miracles – a testimony from the grave of his inherited sanctity as well as desire to join his family and to continue the cult of saints: *han vildi yfir til Orkneyja til Mágnúss jarls ok Rognvalds, frænda sinna...*

d) Cult and pilgrimage compared.

In contrast to the early Christian cults of the martyrs, the regional, local, and popular cults emerged with the spread of Christianity during the Middle Ages. The cult of St Magnus may in general be categorised as a regional and secular cult. Local cults were influenced by the ruling classes, and the object of veneration was usually a person of higher rank²⁷. Although St Magnus was not of traditional royal lineage, his martyrdom and sanctity may resemble the cults of royal saints of which St Olaf of Norway is a classic example²⁸. St Olaf's death in battle was perceived as a martyrdom suffered for Christianity. St Magnus was rather a pacifist, refusing to fight with King Magnus, and he boldly accepted his death-sentence²⁹.

The cult and pilgrimage of St Olaf in Norway provides the closest cult of comparison. In contrast to St Magnus, St Olaf was both *rex* and *martir*. Since the earldom was subjected to the kingdom of Norway, its leaders were not royalty, but nobility (earl: *jarl* / *dux* / *comes*). Both men died, though, as 'Martyrs of Faith': Olaf in battle and Magnus through execution. Although Olaf preferred to fight, Magnus was a self-proclaimed pacifist. Both men became the patron saints of their country, but the process of official veneration differed between these two cults: The veneration of St Olaf was immediately encouraged by the Church, while an open veneration of St Magnus was suppressed by the bishop in Orkney. A strong focus on the royal cult of St Olaf confirmed the supremacy of both king and Church. This unity and self-confirmation was later adopted by Earl Rognvald Kali. Under his rule, the veneration of St Magnus was encouraged, and developed into a local cult of the North Atlantic. This development may initially be interpreted as a provocation against Norway, the cult of St Olaf, and the Archbishop's Seat in Nidaros. The building of St Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall may therefore be seen as an attempt to outclass the veneration of St Olaf in the earldom. There is, however, nothing which indicates that there ever was rivalry between the two cults, and with the establishment of the Archbishop's Seat in Nidaros in 1152 – the cult centre of St Olaf, the bishopric of Orkney was subjected to Nidaros by papal consent. The numerous dedications to St Olaf in Orkney and Shetland indicate that his cult was present in the isles alongside the cult of St Magnus. Nor does it appear to have been a conflict in transferring St Magnus shrine from Birsay to the church in Kirkwall, which was probably dedicated to St Olaf. The new political and ecclesiastical administration of the earldom moved to Kirkwall. This part of the earldom had formerly belonged to Earl Rognvald Brusason which he had been granted by King Olaf Haraldsson, his godfather. A poem written by Ottar the Black, the Earl of Thurso, gives some indication that King Olaf was highly regarded in the earldom as a great overlord:

*Gegn, eru þér at þegnum,
þjóðskjoldunga góðra
haldið hæft á veldi,
Hjaltlendingar kenndir.
Engi varð á jorðu,
ógnbráðr, áðr þér náði,
austr, sás eyjum vestan,
ynglingr, und sik þryngvi.* (OS XIX : 41)

After the martyrdom on Egilsay in 1116, Magnus became “the holy personified”, just as Olaf had become after the battle of Stiklestad in 1030. “The holy personified” as expressed in *cultus* is always tied with *place*. The holy places were the locations of the shrines containing the relics, and in these cults’ ultimate stages the places of the holy shrines and centres of pilgrimage were Christ Church in Nidaros and St Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall. In the medieval pilgrimage processes to Nidaros and Kirkwall, the holy would consequently both have been the object of veneration (the saint/shrine, the relic, the altar etc.) and the cult-centre (the confined and consecrated space of the church-building/churchyard).

Although Magnus’ and Olaf’s historical characters differ in terms of king/earl, warrior/pacifist etc., their saintly status as martyrs and providers of “divine relief ” were similar in function. Their shrines became the centres of miracles and therefore also pilgrimage, which to some degree may be interpreted as movement through a sacred landscape. The movement of pilgrims to the Holy Land and Rome since the fourth century followed specific routes. The common routes provided a greater degree of safety for the pilgrims, and the travelling, for either sacred or profane reasons, contributed in the establishment of churches, monasteries, hospitals, and guest-houses which offered sanctuary, rest and food.

In contrast to the long-established and historical routes to the Holy Land and Rome, the pilgrimages to Nidaros and Kirkwall are difficult to trace, particularly in Orkney. Traditions concerning an established pilgrimage route to the shrine of St Magnus have not been preserved in this maritime landscape, although movement between the islands and the knowledge of safe harbours were an integrated part of society. In Norway, on the other hand, the longitudinal geography, and movement across great distances made it necessary to develop and preserve the established inland and coastal route-system. The routes equalled communication on both a religious and worldly level, and the pilgrimage process to Nidaros became associated with the landscape through symbols, monuments, and legends.

The monuments associated with the cult of St Magnus is consequently seen as defining the sacred landscape of Orkney: The passion of Christ was experienced liturgically by pilgrims in Jerusalem as a historical narrative. The martyrdom and translation of St Magnus may have been experienced by the North Atlantic pilgrims in a similar way: The historical narrative in the *Vita Magnus* was the source of a liturgical pilgrimage from Egilsay via Birsay to Kirkwall. By comparison, the only pilgrimage movement recorded in Orkney is Jo. Ben's narrative of the men of all ages making pilgrimages to the Brough of Deerness (A13), who struggled their way to the top on their bare hands and knees. The pilgrims prayed as they ascended, and only one at the time could approach the chapel, encircling it two or three times and throwing stones and water behind their backs. Jo. Ben's narrative from 1529 is the only example in the Northern Isles of movement through landscape perceived as sacred, and how the ritual of pilgrimage was performed in this place. Except for the incantations to God, the original dedication to the chapel on the Brough is unknown, but the pilgrimage process suggests the presence of *cultus*; the chapel may have possessed a sacred reliquary, or the water from the well (Morris et al. 1986 : 311 and Jo. Ben A13) not far from the chapel may have been believed to contain curative powers etc.. Jo. Ben's description of the pilgrims' ritual therefore indicate that the physical geography was perceived as sacred landscape and that it was connected to the fabric of the chapel. Similarly, the pilgrimage process to Nidaros was perceived as connecting the landscape and cult of St Olaf. The pilgrimage to the shrine of St Magnus was consequently directed by the hagiological and historical narratives of his life, martyrdom and translations, and his cult became established in place and monument.

e) Future research.

Medieval cult and pilgrimage is a complex subject which cannot be approached from one angle of research only. The initial intention of this thesis was to approach the subject from the view-point of an archaeologist, but during the course of research it became evident that such an approach alone would not illuminate the subject to the degree which it deserves. The pilgrimage of St Magnus needed to be discussed within a wider context than the archaeological and historical dimensions. These are the immediate and traditional approaches by medievalists studying the society of the Northern Isles, but in order to throw new light on St Magnus, the tradition of cult and pilgrimage had to be considered within wider terms. Medieval Christian cults and pilgrimage are (apart from being themes for historians and archaeologists) as much tied with the history and philosophy of religion (Christianity) as well as folk-lore. Saints' cults and pilgrimage are thus generally seen as divided subjects and should ideally be approached from the four angles of:

<i>History</i>	[the historical sources and documents]
<i>Archaeology</i>	[the associated monuments and sites]
<i>Religion</i>	[the historical and philosophical approaches to Christianity]
<i>Folk-lore</i>	[the legends, customs, and traditions – if any]

The challenge of this thesis has been to approach the subject of St Magnus and the pilgrimage to Orkney from these four angles. This is also where the potentiality of future research lies. Studying the cult and pilgrimage of St Magnus in light of history, archaeology, religion, and folk-lore has opened up new areas of research into the Christian / Norse / medieval society of the Northern Isles and the North Atlantic. In light of this thesis and on the basis of the four source/research approaches, the following areas of potential future research may be proposed:

Cultus.

The historical material including sagas and documents needs to be given further attention in order to create a catalogue of saints' cults in the North Atlantic. This has to date been done to some degree concerning Iceland and Shetland (Comack 1994 and Cant 1975). A possible starting-point of research could initially be the *Ordo Nidrosiensis Ecclesiae*³⁰ which served as a guide of saints' festivals celebrated and commemorated within the Archbishopric of Nidaros between c. 1152 – 1536 (possibly until 1266 in the bishopric of Sodor, and until 1472 in the Bishopric of Orkney). This study could further include saints' dedications of ecclesiastical buildings which may throw further light on the distribution and spread of cultus within this geographical area with a common cultural background.

Pilgrimage and sacred places.

Investigations and/or excavations of medieval church and chapel sites with associated pilgrimage traditions in Orkney and Shetland would possibly throw new light on the archaeology of sacred places. A potentially major project could be based on the experiences made during the excavation of the chapel on the Brough of Deerness³¹, Orkney, in the late 1970s (Morris and Emery et al 1986), as well as the Unst chapel-surveys by Lowe (1988) and Morris and Brady (1998). The chapel on the Brough of Deerness remains to date the only excavated site associated with pilgrimage-traditions, and the excavation revealed a possible connection between coin-deposits and Jo. Ben' description of the obscure customs at the site. Sites which would possibly be suitable for archaeological excavation in Orkney are: St Tredwell's Chapel in Papey³² and the Well of Kildinguie in Stronsay³³. In Shetland: Cross Kirk in Unst³⁴ and Cross Kirk in Eshaness³⁵.

Translation and consecration.

The act of translation defined as the arrival, installation, and celebration of relics³⁶, is a topic which has not been properly investigated in the North Atlantic region. This potential study should concentrate on the *translation* of relics and the *consecration*³⁷ of churches and altars, and investigate the evidence for this process. Historical documents and sources may contain information regarding the arrival and celebration of relics to specific places. The act of installation, on the other hand, would potentially be the subject of an archaeological investigation as the installation of relics in altars or in the fabric of buildings also concerns the consecration of space. This study would supplement archaeological investigations of church-architecture and church-plans, focusing on the physical location/distribution of shrines or reliquaries and the sanctification of space. St Magnus Cathedral at Kirkjubøur³⁸ in the Faeroes may be used as a starting-point for this type of research.

Pilgrimage and funeral customs.

The processes of medieval pilgrimage and funeral customs contain processual similarities which may be suitable for a comparative study, within Northern Europe. These processual similarities are a) between the act of pilgrimage and/or the pilgrimage route, and the funeral customs and/or the funeral route; b) between the holy dead (the saints), and the ordinary death; and c) the ordinary burial *in proximity* to the holy (*ad sanctos*³⁹). There are numerous examples in Northern Europe of recorded medieval funeral customs, and in particular funeral routes with associated sites and/or monuments (coffin-rests, stones and crosses). The funeral routes are to some extent structurally comparable to the physical movement of pilgrimage.

These structural similarities are two-dimensional; as physical movement from home to the grave/shrine, and as a mental journey from the *familiar* to the *other*. This study would also incorporate a comparative discussion of the holy vs. the ordinary dead (body): How was death and the dead perceived and ritualised within a given society? A third approach to pilgrimage and funeral customs would finally concern the goal of the journey – the grave or the shrine: The relationship between the ordinary and the holy dead in burial. The distribution of ordinary medieval Christian graves within a defined and consecrated space (hereunder the church choir, the church building/fabric, the churchyard, or the graveyard/necropolis) in proximity to the *sanctum sanctorum* (the holy shrine, altar etc.) would further illuminate the theme of burial *ad sanctos*, and addressing issues concerning the sacredness of the body, the grave, and the place. A potential future study may involve the historical and folkloric documentation in e.g. Scandinavia and the British Isles concerning funeral/pilgrimage routes and an archaeological investigation of associated monuments/sites.

Sanctuary.

Research into the subject of religious sanctuary⁴⁰ would initially be based on historical and folkloric sources. Religious sanctuary within a Christian setting has two meanings; as part of the architecture of the church-building, east of the choir, and as defined space designated to provide the individual with some degree of protection in specific situations. It is the latter meaning which would initially be suitable for future research, and past and present research on medieval juridical immunity and ‘protected space’, should be used as a starting-point. The religious sanctuary as protected space is linked with the act of consecration, i.e. the creation of sacred space. Potential future research should therefore be explored from the angle of history and philosophy of religion in order to investigate its universal Christian origin and meaning. Secondly, the study of sanctuary as protected and sacred space should be tied with known places where monuments, historical sources, and local customs and traditions are available. Immunity and protected space have been the subject of research on the Continent and the British Isles since the beginning of the twentieth century. Similar research-interest has been lacking in the North Atlantic region of the Norse societies. This area’s cultural and religious unity could, however, inspire an investigation of whether this privilege was indeed present within the North Atlantic, as well as the distribution of such places/monuments and how this privilege was administered. Finally, the connection between religious sanctuary and consecrated space should be investigated in relation to (if any) specific sites, buildings, or monuments in the North Atlantic.

Notes to chapter 9.

- ¹ Cf. Ch. 4c : 64.
- ² Cf. Ch. 2a : 8-10
- ³ Cf. Ch. 2b : 12-13.
- ⁴ Cf. Ch. 2c : 17.
- ⁵ Cf. Ch. 7d : 152.
- ⁶ Cf. Ch. 5b : 84-85.
- ⁷ Cf. Ch. 4b : 59-60.
- ⁸ Cf. Ch. 7, parts b), c), and d).
- ⁹ Cf. Ch. 6d : 128ff.
- ¹⁰ Cf. Ch. 2b : 12 and ch. 8b : 176.
- ¹¹ Cf. Ch. 8b : 176.
- ¹² Cf. Ch. 8b : 177.
- ¹³ Cf. Ch. 8b : 175.
- ¹⁴ Cf. Ch. 8d : 182.
- ¹⁵ See note 10, above.
- ¹⁶ Cf. Ch. 7, note 29.
- ¹⁷ Cf. Ch. 6a : 114.
- ¹⁸ Cf. Ch. 4b : 56-57.
- ¹⁹ Cf. Ch. 4b : 57.
- ²⁰ Cf. note 5, above.
- ²¹ Cf. Ch. 3d : 45ff.
- ²² Cf. Ch. 3c : 42.
- ²³ Cf. Ch. 4c : 62ff.
- ²⁴ Cf. Ch. 4c : 61.
- ²⁵ Cf. Ch. 7d : 154-155.
- ²⁶ Cf. Ch. 7e : 160-161.
- ²⁷ Cf. Ch. 4b : 59
- ²⁸ Cf. Ch. 4b : 57.
- ²⁹ Cf. Ch. 6b : 118.
- ³⁰ Cf. Ch. 8f : 188.
- ³¹ Cf. Ch. 5c : 100, and ch. 7c : 145.
- ³² Cf. Ch. 5c : 98-100.
- ³³ Cf. Ch. 5c : 105.
- ³⁴ Cf. ch. 5c : 104.
- ³⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶ Cf. Ch. 4b : 55.
- ³⁷ Cf. Ch. 2b : 11ff.
- ³⁸ Cf. note 10, above.
- ³⁹ Cf. Ch. 2d : 23ff.
- ⁴⁰ Cf. Ch. 2c : 17ff.

