



UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND

Images in seals of chapters and bishops in the medieval dioceses of Norway and Iceland

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Abstract

The PhD thesis, *Images in seals of chapters and bishops in the medieval dioceses of Norway and Iceland*, is an innovative study on the imagery in the seals of chapters and bishops in the medieval dioceses of Norway and Iceland in the time frame of ca 1250-1537. The dioceses in question were those of Nidaros, Bergen, Hamar, Stavanger, Oslo, Skálholt and Hólar. The study aims partly to investigate the visual authority of the metropolitan see in Nidaros. Whether the iconography in the seals of the archbishops had an impact on the imagery in the seals of the suffragans. Another important aim is to explore architecture and architectural elements in the seals and estimate on what ground the topographical connection or accuracy in seal images rests.

The first part of the work consists of an overview of both types of the seals in question and the later chapters provide an in-depth study on architecture and architectural elements in these two types of seals. Chapter 2. provides an overview of chapter seals which are different in essence from the seals of individuals. The seals are listed and described, diocese by diocese, starting with Nidaros. Chapter 3 presents the seals of bishops according to their iconographic types and is subdivided by them. The discussion in chapter 4 provides a ground for evaluation of church buildings in chapter seals in general by presenting important comparison examples where both seal and a medieval church are preserved. In chapter 5 individual examples from the dioceses in Norway and Iceland are presented. Because of a complete lack of preserved medieval church buildings in Iceland, the Icelandic chapter seals receive the most attention. Chapter 6. Deals with architectural elements in bishop's seals. Suggestions are provided for what types of architectural elements would be appropriate in bishop's seals and that is different from what is relevant for chapter seals. The seals with architectural elements are then compared to the built environment at their cathedrals and/or what is known about them.

The conclusion of the thesis is multi-layered, providing both positive and negative answers to the research questions where topographical accuracy of church images in chapter seals is addressed and a plausible possibility in many instances.

Doktorsritgerðin, *Images in seals of chapters and bishops in the medieval dioceses of Norway and Iceland* fjallar um myndefnið í tveimur tegundum kirkulegra miðaldainnsigla í norsku og íslensku biskupsdæmum miðalda. Annars vegar innsigli dómklerka og klaustursamfélaga og hins vegar einstaklinga, þ.e. biskupa.

Samfélög dómklerka og klaustrafólks nefndust kapítuli og af því er orðið kapítulainnsigli dregið. Orðið kapítuli á einnig við um samkomustaðinn sjálfan, rýmið þar sem starfsemin fór fram. Tímarammi verksins er frá elstu varðveislu sem nær aftur á miðja 13. öld og fram til síðbreytingar. Þar er miðað við ártal kirkjuordinazíu Kristjáns III frá 1537 að teknu tilliti til breytileika eftir biskupsdæmum.

Innsigli þessara hópa eru ólík í eðli sínu og því nauðsynlegt að fjalla um þau í aðskildum köflum. Kapítulainnsiglin höfðu langan líftíma, sum hver voru notuð öldum saman en aftur á móti voru biskupsinnsigli bundin við embættistíð hvers þeirra sem gat verið nokkuð breytileg. Stíll biskupsinnsigla breyttist því hraðar en kapítulainnsigla.

Í köflum 2 og 3 er lagt fram yfirlit yfir varðveitt kapítula- og biskupsinnsigli í norsku og íslensku biskupsdæmunum eins og þau voru á miðöldum. Birtir það yfirlit ákv. mynstur menningartengsla sem eru mismunandi eftir því hvor flokkur innsigla á í hlut. Í köflum 4-6 er áhersla lögð á að skoða byggingar og byggingarþætti í þessum sömu flokkum innsigla. Grundvöllurinn sem liggur að baki því að kirkjumyndir voru í kapítulainnsiglum er kannaður og lögð fram skýr dæmi þar sem samanburður á innsiglismynd og traustri heimild um útlit kirkju kemur fram. Sérstök áhersla er lögð á að meta kirkjumyndir í íslensku kapítulainnsiglum, einkum í ljósi þess að engar varðveittar miðaldakirkjur eru til í landinu. Myndefni þetta hefur því mikið gildi fyrir rannsóknir á íslenskum kirkjubyggingararfi.