Appendix A

Norse and Latin translations

Chapter 2:

- A1 *Item quatenus Berweno(!) Nicolai presbytero canonico ecclesie Nidrosiensis altare portabile concedere dignemini per se et pro se ut supra ut in forma. Item quantenus eidem B. ut ante diem missas et alia diuina celebrare aut facere celebrari etca ut in forma (DN XVII, no. 374 : 287-288).*

Likewise, it should be granted Berwenus Nicolai, Canon of Nidaros Church, the privilege to receive a portable altar which he will make use of as agreed. Likewise, to let the same B[erwenus] celebrate Masses and other services at dawn etc. as stated above.

- A2 *Item quatenus Olawo Andree presbytero Asloensis diocesis altare portabile etca ut supra in precedente. Item quantenus eidem Olawo ut ante diem missas etca ut supra ut in forma (DN XVII, no. 374 : 287-288).*

Likewise, it should be granted Olawus Andree, Presbyter of Oslo Diocese, the privilege to receive a portable altar, as stated above. Likewise, to let the same Olawus celebrate Masses etc. as stated above.

- A3 [], *hinc est quod nos tue celsitudinis deuotis supplicationibus inclinati ut liceat tibi habere altare portatile cum debitis reuerentia et honore super quo in locis ad hoc congruentibus et honestis possis per proprium vel alium sacerdotem ydoneum missam at alia diuina officia sine juri alieni preiudicio in tua et aliorum quorumlibet presentia facere celebrari deuotioni tue tenore presentium indulgemus (DN VIII, no. 336 : 362-363).*

[], this is why we, moved by the devoted prayers of Your Highness, with this letter give in to your devotedness, so that you may possess a portable altar with all due awe and honour. With this [portable altar] you may, in dignified places and in concordance with it, with your own or another suitable priest, let the Mass and other services be celebrated without any unlawful offence, in the presence of yourself or anyone else.

- A4 *Cum irrefragabiliter sint servanda que per sedem apostolicam sunt statuta, nos tue fraternitatis precibus inclinati libertatis et immunitates a felicis recordationis Adriano et aliis Romanis pontificibus predecessoribus nostris, nec non libertates et exemptiones secularium exactioinum a regibus et principibus et aliis Christifidelibus ecclesiis regni Norwagie tibi subiectis rationabiliter, ut in authenticis inde confectis*

dicitur plenius contieneri, concessas auctoritate apostolica confirmamus et presentis scripti patrocinio communimus (DN I, no. 20 : 16).

As the things resolved by the Apostolic Seat shall be observed unhindered, do we confirm, moved by you, our brother's prayers, the Apostolic authority, and convey in the protection of this letter, the freedom and immunity that is given by Hadrian, peace be with him, and other Roman popes, our predecessors, as well as the liberties and exemptions from worldly demands by kings, sovereigns and others, to the churches of the kingdom of Norway that are faithful to Christ and which is rightfully subjected to you as it is claimed to be written more elaborately in the valid documents which is since made.

A5 *Cum a nobis petitur [] assensu, domos et ambitum ecclesie vestre ab ea usque ad quadraginta passus illa libertate, ac immunitate, qua ecclesia ipsa gaudet, auctoritate presentium gaudere decernimus, maxime cum hoc ab antiquis temporibus fuerit, sicut asseritis, pacifice observatum (DN VIII, no. 7 : 9).*

Because we were asked to give our consent, we have decided that the houses and the area around your church, including that of forty feet from this building, with the authority of this letter, shall enjoy the same privilege of liberty and immunity as held by the church itself, especially since this privilege has been peacefully kept since past times, as you claim.

A6 *Non multo postquam Nicolaus Tyrry noster subditus, [nec non uest]rarum serenitatum familiaris cum credite fidei litteris ad nos missus ipsarum litteras reddidisset, mandataque e... sset, nullo super expositis adhuc a nobis accepto responso, ad sanctuarium, ecclesieque immunitates, illum [] (DN XI, no. 413 : 421).*

Not long after Nicolaus Turry, our subject and your highnesses servant, was sent to us with a letter and did deliver this, ..., without having received an answer on our behalf concerning what has been put before us, we understand that he had taken sanctuary in a church, an incident which puzzled us [].

Chapter 5:

- A7 *Dá váru hér menn kristnir, Þeir er Norðmenn kalla papa, en Þeir fóru síðan á braut, af því at Þeir vildu eigi vera hér við heiðna menn, ok létu eptir bækr írskar ok bjöllur ok bagla. Af því mátti skilja, at Þeir váru menn írskir (Hermannsson 1966 : 60).*

There were Christian men here, that the Northmen called papa. Later they went away because they did not want to live next to heathens. They left behind Irish beakers, bells, and staffs/crosiers. From these objects one could tell that the men were Irish.

- A8 *Hann sat jafnan í Byrgisheraði ok lét þar gera Kristkirkju, dýrlegt musteri; þar var fyrst settr byskupsstóll í Orkneyjum (OS XXXI : 80).*

He had his permanent residence at Birsay, where he built and dedicted to Christ a fine minster, the seat of the first bishop of Orkney (Pálsson and Edwards 1978 : 75).

- A9 *Ad easdem insulas Orchadas, quamvis prius ab Angelorum et Scothorum episcopis regerentur, noster primas iussu papae ordinavit Turolfum episcopum in civitatem Blasconam, qui omnium curas ageret (Adamus Bremensis : 59).*

Although the islands of Orkney were earlier subjected to the bishops of England and Scotland, our archbishop have, by papal consent, consecrated Thorolf, bishop of the town of Blascona, and for him to take care of these islands.

- A10 *Cum coloni Hialtandie se voto, longis retroactis temporibus, firmiter adstrinxerunt, pro fertilitate terre sue, ut singuli singulis annis certam mensuram farine, que Sunnifumiol in vulgari apellatur, ad scrinium beate Sunnive Bergis offerent (DN VII : 134, no. 120).*

The farmers of Shetland did long ago bind themselves to the vow, in concordance with the fertility of their land, to give an annual contribution of their fertile land, of a given measurement of flour, usually called *Sunnifumiol*, to the shrine of St Sunniva in Bergen.

- A11 *Metropolis civitas Nortmannorum est Trondemnis, quae nunc decorata ecclesiis magna populorum frequentia celebratur. In qua iacet corpus beatissimi Olaph regis et martyris. Ad cuius tumbam usque in hodiernum diem maxima Dominus operatur sanitatum miracula, ita ut a longinquis illic regionibus confluant hii, qui se meritis sancti non desperant [posse] iuvare. Est vero iter eiusmodi, ubi ab Alaburg vel Wendila Danorum ingredientibus naviam per diem mare transeat ad Wig, civitatem Nortmannorum. Inde vela torquentur in laevum circa littora Norvegiae, V^a die prevenitur ad ipsam civitatem, quae Trondemnis dicitur. Potest autem iri et alia via,*

quae ducit a Sconia Danorum terrestri itinere usque ad Trondempnem ; sed haec [est] tardior in montanis, et quoniam plena est periculo, declinatur a viatoribus (Adamus Bremensis : 55, 57).

The capital of the Northmen is called *Trondemnis* (Trondheim); it is a great bishopric with many churches. In this place the body of Olaf the Holy, king and martyr, rests. By his grave, the Lord performs daily miraculous cures. People come from places far away in the belief that the sanctity of this holy man will help them. The capital may be reached in the following way: From *Alaburg* (Ålborg) or *Wendila* (Vendsyssel) in Denmark to *Wig* (Viken), a Norwegian town. This journey takes one day of sailing. At Viken, one should turn left and sail along the Norwegian coast. On the fifth day one will reach Trondheim. There is another route, from Skåne in Denmark across land to Trondheim, but this route takes much longer time because of the mountains. The travellers avoid this route because of the many dangers.

- A12 *Papa Westray, quasi dicas (the Little West Isle) subjecta est priori insulæ, fertilis ut aliæ insulæ, lacus est in hujus insula meditullio et in lacu insula in qua capella parvula est (Jo. Ben 1529 : 450).*

Papa Westray, the Little West Isle so to speak, is subjected to the first island. It is fertile like the other islands. There is also a lake in the middle of the island, and in the lake there is an island with a small chapel.

- A13 *Dierness quasi (the Ness of Diers) hæc parochia olim erat næmorosa; et multæ feræ hic fuere; tandem diluviis venientibus, arbores, vulsis radicibus, submersi sunt.*

In aquilonari parte istius parochiæ in mari est nativum Saxum ubi homines manibus et genibus quam difficillime ascendunt ad cacumen; illic est sacellum quod nominatur (the Bairns of Burgh).

Confluunt huc diversis insulis, homines, juvenes, pueri, senes, servi, innumerabiles, venti vero, nudis pedibus, ut prius dixi, orantes ascendunt ubi nullus preterquam unus ad sacellum uno tempore venire potest: Illic est fons purus et nitidissimus; quod quidem mirabile est: Tunc homines, genibus flexis, manibusque conjunctis, diffidentes Deum esse, orant (the Bairns of Burgh) multis incantationibus, projicientes lapides et aquam post tergora, et circa sacellum bis terve gradientes, finita oratione domum redeunt affirmantes se vota habuisse. Non pure hic colunt Deum (Jo. Ben 1529 : 452).

Deerness, or (the Ness of Diers) was once a parish with many trees, and there was a lot of game here. In the end there were floods, and the trees died, they were uprooted.

In the northern part of this parish there is a natural rock in the ocean, to where people struggle their way to the top on their bare hands and knees. There is a chapel in this place called (the Bairns of Burgh).

To this place a number of people come from various islands, men, youths, boys, old men, and servants. Those that come, arrive with bare feet, praying as they ascend, as mentioned earlier, only one at the time may approach the chapel. There is a well in this place, pure and very clear. And this is quite unbelievable: The people (the

Bairns of the Burgh) pray with bent knees and hands folded, doubting God's existence, and with these incantations throwing stones and water behind their backs as they walk two or three times around the chapel. Returning home when the invocations are ended they affirm that they have kept their promises [to God?]. In this place they do not worship God purely.

- A14 *Hara alia parochia, ubi ignavissimi fuci sunt, ideoque dicuntur (the Sheeps of Harray). Hic est magna Ecclesia dedicata Sanctæ Mariæ, vulgus vocat (the Lady of Grace) de qua homines multa fabulantur: Hic multi confluunt ex diversis insulis (Jo. Ben 1529 : 454).*

Harray is another parish where the drone and lazy are/live, and they are therefore called (the Sheeps of Harray). There is a great church in the parish dedicated to St Mary. The people call it (the Lady of Grace), and a lot of things are said about it. Many people come to this place from various islands.

Chapter 6:

- A15 [] *at jarldómr Orkneyja, Kataness ok Hjaltilands skyldi miðlast til hálfis milli þeira Magnúss jarls ok Hákonar; [] (M1 XX : 359).*

[], that the earldom of Orkney, Caithness, and Shetland should be divided into two halves between the Earls Magnus and Hakon, [] (Metcalf 1895 : 343).

Chapter 7:

- A16 *Egilschay, quasi dicas ecclesiæ insularum (the Kirk-Isle). In longitudine est unum milliare, latitudine autem dimidium; ecclesia hic est Sancto Magno dicata. Quamplurimi insulam hanc pretereuntes vitalia lumina perdunt. Gallinæ hic quamplurimo ova [deponunt ita ut doliantur foro]. Sanctus Magnus in hac insula natus est, et educatus est ab infantia, et dedit domum nutrucci suæ, nempe messuagium unam terræ, ubi illa sacellum ædificavit, in quo cameram in solo fecit, atque cunabulum, mensam, lectum, et alia domui necessaria ex lapidibus, postea vero dirutum, ubi segetes nunc sunt nihilominus suppellectilia adhuc manent (Jo. Ben 1529 : 450-451).*

Egilsay, the church-island so to speak (the Kirk-Isle). It is one mile long and half a mile wide. There is a church dedicated to St Magnus. Many who travel past this island loose their light of life. The hens produce so many eggs that []. St Magnus was born on this island and was raised here from childhood, and he gave a home to his nurse, indeed, a property of land where she built a chapel. Inside it she dug/built a room into the ground, and a cradle, a table, a bed, and other necessary domestic utensils, everything made of stone, but this was later torn down. There are now cornfields in this place. And not the least, there is still household equipment there.

- A17 *Siðan var Magnús jarl færðr til Hrosseyjar ok grafinn a Kristkirkju þeiri, er Þorfinnr jarl lét gera (OS LII : 112).*

Later, the body of Earl Magnus was carried to Mainland and buried at Christ Church, which Earl Thorfinn had built (Pálsson and Edwards 1978 : 96).

- A18 *Því næst gerðu menn ferð sína bæði af Orkneyjum ok Hjaltlandi, þeir er vanheilir váru, ok vokðu at leiði ins helga Magnúss jarls ok tóku bót sinna meina; ... (OS LII : 112).*

[], so ailing people started coming from both Orkney and Shetland to keep vigil at the grave of the holy Earl Magnus and there they were cured of their ills (Pálsson and Edwards 1978 : 96).

- A19 *Vilhjálmr byskup bauð þá heilagt at halda hvárntveggja daginn um allt sitt byskupsdæmi; ... (M2 XVIII : 326).*

Next, Bishop William decreed that both days should be held sacred throughout his bishopric ... (Pálsson and Edwards 1996 : 36).