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80. Skálholt, Gozewijn Comhaer (1437-1446). AM Fasc-IX, 10. Photo Þjóðskjalasafn Íslands.
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83. Hólar, Ólafur Rögnvaldsson (1460-1495). Photo Þjóðskjalasafn Íslands, b. Hólar, Gottskálf Nikulásen (1496-1520). Photo Guðrún Harðardóttir.
84. Skálholt, Sveinn Pétursson, (1466/67-1475) - Skálholt, Stefán Jónsson (1491-1518). From *Sigilla Islandica* I, 11, 21; Wax, Photo Guðrún Harðardóttir.
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From afar, a medieval seal presents itself as an unclear item attached to a written document. With a closer look, one realizes that there is a whole microcosmos within. Seal images range from being rather simple up to genuine works of art and are a fascinating sphere to investigate. The road leading to this end-product was not very linear, sometimes rough, but very enjoyable. The journey had several milestones or guiding lights, mainly in the form of lectures at certain conferences where I had the chance to present individual chapters or parts of chapters. These were at Leeds 2016, Oxford 2017, Stiklestad 2018 and Leeds 2019.

My doctoral committee consisted of professor Sverrir Jakobsson at University of Iceland, who was my main supervisor, professor Haki Antonsson at UCL and Erla Hohler, professor emeritus at University of Oslo.

The project received a 3-year grant from the *University of Iceland research fund* and would not have been done without it. In 2017 I had the opportunity to stay at the University of Oslo for two months as Erasmus+ exchange student. There I enjoyed the experienced guidance of professor Jón Viðar Sigurðsson and was introduced to good Norwegian colleagues both in Oslo and Trondheim. An invitation to present the concept of the thesis at Middelalderseminariet in Trondheim was in fact an important turning point in the right direction for the whole work. This visit created opportunity for inspiring conversations with many experts. The stay at Oslo had great value in the whole process of the thesis and I am indebted to Tor Weidling at Riksarkivet in Oslo for providing valuable assistance. The primary reason for the Oslo period was to be in better dialogue with the expert on seals in the committee, the art historian Erla Hohler. This was very valuable time, but Erla passed away in 2019. Her seat was replaced by art historian Julian Gardner, professor emeritus at Warwick University who has provided me with great support and guidance in the process.

I want to give special thanks to my supervisor, Sverrir, who has never lost faith in the work and provided important support through the roughest patches. Also, to members of my family for their patience with me through this long process which at times was tough on them.

Abbreviations used in footnotes and figure texts

References to catalogue numbers in the Arnamagnæan charter collection, is in large accessible at <https://sprogsamlinger.ku.dk/q.php?p=ds/hjem/mapper/4544>

AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc.

AM Dipl. Norv. Fasc.

NB = Nasjonalbiblioteket Oslo

RO = Riksarkivet Oslo = Arkivverket

References to printed editions, also accessible online

DI = Diplomatarium Islandicum. The references are by page nr.

DN = Diplomatarium Norvegicum. The references are by charter nr.

1. General introduction of the seals of chapters and bishops in the Norwegian and Icelandic dioceses

Seals were an integral part of the visual culture in the Middle Ages as they were used to authenticate documents of various sorts. The seals were composed of an image in the centre and a written legend around the edges. Because of this authenticatory nature of medieval seals, the images were meant to reflect the identity of the seal owner in one way or another. A seal image is therefore an expression of a given identity, closely linked to the position the seal owner held in society. The image and its iconography were the key element in the identification of a seal on a document. For example, kings were usually presented sitting on a throne with an orb and a sceptre, or on horseback wielding a sword, and bishops would be presented in liturgical vestments of office and holding their insignia.¹

In the earlier Middle Ages, seals were mainly associated with the top-most level of society, but later their use filtered down the social hierarchy. At the same time of being literally attached to textual documents, seals are an equally integral part of the visual culture of each time. They are in a way a small-scale mirror of visual trends through the centuries, reflecting both stability and changes. Medieval seals are fascinating source material in several ways, and they are truly multi-dimensional historical sources. They are material items, both as matrices and wax impressions attached to documents. Seals have an iconographical dimension in their imagery, and they have a textual aspect in the legends which surround the central image area. Seals also have an interesting personal dimension, where there is always some direct connection to the person or institution attached to a document.²

The research presented here touches on certain parts of this source material which are ecclesiastic seals from within a certain bureaucratic context which is the Nidaros archdiocese. At first, I intended to present all the Icelandic ecclesiastic seals, the seals of bishops, abbots, abbesses, officiales, priests, and chapters. This turned out to be too vast to cover in one PhD thesis, and the group of seals was cut down to the seals of bishops and chapters (cathedral, royal and monastic). At the same time, it was clear that it would have more value to present the Icelandic seals in some outer context rather than presenting them in a local vacuum only. The most natural context for ecclesiastic seals would be the bureaucratic entities within the Nidaros metropolitan see, that is, individual dioceses. The subject of the thesis therefore turned into being a presentation of these types of seals within Icelandic as well as Norwegian dioceses. Although this coverage is mainly confined with Iceland and Norway due to accessibility of the

¹ See for example Pastoureau, *Les sceaux*, 70-71; Whatley, "Introduction," 1-5; Bedos-Rezak, "*Seals*" accessed at DOI: 10.1093/obo/9780195396584-0135

² See for example *Catalogue of the seals in the treasury of the dean and chapter of Durham I*, xii-xix; Grandjean. *Dansk sigillografi*, 37-55, 125-129.

material, the modern national entities are not of main interest, but much rather the aim and the structure of the thesis is on a diocesan basis as they were in the Middle Ages.



Fig. 1. The Nidaros archdiocese before 1387.

The Nidaros archdiocese was established in 1152/53, but seals of bishops attached to charters are not preserved from such an early age. An establishment of this type of institution involved writing and receiving letters and the production of various other documents. Communication with the papal curia was an integral part of this process. By the mid-12th century, documents were not always sealed or kept in archives, but that changed in the 13th century.³ Although bureaucracy of the Nidaros metropolitan see was established during the office of the second archbishop in Nidaros, Øystein, the preservation of seals does not follow that development.⁴ The earliest seal image from the Norwegian dioceses is an excavated matrix, identified as the one of Henrik bishop of Stavanger (1207-1224).⁵ One of the seals of the Nidaros chapter is preserved in a fragment dating to 1225,⁶ but the main wave of preserved seals in this context begins in the mid-13th century with the seal of Håkon bishop of Oslo (1248-1267) and the electus' seal of archbishop Sørle from 1252.⁷ From 1280 on, seals are better preserved than previously. The early end of the time frame of the thesis therefore starts in the second half of the 13th century and the other end wraps around the year of the new church ordinance from 1537 which marks the Reformation in the Nidaros archdiocese. However, there

³As Clanchy puts it: "The twelfth century had been a great period of making documents, the thirteenth was the century of keeping them." Clanchy, *From memory to written record*, 70. I would like to note that personal names are mainly used in their modern version, according to each language.

⁴Bagge, "Den heroiske tid" 61-64.

⁵Hohler, "Registrering av seglstamper i Norge," 46.

⁶Trættemberg, "Domkapitelssigill," 204.

⁷Trættemberg, *Geistlige segl i Oslo bispedømme*, 9-10, 97; *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 39-41.

are some variations according to individual dioceses, for example Hólar in Iceland which remained Catholic until 1550. The basic time frame of the thesis is therefore approximately 1280-1550.