- A20 *Birsa baronia dicitur, ubi palatium est excellens, ubi olim regnabat Rex Orchadiæ; sed Julio Cæsare regnante totum orbem, vi quadam Romæ deferebatur, et subjecta est Orchadia Romanis postea, ut inscriptio unius lapidis testatur. Nomen Regis fuit Gavus (Jo. Ben 1529 : 454).*

It is called the Barony of Birsay, the place where there is a great hall. Once the King of Orkney reigned in this place. At the time when Julius Caesar ruled the entire world, the king was overthrown during a Roman attack, and later all of Orkney was subjected to the Romans, according to the inscription on a certain stone. The name of the king was Gavus.

- A21 *Siðan fór Vilhjálmr byskup austr í Kirkjuvág með virðuligu foruneyti ok flutti þangat helgan dóm Magnúss jarls. Var skrinitt sett yfir altari í kirkju þeiri, sem þar var (M2 : XIX, 326-7).*

Afterwards, Bishop William led an imposing procession east to Kirkwall taking along the holy relics of Earl Magnus, and placed the holy reliquary above the high altar of the church that stood there at that time (Pálsson and Edwards 1996 : 37).

- A22 *Est etiam hic alia ecclesia, in cineres redacta ab Anglis, nomine St Olais Kirk, ubi nunc sepeliuntur malefactores (Jo. Ben 1529 : 453).*

There is also another church in this place which was burnt to ashes by the English. It is called St Olaf's Church. It is now used as a graveyard for criminals.

- A23 *... ok fór svá mikit fram verkimi á þeim misserum, at minna gekk á fjórum eða fimm þaðan í frá (OS LXXVI : 176).*

So rapidly did the building progress that more was done in the first year than in the two [four] or three [five] that followed (Pálsson and Edwards 1978 : 142).

- A24 *Andlátsdagr Rognvalds jarl Kala er fimm nóttum eptir Máriumessu ina fyrri um sumarit. Fóru þeir Haraldr jarl þaðan út í Orkneyar með likit með fogru foruneyti ok veittu gropt at Magnúskirkju, ok hvíldi hann þat, til þess er guð birti hans verðleika með morgum ok stórum jarsteinum, en Bjarni byskup lét upp taka helgan dóm hans at leyfi páfars (OS CIV : 282).*

Earl Rognvald died on the fifth day after the Feast of the Assumption. Earl Harald and his men sailed in great style from Thurso to Orkney with the body, and buried it at St Magnus' Cathedral where Earl Rognvald rested until God made manifest the worthiness of the Earl with a number of wondrous miracles, whereupon, with the Pope's permission, Bishop Bjarni had his holy relics translated (Pálsson and Edwards 1978 : 214).

- A25 *Beatissime pater cum ecclesia Orchadensis sancti Magni martiris de regno Norwagie Illustris et famosa ac vna de principalioribus ecclesiis inter alias cathedrales ecclesiasticas dicti regni eciam de fundacione regia necnon venusta et magis notabilibus edificiis ab antiquo constructa deuotaque et sub vocabulo eiusdem sancti Magni martiris fundata existat In qua ipsius martiris et aliorum sanctorum quamplures venerabiles reliquie honorifice conseruantur et ad eam singulis annis casua deuocionis de diuersis partibus dicti regni Christifidelium multitudo affluere consuevit, quamque habitatores et incolae ipsius regni ad alia loca extra partiam illam propter nimiam distanciam ac marium ac viarum varia pericula ac eciam discrimina pro indulgenciis fructuosis a diuersis pontificibus concessis ad salutem animarum suarum consequendam ut affectarent se transferre et illic accedere commode nequeant Eapropter ut ipsis Christifidelibus oportune consulatur ipsique eo libencius ad ecclesiam predictam inclinentur. Supplicat s. v. deuotus e. s. orator et simplex creatura Thomas episcopus dicte Orchadensis ecclesie qui in ipsa per vigintiduos annos et vltra pontificali dignitate prefuit presens in curia quatenus omnibus et singulis christifidelibus vere confessis vere contritis qui dictam ecclesiam deuote visitauerint annuatim et pro preparacione et conservacione illius pias elemosinas dederint irrogauerint seu ad hoc manus adiutrices porrexerint videlicet in festo beati*

Johannis baptiste ac ipsius beati Magni martiris passione et translacione ac octauas eorumdem septem annos et totidem quadragenas de iniunctis eis penitencijs imperpetuum eis concedere et indulgere dignemini Quodque episcopus dicti loci seu eius penitenciarius pro tempore omnes et singulos Christifideles qui prefatis temporibus et per ipsa tempora ac octauas eorumdem dictam ecclesiam causa deuocionis visitauerint ut prefertur ipsos et eorum quemlibet ab omnibus peccatis delictis et excessibus suis tam commissionis quam omissionis Necnon a quibuscumque excommunicationis suspensionis uel interdicti sentencijs a jure uel ab homine generaliter uel specialiter latis [] (DN XVII : 443, no. 552)¹.

Most reverend father. The church of St Magnus the Martyr in Orkney is magnificent and famous and one of the prime churches amongst the other cathedrals of the Norwegian kingdom. It is a royal and ancient foundation, built in the olden days and dedicated to and founded on the name of the same St Magnus the Martyr. In this place many venerable relics are kept, of this martyr as well as of other saints, and a great number of Christians yearly flock in devotion to the cathedral from many parts of the kingdom. The inhabitants of the kingdom have difficulties in travelling outside their native country, because of the great distances and the different dangers encountered at sea and on the inland routes, in order to achieve salvation. To make it more desirable for the Christians to seek the above-mentioned church, the *s. v.* devoted *e. s.* requesting and humble creature Thomas, bishop of the above-mentioned church of Orkney, who has governed this for more than twenty-two years on papal authority, present in the curia, ask you, if it so pleases, to give and grant each and every Christian who truly confess and who truly repent, who devotedly seek the above-mentioned church annually, and give pious alms for its furnishing and upkeep, and reach out a helping hand on the festival of St John the Baptist [24th of June], on the days of the blessed Magnus Martyr's passion and translation, and on the octavo for seven years, and just as many, forty times of fasting, to be exempted from the penance that has been imposed upon them, and that you find it reasonable that the Bishop of the aforementioned place or his penitentiaries in some instances, may have the authority to give absolution to each and every Christian, who at the mentioned times as well as during the festivals and the octavos, visit the mentioned church in affection, and absolve them from all dilution and sin committed, either caused by action or by omission, as well as from any kind of exclusion from the Holy Communion.

A26 *Et episcopo Orcadie, pro vno dolio vini et tribus celdris frumenti, ad ecclesiam Sancti Magni Orcadie, [] (DN XIX : 658, no. 534).*

And for the bishop of Orkney, for one barrel of wine and three chaldrons² of grain, for St Magnus Church in Orkney.

A27 *...sýndisk opt himneskt ljós um nætr yfir grepti Magnúss jarls. Síðan tóku menn at heita á hann í nauðsynjum sínum, ef í háska vǫru staddir, ok greiddisk þegar mál þeira, sem þeir beiddu. Jafnan var kenndr himneskr ilmr yfir grof hans, ok fengu menn heilsu þaðan. Því næst fóru menn af Hjaltlandi ok Orkneyjum, þeir sem vanhélilir vǫru, ok vokðu menn þar at leiði hans of fengu þar bót meina sinna (M2 XV : 323).*

... heavenly light was often seen at night over the grave of Magnus. Then people began to pray to him in time of trouble when they found themselves in peril, and for those who had prayed, all difficulties were soon overcome. People would often be conscious of a heavenly fragrance over his grave, and recovered their health there, so the sick began coming from Shetland and Orkney to keep vigil at his graveside, and there they were cured of their illnesses (Pálsson and Edwards 1996 : 33-34).

- A28 *Haraldr jarl ungi fell við torfgrafir nokkurar. Var þá þegar um nóttina sét ljós mikit, þar er bloðit hafði niðr komit. Þeir kalla jarlinn sannhelgan, ok er þar nú kirkja, sem hann fell, ok er hann þar jarðaðr á nesinu. Ok gerask ótoluligar jarteinir fyrir hans verðleik af guði, ok vitrar þat jafnan, at han vildi yfir til Orkneyja til Mágnúss jarls ok Rognvalds, frænda sinna (OS CIX : 292-293).*

Earl Harald the Young was killed near some peat-diggings, and that same night a great light could be seen where his blood had been spilt. People in Caithness think him a true saint and a church stands where he was killed. He was buried there on the headland, and as a result of his virtues, great miracles have been performed by God as a reminder that Harald wished to go to Orkney and join his kinsmen, Earl Magnus and Earl Rognvald (Pálsson and Edwards 1978 : 220).

Chapter 8:

- A29 *Suðreykingar segja. at þesir menn er konungi syndyz voru þeir. hinn heilagi Olafur ok Magnus Jarl ok kolumbás (Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar 1977 : 149).*

The Hebrideans say that these men that the king thought came before him in the dream, were Olaf the Holy, Earl Magnus, and Columba.

- A30 *Þar spurði hann [Magnús konungr] andlát Erlends jarls austan um haf; hann hafði andazk vart í Niðarósi ok var þar jarðaðr, en Páll jarl í Bjorgvin (OS XLII : 101).*

[] he [King Magnus] heard that Earl Erlend had died and been buried at Trondheim. Earl Paul was buried at Bergen (Pálsson and Edwards 1978 : 88).

- A31 *Lét byskup þá þvá beinumum, ok váru allvel lit. Hann lét þá taka einn koggul ok reynir í vígðum eldi þryssvar, ok brann eigi, heldr varð hann álits sem gull. Þat er sumra manna sogn, at hann væri þá runninn í kross (OS LVII : 124).*

Once the bishop had them washed, the bones of the Earl shone brightly, and a knuckle bone that the bishop tested three times in consecrated fire wouldn't burn, but

took on the colour of gold. Some people say that the bone also took on the shape of a cross (Pálsson and Edwards 1978 : 104).

- A32 *Hann [Vilhjálmr byskup] lét þvá beinin ok taka koggul ok reyndi í vígðum eldi þrysvar. En hann brann eigi, heldr varð hann svá sem brennt silfr. Þat er sumra manna sogn, at hann rými í kross (M2 XVIII : 326).*

The bishop had them washed, and had one knuckle tested three times in consecrated fire, in which it did not burn but took on the colour of burnt silver. Some people say that the bone took on the shape of a cross (Pálsson and Edwards 1996 : 36).

- A33 *Þórðr hét maðr, er fallaðr var drekaskoltr; hann var leigumaðr Bergfinns af Hjaltlandi; hann barði korn af hálmi í bygghúsi inn næsta dag fyrir Magnúsmessu ok Lúciú. En at oðrum lit dags þá gekk Bergfinnr búandi út þangat í húsit ok bað hann hætta verkinu. Þórðr segir: "Þat er sjaldnast, at þér þykki ek of lengi vinna." Bergfinnr mælti: "Magnúsmessa er á morgin, er vér eigum at halda með slikri dýrð allri sem vér kunnun bazt." Þá gekk Bergfinnr í brot, en Þórðr vann þá allra sýsligast. En er skammt var frá liðit, þá fór Bergfinnr í annat sinn ok mælti við Þórð af reiði mikilli: "Fjándskapr þykki mér í því, er þú vinnr nú á helgum tíðum, ok lát nú af þegar!" (OS LVII : 126).*

There was a man called Thord Dragon-Jaw, a tenant of Bergfinn's in Shetland. He was threshing corn in a barley-shed on the eve of St Magnus and St Lucy when just about sunset the farmer, Bergfinn, came to the barn and told them to stop work. 'It's not often you think I'm working too late,' said Thord. 'St Magnus' Mass is tomorrow,' said Bergfinn, 'and we should observe it with all the respect we can.' Then he went away, but Thord kept working away harder than ever. Shortly after that Bergfinn came back and spoke to Thord very angrily. 'If you work on holy days,' he said, 'I shall take it as an act of spite. Stop at once' (Pálsson and Edwards 1978 : 106).

A34 *Nobilis humilis*

- 1) *Nobilis, humilis, Magne martir stabilis,
habilis, utilis, comes uenerabilis
et tutor laudabilis, tuos subditos
serua carnis fragilis mole positos.*

Magnus Martyr, noble, humble and firm,
able and clever, honourable earl and protector.
Protect your subordinates who have dwelled
in the perishable and troublesome flesh.

- 2) *Preditus celitus dono sancti spiritus
uiuere temere summo caues opere;
carnis motus premere studes penitus,
ut carnis in carcere regnet spiritus.*

You received the Heavenly gift of the Holy Spirit,
and you were careful not to live a life without purpose.
Your heart strived to suppress the carnal lusts,
and let the Spirit reign in the carnal prison.

- 3) *Socita regia tibi uiri nescia
traditur, subditur, casta casto iungitur;
nam neuter illuditur sic decennio,
rubus non comburitur in incendio.*

You were given a virgin of royal blood,
a chaste woman tied to a chaste man.
For ten years you did not fall into temptation,
nor did the burning bush get swallowed by fire.

- 4) *Turbidus, inuidus hostis Haco callidus
sternere, terere, tua sibi subdere,
te cupit et perdere doli spiculo,
iuncto fraudis federe pacis osculo.*

Your wild, hateful, and cunning enemy, Hakon,
wanted to ruin and conquer all that was yours,
and destroy you with the spear of deceit,
as he sealed the treacherous alliance with a kiss of peace.

- 5) *Gravia, tedia, ferens pro iusticia,
raperis, traheris, demum ictu funeris,
ab ymis extolleris, ad celestia,
sic Xpisto coniungeris per supplicia.*

You received the burden of torment in place of justice.
You were hauled away with force.
With a deadly blow, you were lifted from this world and into Heaven.
So, you were united with Christ through your torments.

- 6) *Eya gloria signorum frequencia,
canitur, agitur, Xpistus benedicatur,
et tibi laus redditur in ecclesia,
o quam felix cernitur hinc Orcadia.*

Behold the glory, the numerous signs are sung and celebrated.
Christ is blessed,
and you are praised in the Church.
Oh, what happiness is given Orkney!

- 7) *Omnibus laudibus tuis insistentibus,
graciam veniam et eternam gloriam,
precum per instanciam pater optine,
hanc slavans familiam a discrimine.*

Lord, with eagerness and glow we praise you,
so that you, through our prayers
will receive mercy, pardon, and eternal glory,
and save the bondsmen from danger.

Amen.

(Kolsrud and Reiss 1913 : 38-40, Mooney 1935 : 291-292)

A35 *O Mhanuis mo ruin*

- 1) *O Mhanuis mo ruin,
Is tu dheanadh dhuinn iul,
A chuirp chubhraidh nan dul,
Cuimhnich oirm*

O Magnus of my love,
Thou it is who would'st us guide,
Thou fragrant body of grace,
Remember us.

- 2) *Cuimhnich a naoimh nam buadh,
A chomraig 's a chomhn an sluagh,
Cobhair oirnne 'n ar truaigh,
'S na treig sinn.*

Remember us, thou Saint of power,
Who didst encompass and protect the people,
Succour thou us in our distress,
Nor forsake us.

- 3) *Tog ar seilbh mach ri leirg,
Casg coin ghioirr is coin dheirg,
Cum uainn fuath, fath, feirg,
Agus foirne.*

Lift out flocks to the hills,
Quell the wolf and the fox,
Ward from us spectre, giant, fury,
And oppression.

- 4) *Cuartaich tan agus buar,
Cuartaich caor agus uan;
Cum uap an fhamh-bhual,
'S an luch-fheoir.*

Surround cows and herds,
Surround sheep and lambs;
Keep from them the water-vole,
And the field-vole.

- 5) *Crath an druchd o'n speur air crodh,
Thor fas air feur, deis, agus snodh,
Dubhrach, lus-feidh, ceis, meacan-dogh,
Agus neoinean.*

Sprinkle dew from the sky upon kine,
Give growth to grass, and corn, and sap to plants,
Water-cress, deer's-grass, 'ceis', burdock,
And daisy.

- 6) *O Mhamuis nan glonn,
Air bharcá nan sonn,
Air bharrá nan tonn,
Air sala no fonn,
Comhn agus gleidh sinn.*

O Magnus of fame,
On the barque of the heroes,
On the crests of the waves,
On the sea, on the land,
Aid and preserve us.

(From Pálsson and Edwards 1996 : 50-51
after Carmichael 1900 : 180f)

- A36 *Eptir þat signdi Magnús jarl sik ok laut undir höggit, en Lifólfr hjó í höfuð honum
mikit högg með öxi (M1 XXVII : 369).*

After this Earl Magnus crossed himself, and bowed him to the stroke. Lifolf struck him on the head a great blow with an axe (Metcalf 1895 : 350).

Chapter 9:

A37

*Gegn, eru þér at þegnum,
þjóðskjoldunga góðra
haldið hæft á veldi,
Hjaltlendingar kenndir.
Engi varð á jorðu,
ógnbráðr, áðr þér náði,
austr, sás eyjum vestan,
ynglingr, und sik þryngvi.
(OS XIX : 41)*

Great rulers have good reason
to regard you; trust
you show in their strength:
Shetlanders will serve you.
Before your coming
no commander so courageous
in all the eastlands, you
overlord of Orkney.

(Pálsson and Edwards 1978 : 49).

Notes to Appendix A

¹ Cf. Appendix B: B20 : 251.

² 1 chaldron = 36 bushels. 1 bushel = 8 gallons / 36,368 litres. Measurement used for grain and fruit before metrication.

Appendix B

Church Indulgences¹

No.	Church	Year	Granter	Indulgences	Festivals
B1	<i>St Swithun</i> (Stavanger) (DN III : 13, no. 12)	1275	Archbishop Jon (Nidaros)	40 days	Two festivals of <i>St Swithun</i> Festival of Dedication <i>St Vincent</i>
B2	<i>St Swithun</i> (Stavanger) (DN III : 15, no. 14)	1278	The Bishop of Orkney	40 days	Two festivals of <i>St Swithun</i> Festival of Dedication Four festivals of <i>Mary</i> <i>St Michael</i> <i>St Andrew</i> <i>St Olaf</i> <i>St Nicholas</i> <i>St Vincent</i> <i>St Anskar</i> <i>St Mark</i>
B3	<i>St Swithun</i> (Stavanger) (DN III : 15, no. 15)	1278	Bishop Andreas of Oslo	20 days	Two festivals of <i>St Swithun</i> Festival of Dedication Four festivals of <i>Mary</i> <i>St Michael</i> <i>St Andrew</i> <i>St Olaf</i> <i>St Nicholas</i> <i>St Vincent</i> <i>St Anskar</i> <i>St Mark</i>

No.	Church	Year	Granter	Indulgences	Festivals
B4	<i>St Swithun</i> (Stavanger) (DN III : 18-19, no. 17)	1280	Bishop Thorfinn of Hamar	40 days	Two festivals of <i>St Swithun</i> Festival of dedication Four festivals of <i>Mary</i> <i>St Michael</i> <i>St Andrew</i> <i>St Olaf</i> <i>St Nicholas</i> <i>St Vincent</i> <i>St Anskar</i> <i>St Catherine</i>
B5	<i>St Swithun</i> (Stavanger) (DN III : 24, no. 25)	1289	Bishop Eyvind of Oslo	40 days	Two festivals of <i>St Swithun</i> Two festivals of the Holy Cross <i>St John the Baptist</i> <i>St John the Evangelist</i> <i>St Peter and St Paul</i> <i>St Michael</i> <i>St Andrew</i>
B6	<i>St Swithun</i> (Stavanger) (DN VI : 51-52, no. 56)	1290	Pope Nicolas IV	1 year and 40 days	Festival and anniversary of Dedication

No.	Church	Year	Granter	Indulgences	Festivals
B7	<i>The Apostles</i> (Bergen) (DN VIII : 27, no. 15)	1291	Pope Nicolas IV	1 year and 40 days	The Annunciation of Mary The Nativity of Mary The Purification of Mary The Assumption of Mary St Peter and St Paul St Olaf
B8	<i>Holy Cross</i> (Bergen) (DN VII : 17, no. 17)	1292	Pope Nicolas IV	1 year and 40 days	Eight festivals of the Holy Cross Festival of Dedication
B9	<i>St Olaf</i> (Nidaros) (DN VI : 72, no. 75)	1311	Pope Clement V	1 year and 40 days	St John the Baptist St Olaf and festival of Dedication Pentecost Four festivals of Mary
B10	<i>St Olaf</i> (Nidaros) (DN I : 316-317, no. 414)	1371	Pope Gregory XI	1 year and 40 days	Five festivals of Christ Four festivals of Mary St Olaf

No.	Church	Year	Granter	Indulgences	Festivals
B11	<i>St Mary</i> (Skien) (DNI : 78, no. 85)	1297	Archbishop Jørund (Nidaros)	20 days	Two festivals of the Holy Cross St Olaf St Lawrence The conversion of St Paul Festival of Dedication
B12	<i>St Alban</i> (Fimreite, Sogn) (DNI : 261, no. 331)	1352	Bishop Gisbrikt of Bergen	20 days	The Nativity of Christ The Circumcision of Christ The Resurrection of Christ The Ascension of Christ Four festivals of Mary St Olaf St Alban St Thomas (of Canterbury) Festival of Dedication
B13	<i>St Lawrence</i> (Tønsberg) (DNI : 325, no. 429)	1374	Archbishop Thronð (Nidaros)	40 days	Three festivals of Christ Easter Ascension of Christ Pentecost Four festivals of Mary St Michael St John the Baptist One festival of the Apostles St Lawrence St Olaf St Halvard St Edmund Two festivals of the Holy Cross St Nicholas and St Martin Mary Magdalene St Catherine St Margaret St Sunniva St Barbara

No.	Church	Year	Granter	Indulgences	Festivals
B14	<i>St Michael and St Dyonysus</i> (Sortland, Nordland) (DN XIII : 52, no. 67)	1408	Archbishop Eskil (Nidaros) and Bishop Bertold of Gardar	40 days	The Nativity of Christ The Circumcision of Christ Epiphany The Resurrection of Christ The Ascension of Christ Pentecost All festivals of Mary Two festivals of the Holy Cross The Nativity of John the Baptist The Beatification of SS Peter and St Paul All festivals of the Apostles and the Evangelists Two festivals of St Olaf St Lawrence St Michael St Dyonysus St Nicolas St Martin St Catherine St Margaret Mary Magdalene Festival of Dedication

Altar Indulgences²

No.	Altar	Year	Grantor	Indulgences	Festivals
B15	<i>Altar of the Holy Spirit</i> (Stavanger) (DN III : 46-47, no. 40)	1297	Archbishop Jørund (Nidaros)	40 days	Pentecost Two festivals of St Paul St Andrew Festival of altar-dedication St Nicolas St Benedict St Catherine St Margaret
B16	<i>Altar of the Holy Cross</i> <i>Altar of St Vincent</i> (Stavanger) (DN IV : 647-649, no. 885)	1442	Archbishop Johannes (Lund) Archbishop Nicholas (Uppsala) Archbishop Aslak (Nidaros) The Bishop of Oslo The Bishop of Stavanger The Bishop of Viborg The Bishop of Bergen The Bishop of Linköping The Bishop of Skard The Bishop of Vexø The Bishop of Hólar The Bishop of Hamar The Bishop of the Faeroes	Unspecified letters of indulgences	The Nativity of Christ The Circumcision of Christ Epiphany Palm-Sunday Easter The Ascension of Christ Pentecost All festivals of Mary St John the Baptist St Peter and St Paul One festival of the Apostles or of the Evangelists St Lawrence St Stephen St Vincent St Halvard St Swithun St Nicholas St Martin St Catherine

No.	Altar	Year	Grantor	Indulgences	Festivals
continued					St Margaret St Agatha The festivals of the altar- dedications The Holy Cross St Olaf

Indulgences: St Magnus³

No.	Church	Year	Granter	Indulgences	Festivals
B17	<i>The Holy Cross</i> and <i>St Paul</i> (Skien)	1395	Archbishop Vinald (Nidaros)	probably 40 days	<p>The Nativity of Christ</p> <p>The Circumcision of Christ</p> <p>Epiphany</p> <p>Easter</p> <p>Pentecost</p> <p>The Ascension of Christ</p> <p>All festivals of Mary</p> <p>Two festivals of the Holy Cross</p> <p>Two festivals of John the Baptist</p> <p>St Michael</p> <p>All Saints</p> <p>One festival of the apostles</p> <p>St Olaf</p> <p>St Halvard</p> <p>St Magnus⁴</p> <p>St Clement</p> <p>St Lawrence</p> <p>St Blasius</p> <p>St Margaret</p> <p>St Catherine</p> <p>St Sunniva</p> <p>Mary Magdalene</p> <p>St Anne</p> <p>St Nicholas</p> <p>Anniversary of Dedication</p>

No.	Church	Year	Granter	Indulgences	Festivals
B18	<i>St Olaf</i> (Svarstad, Vestfold) (DN II : 414, no. 543)	1395	Bishop Eystein of Oslo	40 days	<p>The Nativity of Christ</p> <p>Epiphany</p> <p>Lent</p> <p>The Easter Vigil</p> <p>The Ascension of Christ</p> <p>Pentecost</p> <p>The Holy Trinity</p> <p>John the Baptist</p> <p>The Holy Cross</p> <p>St Michael</p> <p>St Olaf</p> <p>St Halvard</p> <p>St Lawrence</p> <p>St Magnus⁵</p> <p>St Nicholas</p> <p>St Martin</p> <p>St Botolph</p> <p>St Catherine</p> <p>St Margaret</p> <p>St Sunniva</p> <p>Mary Magdalene</p> <p>The four festivals of Mary</p> <p>One festival of the Apostles</p> <p>Anniversary of Dedication</p>

No.	Church	Year	Grantor	Indulgences	Festivals
B19	St Olaf (Eidsberg) (DN VIII : 299, no. 268)	1422	Bishop Severin of Oslo	40 days	The Nativity of Christ The Circumcision of Christ Epiphany The Resurrection of Christ The Ascension of Christ Pentecost The Holy Trinity One festival of Mary Two festivals of the Holy Cross Two festivals of John the Baptist St Michael Two festivals of St Olaf One festival of the Apostles or of the Evangelists St Halvard St Lawrence St Magnus ⁶ St Blasius St Clement St Gregory the Confessor St Ambrose St Botolph St Augustin the Confessor St Jerome St Martin St Nicholas St Margaret St Sunniva St Catherine St Cecilie St Gertrude St Anne Mary Magdalene Festival of Dedication

No.	Church	Year	Granter	Indulgences	Festivals
B20	<i>St Magnus</i> (Kirkwall) (DN XVII : 443, no. 552)	1441	Pope Eugene IV	7 years	Two festivals of St Magnus ⁷ John the Baptist
B21	<i>St Olaf</i> (Eidsberg) <i>St Mary</i> (Folkingborg) <i>St Peter and St Paul</i> (Thenol) <i>St Lawrence</i> (Trømborg) <i>St Margaret</i> (Herland) All in the Bishopric of Oslo (DN I : 598, no. 820)	1452	Bishop Gunnar of Hamar	40 days	The Nativity of Christ The Circumcision of Christ Epiphany The Resurrection of Christ The Ascension of Christ Pentecost The Holy Trinity One festival of Mary Two festivals of the Holy Cross Two festivals of John the Baptist Two festivals of St Michael Two festivals of St Olaf One festival of the Apostles and the Evangelists St Halvard St Lawrence St Magnus ⁸ St Blasius St Eric St Clement St Gregory the Confessor St Ambrose St Botolph St Augustin the Confessor St Jerome St Martin St Nicholas

No.	Church	Year	Granter	Indulgences	Festivals
	continued				St Margaret St Sunniva St Catherine St Cecilie St Gertrude St Anne Mary Magdalene Festival of Dedication
B22	<i>St Gertrud</i> (Kjøge, Seeland, Denmark) (DN II : 644, no. 862)	1466	Archbishop Olaf (Nidaros)	40 days	The Nativity of Christ The Circumcision of Christ Epiphany Lent Easter The Ascension of Christ Pentecost The Holy Trinity Two festivals of the Holy Cross Two festivals of John the Baptist One festival of the Apostles St Olaf St Lawrence <i>St Magnus</i> ⁹ St Christopher St Knut St Nicolas St Martin Festival of Dedication St Gertrude St Catherine St Barbara St Dorothy St Margaret 11000 Virgins