The types of seals which fall into the time frames of this thesis are rather simple or uniform at the early end of it, but later the types of seals became more varied and complex. This goes hand in hand with increase in bureaucracy within the church during the later Middle Ages. The primary focus is on the imagery, not the legends. The seals can both be studied as “individuals” and as a group and here there is a bit of both. The sample presented here is substantial but not comprehensive since there are always possibilities for the discovery of more seals in unexpected locations.

Although the preservation of seals in the Icelandic dioceses only goes back to 1280, there is evidence from various written sources about the use of seals, both within the ecclesiastic section of society and in the secular one.⁸

Types of seals and explanation of concepts

English is a very practical language for writing about seals, since it has distinct words for the item called matrix which is pressed into the wax and the wax impression itself. This is how this word is generally used, and this terminology is also used in this thesis. The wax impression produced by a matrix is generally referred to as seal, and it will be used in that meaning here. In some instances of precision, they are referred to as wax impressions.

Concerning the other types of seals discussed in the thesis, the emphasis is on the main seals of both persons and communities, in the case of bishops, so-called seals of dignity. These types of seals have a particular iconography, in both cases different from the iconography of counter seals or subsidiary seals. In the 13th century, for example, bishops’ seals of dignity had an effigy image but the counterseals had a saint’s image. Later there was a transfer of image types from the counterseal to the main seal.⁹ The nomenclature of these other types of seals is quite complicated.¹⁰ Other seal types mentioned are counter seals, subsidiary seals, secrets and *sigillum rotundum*. Subsidiary seals is an umbrella concept of a group of seals which are called counter seals, *contra sigillum*, because they were impressed on the back of the wax lump of the main seal.¹¹ This categorisation or sub-categorisation of various kinds of seals is not a main

⁸ Guðmundur Magnússon, “Icelandic medieval seals,” 9-10.

⁹ Trættemberg, “Sigill, andliga. Norge,” 198; Hoskin, “Administration and identity,” 199-208.

¹⁰ See for example New, *Seals and sealing practices* (2010), especially pages 58-65 and the introduction by Hunter Blair in the *Catalogue of the seals in the Treasury of the Dean and Chapter of Durham* (1911). Also Trættemberg, “Sigill II. Norge,” 198-200.

¹¹ New, *Seals and sealing practices*, 63-64.

theme here, but when it comes to the later Middle Ages, it is inevitable to come across these complications in the preserved seal material.

The seal categorisations do not apply much here and are therefore unnecessary to go in depth in these taxonomies.

Seal taxonomy

Because seals are such vast and diverse group of historical sources, there has been a tendency to classify them into different groups in order to make them better comprehensible. This is rooted in the context of German and French scholars in the 19th century, and there seem to be different schools of thought in this matter. The earliest systems was presented by Douet d'Arcq in 1863 and then Coulon, where there was a special emphasis on ecclesiastic seals. The German sigillographer, Von Hohenlohe- Waldenburg, added to this the categories presented by the French.¹² One can say that there was a German and a French school in the taxonomy.

Despite its age, the classification system by Hohenlohe has widely been used in Scandinavian publications, such as *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon* and even most recently in the ones of *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, and *Geistlige segl fra Hamar bispedømme* (*Norske sigiller* III and IV) from 2012 and 2015. That, however, could be explained by the fact that vol I and II in the series were published in early 20th century.

In the later 20th century, there was some development in the field of classification. The German scholar Toni Diedrich presented an important essay, "Prolegomena," in 1983, and in 1990 there was a transnational project of standardisation of the documentation of seals published in *Vocabulaire internationale de la sigillographie* in 1990. Diedrich published a refined version of his system in 2012, and John A. McEwan presented a revolutionary phrasing of iconographic types of seals in his 2016 publication, *Seals in medieval London*.