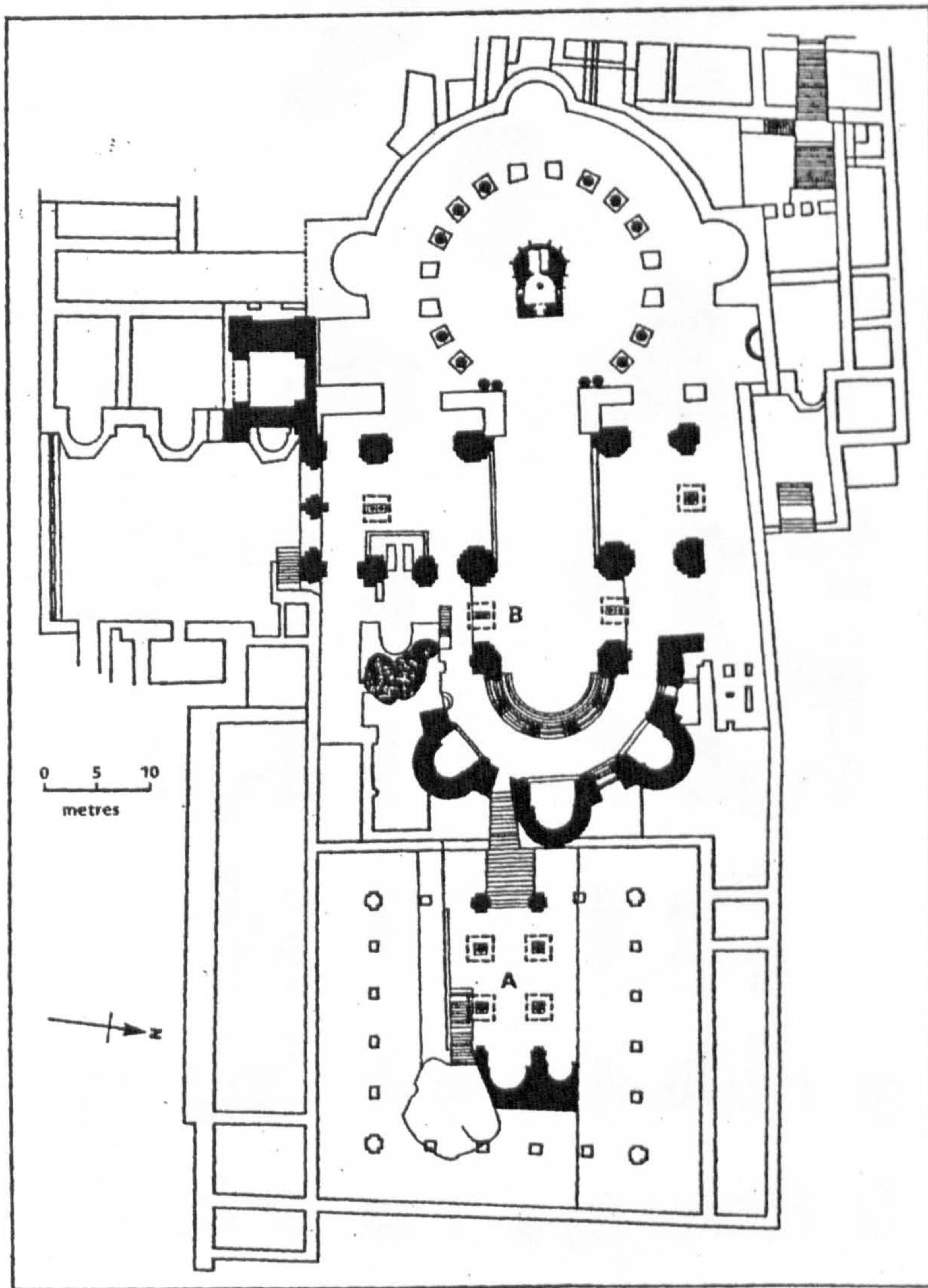
No.	Hospital	Year	Granter	Indulgences	Festivals
B23	St Mary (Hovin) (DN III : 387, no. 522)	1395	Archbishop Vinald (Nidaros)	40 days	The Nativity of Christ The Circumcision of Christ Epiphany Lent Easter Vigil Three times during the Easter The Ascension of Christ Pentecost The Holy Trinity John the Baptist St Olaf St Halvard St Lawrence St Clement St Magnus ¹⁰ Sejumannesse St Martin St Nicholas St Gregory St Botolph St Margaret St Catherine Maria Magdalena St Anne Two festivals of the Holy Cross Two festivals of St Michael One festival of the Apostles Four festivals of Mary Anniversary of Dedication

Notes to Appendix B

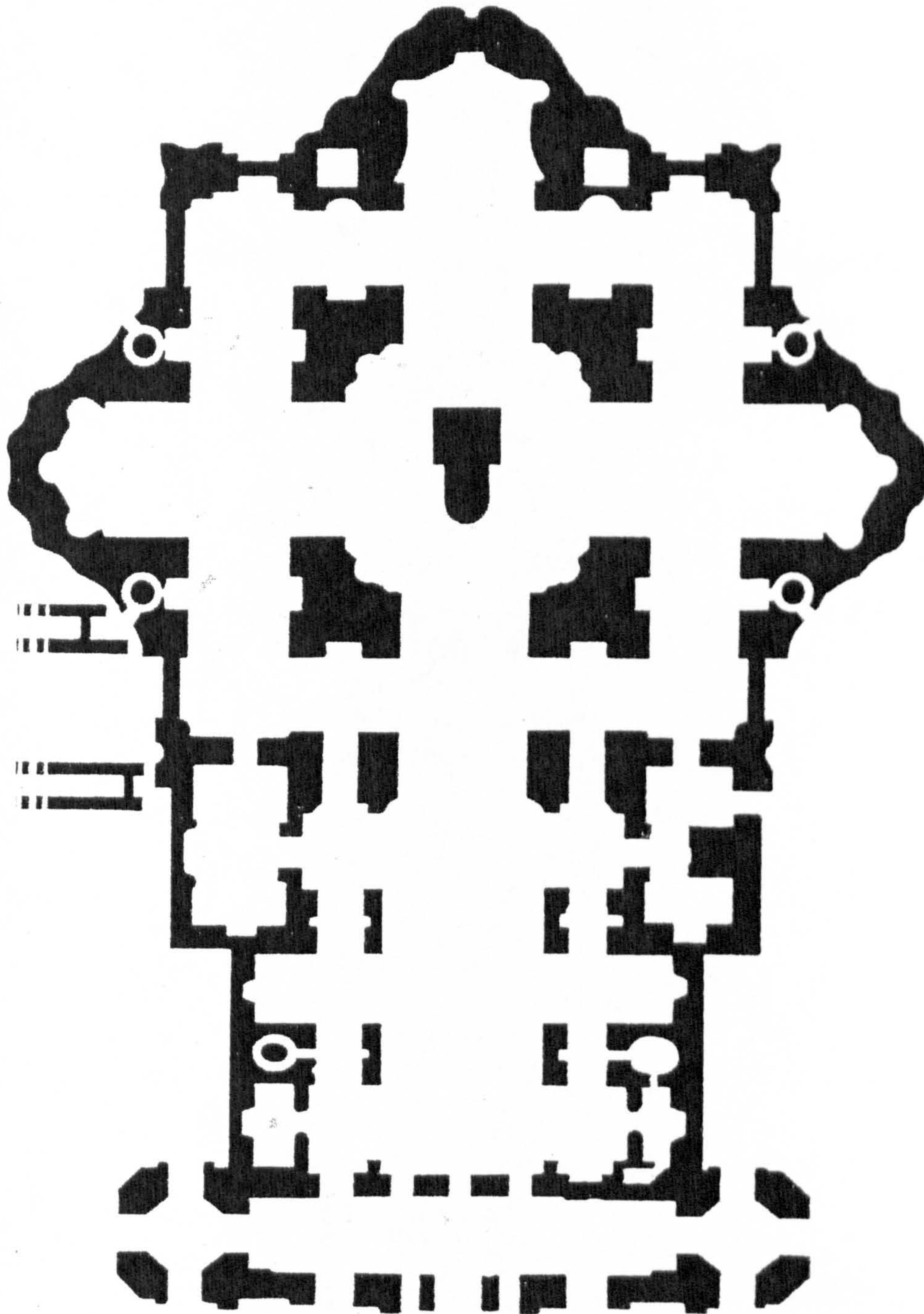
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- ¹ B1-14, Church Indulgences, are discussed in ch. 7f : 162-166.
- ² B15-16, Altar Indulgences, *ibid*.
- ³ B17-23, Indulgences: St Magnus, *ibid*.
- ⁴ The text reads: [] *In festiuitatibus beatorum Martirum, Olavi, haluardi, Magni, clementis, Laurencii, et blasii, []*.
- ⁵ The text reads: [] *sanctorum martyrum Haluardi, Laurencii et Magni, []*.
- ⁶ The text reads: [] *sanctorum martirum Haluardj Laurencij Magni Blasij et Clementis []*.
- ⁷ Cf. Appendix A, A25 : 232-233.
- ⁸ The text reads: [] *sanctorum martirum Haluardi Laurencii Magni Blasii Eirici et Clementis []*.
- ⁹ The text reads: [] *in festo sancti Olavi, in festo sancti Laurencii, sancti Magni, sancti Christophert, []*.
- ¹⁰ The text reads: [] *beatorum martirum Olavi. Haluardi. Laurencii Clementis atque Magni et sanctorum in Selio []*.

Appendix C

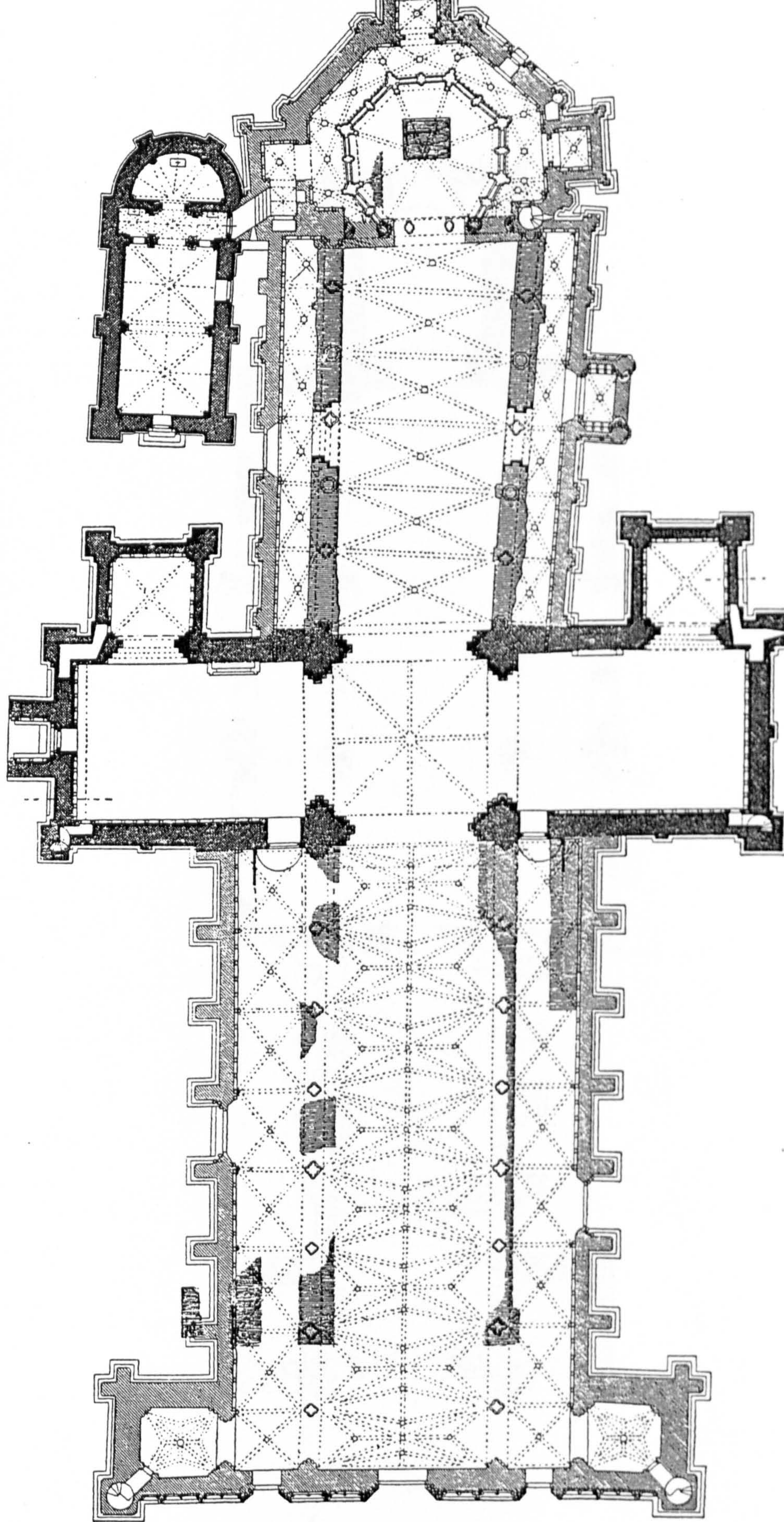
Church Plans



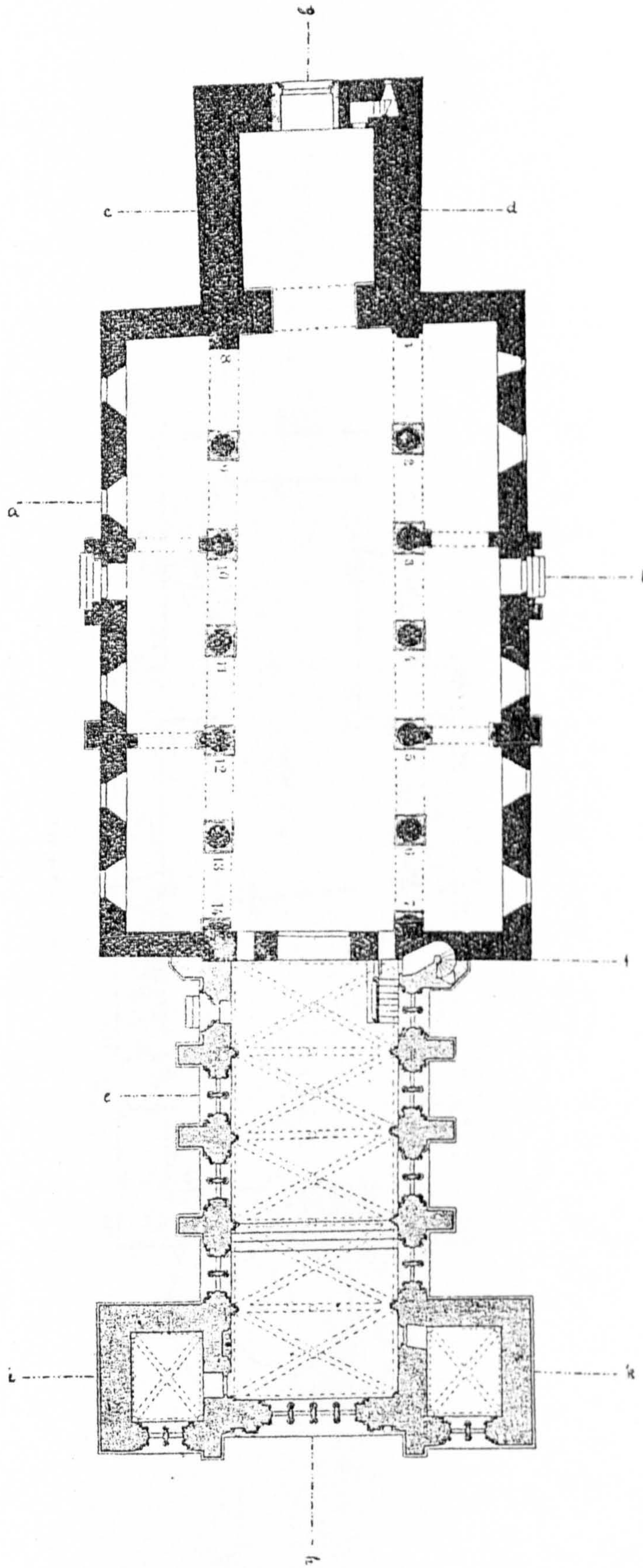
P1. Plan of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem¹.



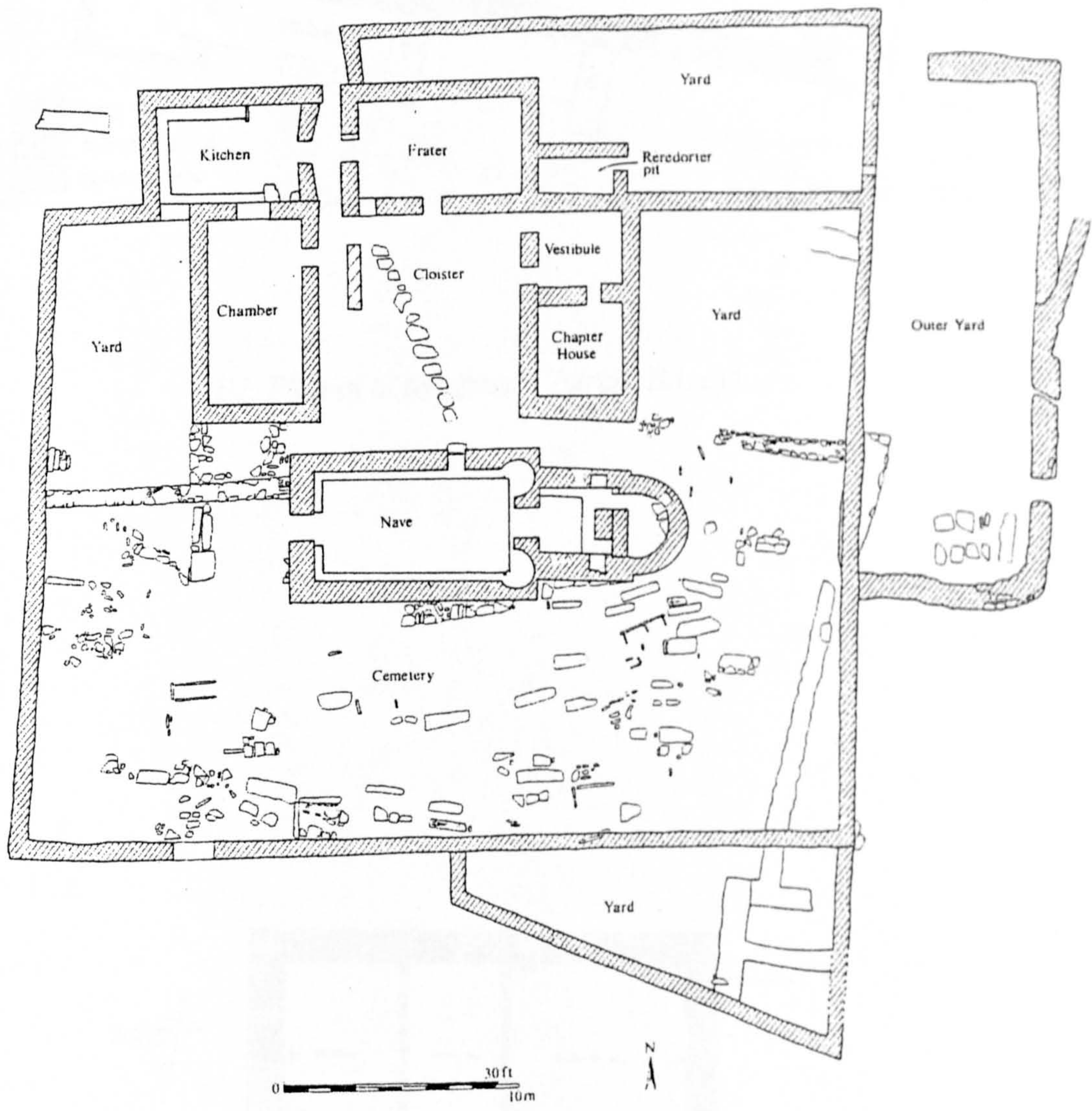
P2. Plan of St Peter's Church, Rome².



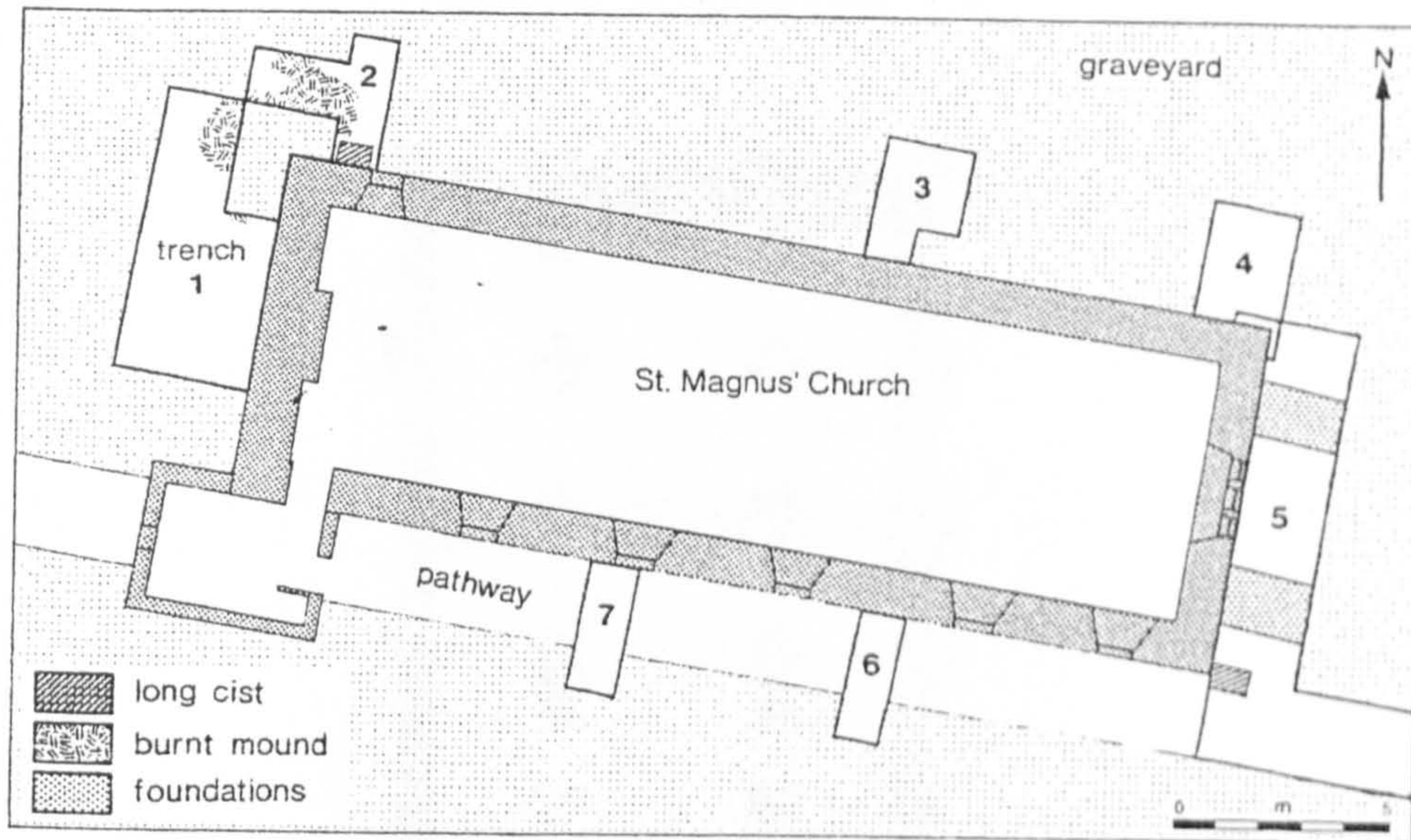
P3. Plan of Christ Church, Nidaros³.



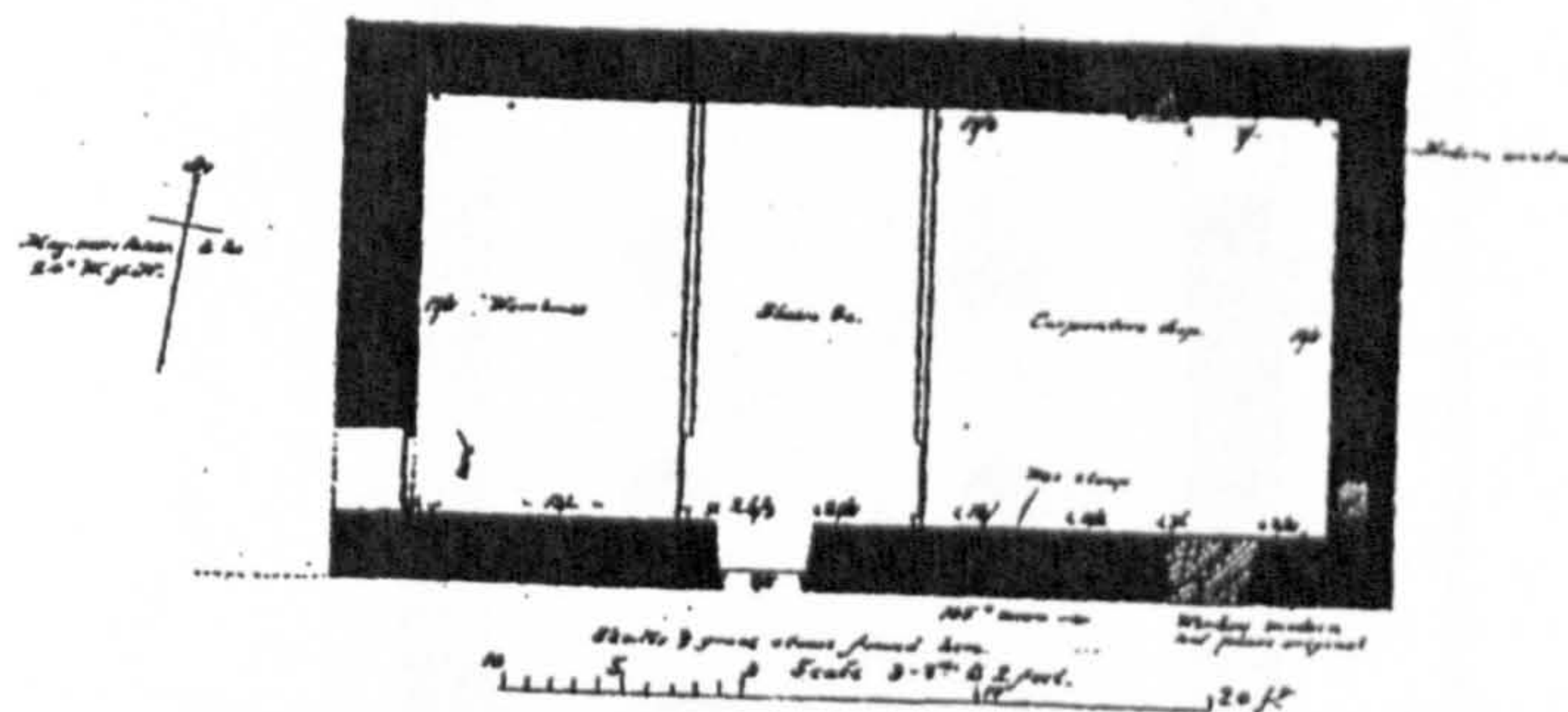
P4. Plan of St Swithun's Cathedral, Stavanger⁴.



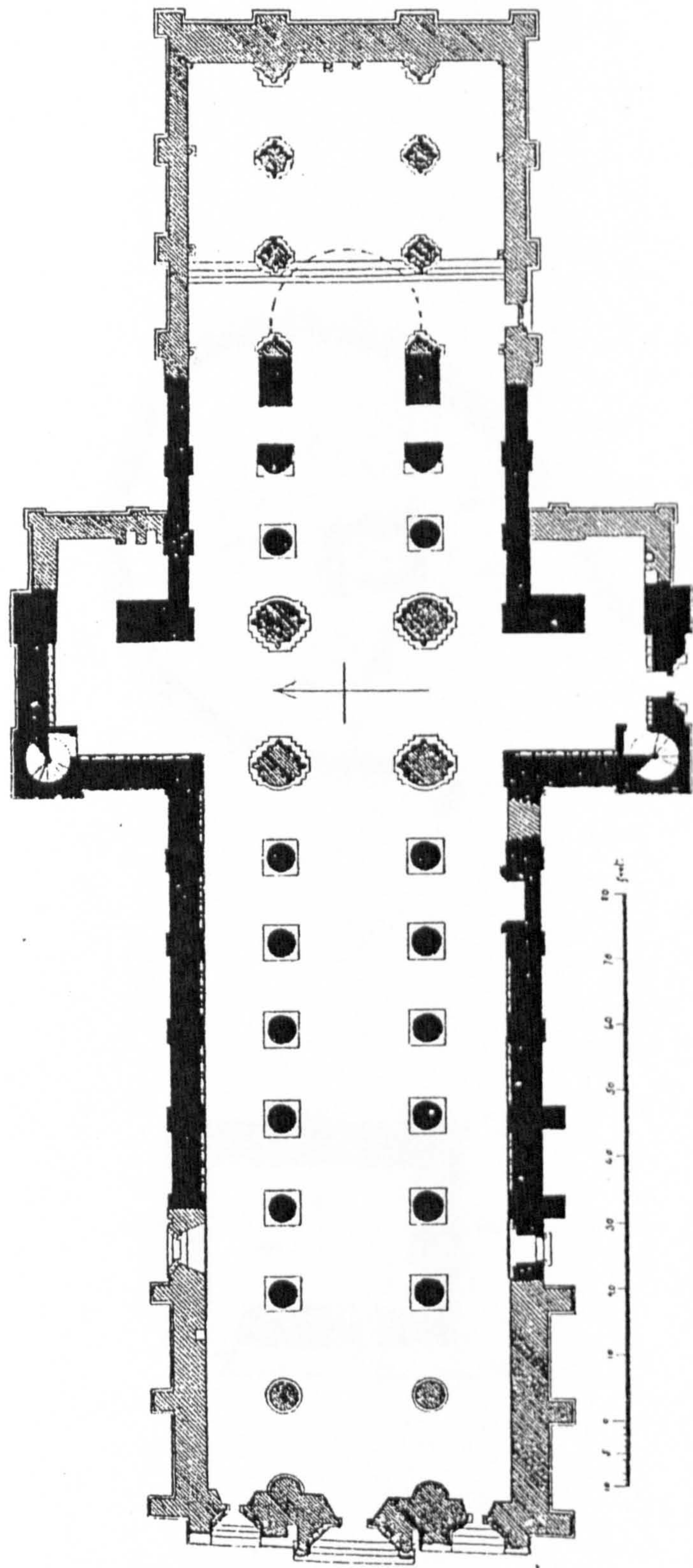
P6. Plan of St Peter's Church, the Brough of Birsay⁶.



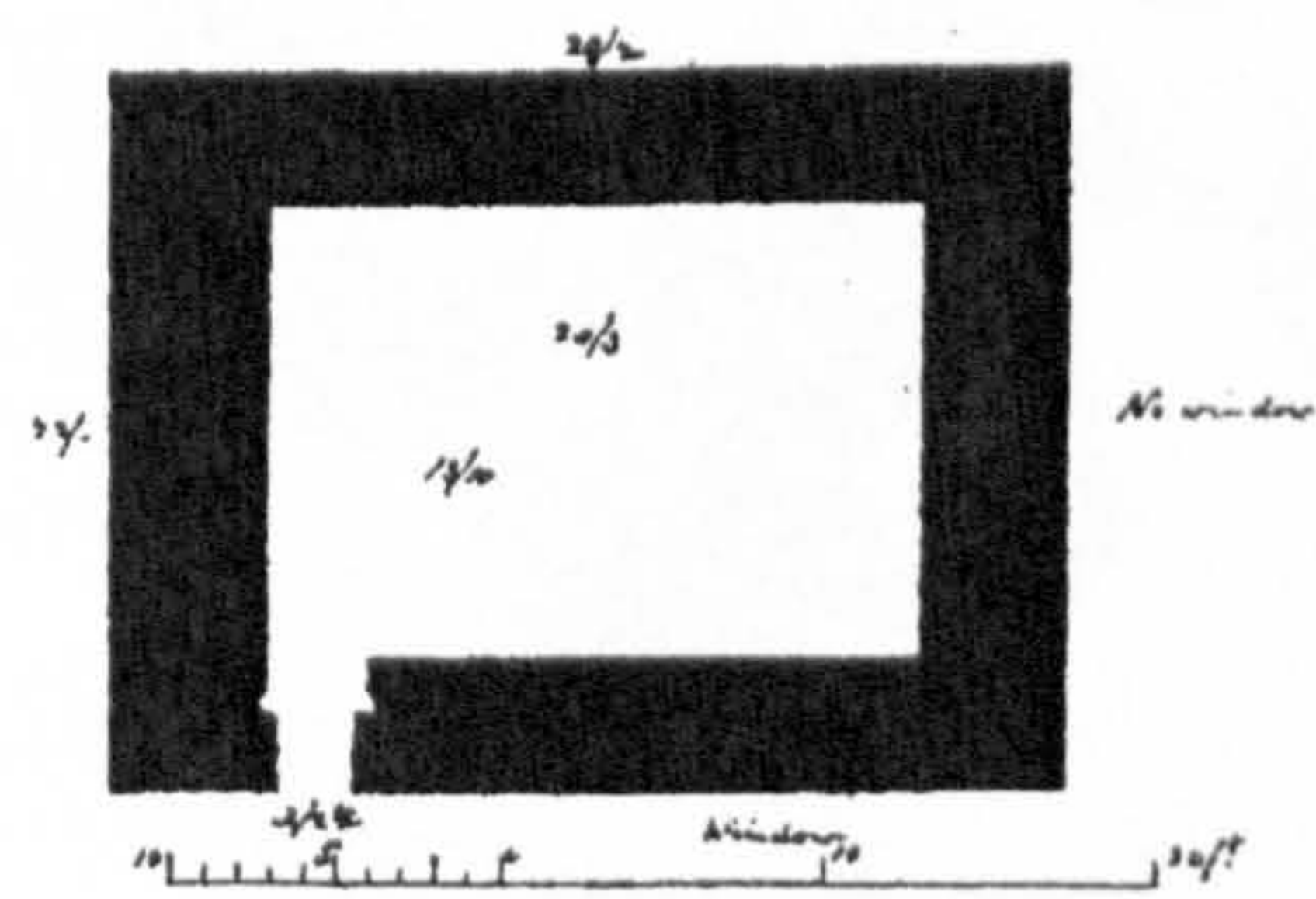
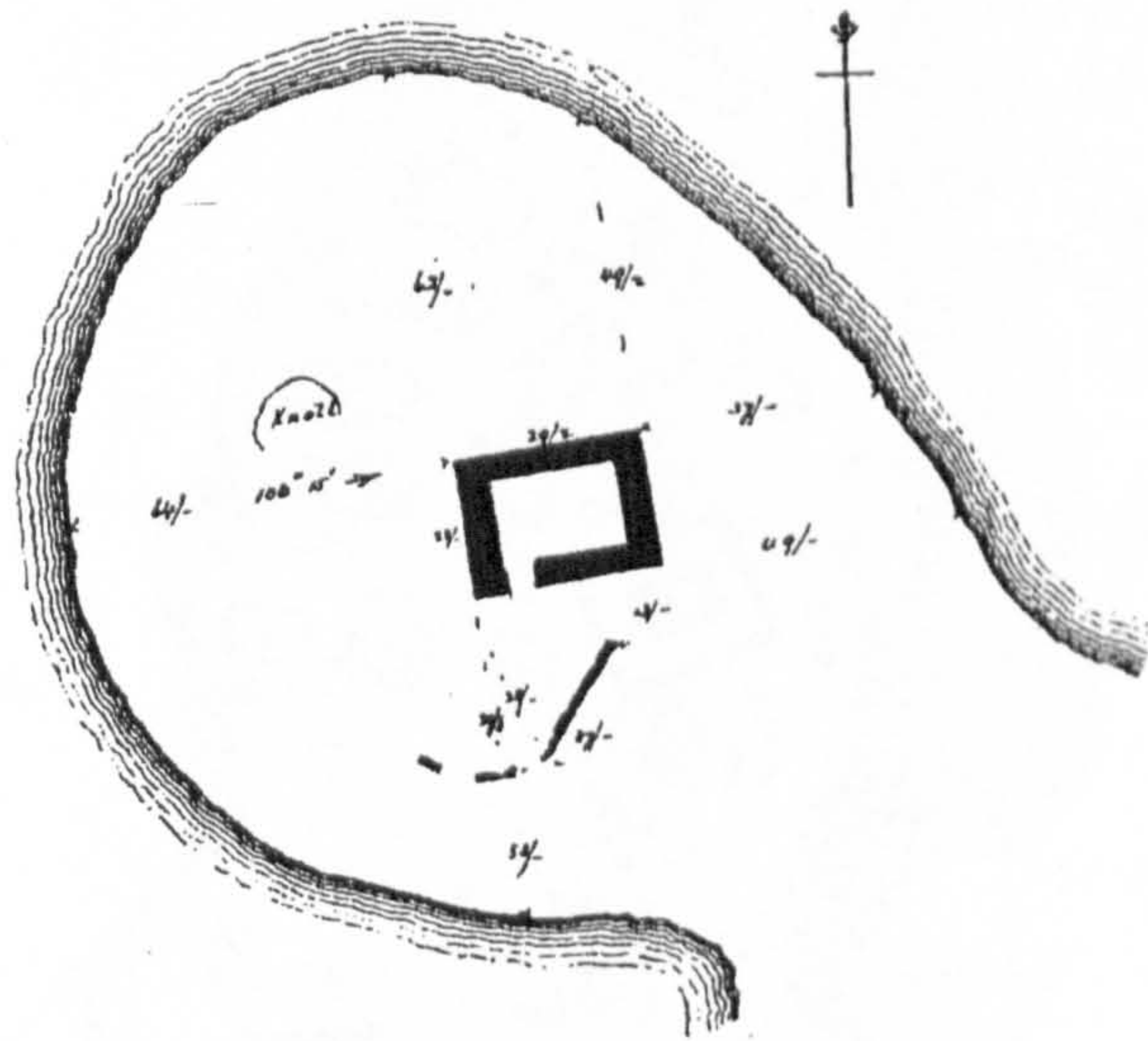
P7. Plan of St Magnus' Church, Birsay⁷.



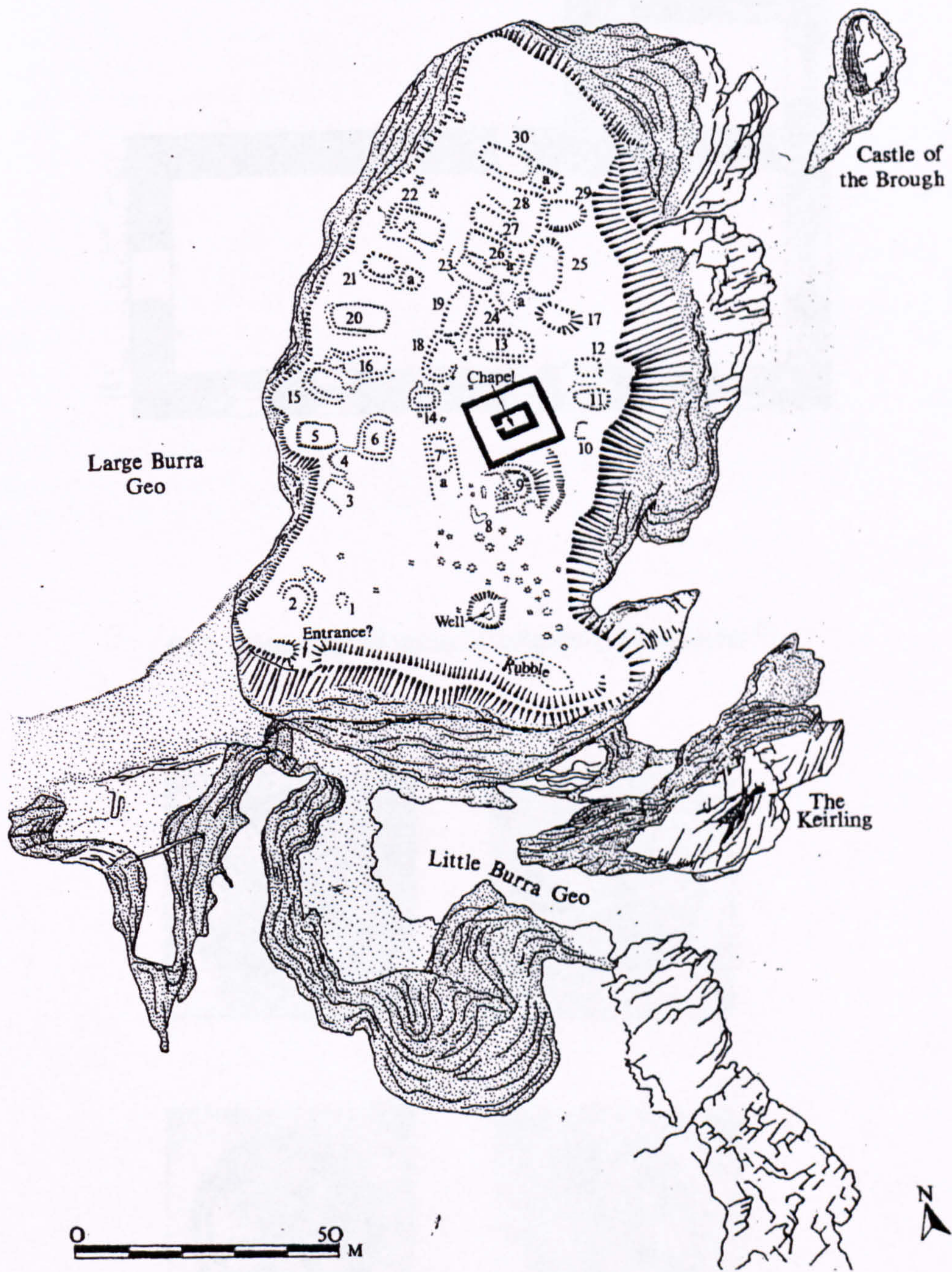
P8. Plan of St Olaf's Church, Kirkwall⁸.



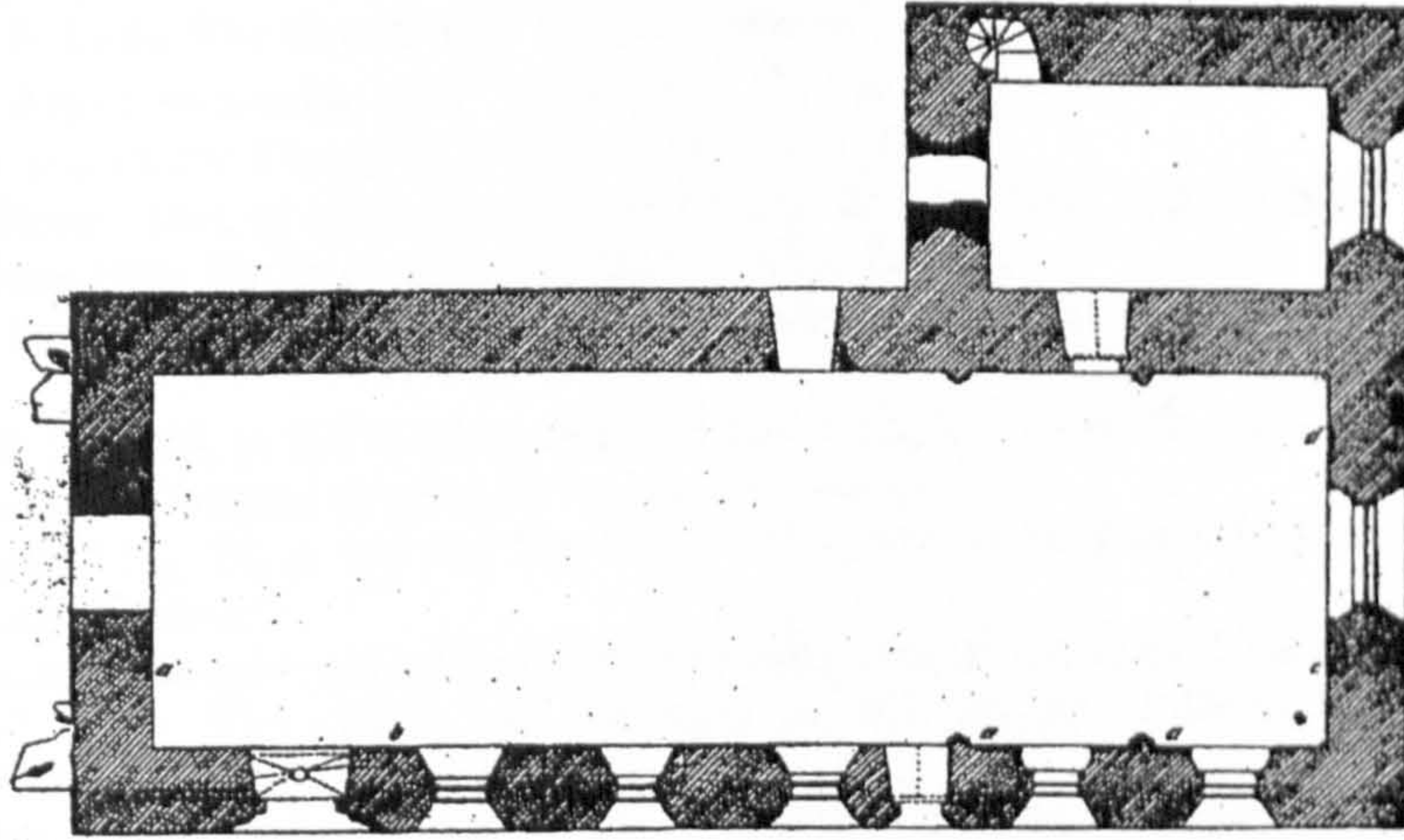
P9. Plan of St Magnus' Cathedral, Kirkwall.



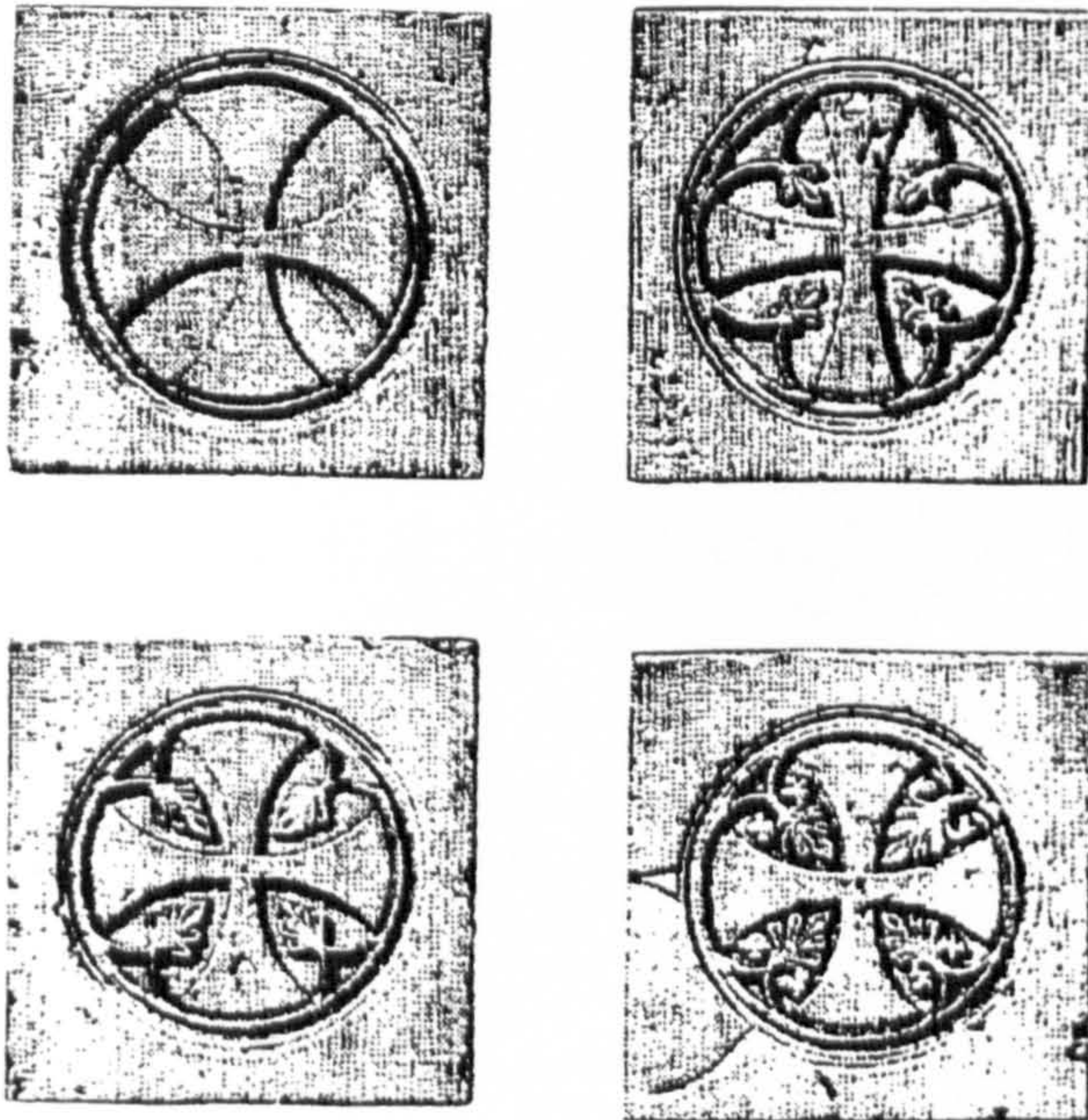
P10. Plans of St Tredwell's Chapel, Papey (Papa Westray)¹⁰.



P11. Plan of Deerness, brough, enclosure and chapel¹¹.



P12. Plan of St Magnus' Cathedral, Kirkjubour¹².



P13. Consecration-crosses, St Magnus' Cathedral, Kirkjubour¹³.

- ¹ "The completed Latin Kingdom rebuilding of the Holy Sepulchre", Fig. 6, p. 37 in Wilkinson, J., Hill, J., and Ryan, W. F. 1988: *Jerusalem Pilgrimage. 1099 – 1185*.
- ² "St Peter's", p. 246 (plan by Stephen, Will) in Beny, R. and Gunn, P. 1981: *The Churches of Rome*.
- ³ "Trondhjems domkirke", pl. 26 (plan by Christie, C.) 1 : 400 in Fett, H. 1909: *Norges Kirker i Middelalderen*.
- ⁴ "Stavanger domkirke", p. 7 in Brøgger, A. W. 1915: *Stavangers Historie i Middelalderen*.
- ⁵ "St Magnus, Egilsay" (plan by Sir Henry Dryden, 1848, redrawn 1868; Crown copyright RCAHMS), figure 16a, p. 141 in Fernie, E. 1988: 'The church of St Magnus, Egilsay'.
- ⁶ "Brough of Birsay: Area I excavation plan", Illus 154, p. 212 in Morris, C. D. 1996: *The Birsay Bay Project. Sites in Birsay Village and on the Brough of Birsay, Orkney*. Vol. II.
- ⁷ "St Magnus' Kirk, Birsay: plan of excavations in relation to church", Illus 7, p. 11 (plan by Barber, J. W.) in Barber, J. W. with others 1996: 'Excavations at St Magnus' Kirk, Birsay'.
- ⁸ "St. Ola, Kirkwall" Fig. 78, p. 110 (plan by Sir Henry Dryden) in Dryden, H. 1896: 'Churches in Orkney and Shetland'.
- ⁹ "Kirkwall Cathedral" Fig. 225, p. 261 in Macgibbon, D. and Ross, Th. 1896: *The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Scotland. From the earliest Christian times to the seventeenth century*.
- ¹⁰ "St. Tredwell's Chapel" Fig. 74, p. 106 and Fig. 75, p. 107 (plans by Sir Henry Dryden) in Dryden, H. 1896: 'Churches in Orkney and Shetland'.
- ¹¹ "The Brough of Deerness as surveyed by Durham University, and its environs" Illus 6, p. 311 in Morris, C. D. and Emery, N. et al. 1986: 'The chapel and enclosure on the Brough of Deerness, Orkney: survey and excavations, 1975-1977'.
- ¹² Kirkjubøur Cathedral (plan by Schiødte, Erik 1889 – completed/redrawn by Koefoed-Jensen, L. 1905) p. 55 in Bruun, D., 1929 : *Fra de Færøske Bygder. Samlede Afhandlinger om Gammeldags Sæd og Skik*.
- ¹³ Consecration-crosses, Kirkjubøur (drawings by Koefoed-Jensen, L.) p. 55 in Bruun, D., 1929 : *Fra de Færøske Bygder. Samlede Afhandlinger om Gammeldags Sæd og Skik*.

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Seal of the Chapter of Orkney

*Comitis generosi militis
gloriosi martiris certamina.
Concinat orchadia gens plaudens
nam celica terit magnus limina.*

*Magnum probant opera que dei
permunera agit dignus nomine.
Spreto uirgo seculo annori
curriculo decem est cum uirgine.*

*Quod ostendit et portendit casu
fractus ouem nactus puerili premio.
Labens ita orat uita ne priuetur
cui medetur magni intervencio.*

*Quia pacto primitus resilere monitus
eligit sagacius illud quod est melius.
Mori proiusticia optat dei gratia
suscepturus gaudia ditandus in gloria.*

*In agone spe corone martir sudat
quod denudat sanguinis dispersio.
Deo gratus sole stratus non inuitus
nunc preditus est coelesti solio.*

*Mestis risus impenditur coesis
uisus aperitur eius patrocinio.
Presul orat ut sanetur et implorat
quod medetur mox precum obsequio.*

*Morbo lepre medicamen nautis
quidem est tutamen e diuersis
languoribus plebem curat mortalibus.
Tribulatos cunctos audit prece uoto
iustis plaudit plenus misericordia
quaeque fugat demonia.*

*O quam martir hic beatus uirgo
fructu fos[sus] latus ter centeno
laureatus fruitur palacio.
Quos nos esse te laudantes
tuum festum celebrantes perpetuo
magne tuo impetres colloquio.*

*Ut erepti tua prece nos ab hostis
seui nece colletemur et priue[mur]
gehennae suplicio.*

*Nobilis, humilis, Magne martir stabilis,
habilis, utilis, comes uenerabilis
et tutor laudabilis, tuos subditos
serua carnis fragilis mole positos.*

*Preditus celitus dono sancti spiritus
uiuere temere summo caues opere;
carnis motus premere studes penitus,
ut carnis in carcere regnet spiritus.*

*Socita regia tibi uiri nescia
traditur, subditur, casta casto iungitur;
nam neuter illuditur sic decennio,
rubus non comburitur in incendio.*

*Turbidus, inuidus hostis Haco callidus
sternere, terere, tua sibi subdere,
te cupit et perdere doli spiculo,
iuncto fraudis federe pacis osculo.*

*Gravia, tedia, ferens pro iusticia,
raperis, traheris, demum ictu funeris,
ab ymis extolleris, ad celestia,
sic Xpisto coniungeris per supplicia.*

*Eya gloria signorum frequencia,
canitur, agitur, Xpistus benedicatur,
et tibi laus redditur in ecclesia,
o quam felix cernitur hinc Orcadia.*

*Omnibus laudibus tuis insistentibus,
graciam veniam et eternam gloriam,
precum per instanciam pater optine,
hanc slavans familiam a discrimine.*

Amen.