In *Siegelkunde* (2012), Toni Diedrich addresses several issues concerning the taxonomy of seals, posing many questions about the different systems. An important notice from Diedrich, which I would like to emphasize, is that "Alle Typologien sind nur Hilfskonstruktionen, um eine gewisse Ordnung in das unermessliche Sigelmateriale zu bringen bzw. dieses unserem Verständnis zu erschliessen."¹³ In essence, it is important to keep in mind that the taxonomy should not get in the way of the study and understanding of seals; it is only created to help structuring the vast amount of seal types to be studied.

¹² Diedrich, "Prolegomena zu einer neuen Siegel-Typologie," 252; *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 19-20.

¹³ Diedrich, *Siegelkunde*, 71.

John A. McEwan has presented an interesting approach linked to the digitalisation of seal material. Online databases are an increasing demand of the present day, and that process requires a new way of thinking. He has designed the *Digisig* project to improve online access to medieval seals and he uses the registration system form example in the 2016 publication, *Seals in medieval London*. It presents an interesting experiment to take religion out of the system and therefore is appears revolutionary. For example, “Full-length seated woman holding a child” means: “St. Mary with the Christ child.”¹⁴ It is important to find a way to successfully digitize seals and make the material searchable. However, at present, such neutralized iconographical concepts of religious origins, become a bit awkward when the whole subject matter is Christian and religious in essence. Despite this interesting non-religious approach, I find that it serves the field perhaps better to retain the classical iconographic concepts into the digitized approach. It is often clearer to be able to just name a type which is comprehensible to those studying the material as well as in other close fields. Although seal taxonomy can be a large issue in some context, especially for the registration of various seal material in different institutions, it cannot be considered a crucial element to the discussion here although it is good to be aware of it, especially the difference between main seals and subsidiary seals and the iconography types in each group.

Structure, approach, and research questions

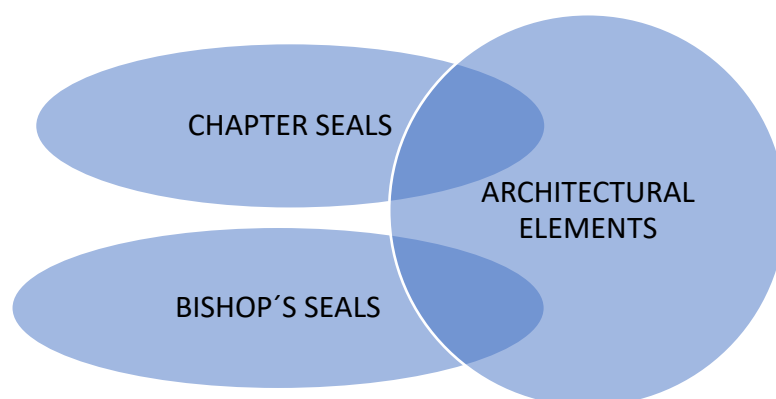
There is a principal difference between the seals of individuals and the seals of corporate entities. Seals of individuals were in use during the lifetime of the persons involved or their years in office, but corporate seals could be in use for longer than a life span of an individual, sometimes for several centuries. The seal of a king or a bishop would for example display an image of an individual in the proper setting and vestment for their status in society. The seal of a city or a monastery would have a different kind of image. In many cases, there would be a representation of a saint or sometimes the built environment relevant to those entities. Because of these essential differences, these two types of seals are not truly comparable and are therefore treated in separate chapters. That is, this difference of essence is reflected in the structure of this thesis and how it is divided into parts and chapters. That division of the material ensures that each type of seal is treated correctly.

The structure of the thesis is the following: It is divided into eight chapters. After the introduction in chapter 1, the next two provide overview of the material where the approach is

¹⁴ See John A. McEwan, “Challenge of the visual: Making medieval seals accessible in the digital age” (2014) and “The past, present and future of sigillography: towards a new structural standard for seal catalogues” (2018); *Seals in medieval London*, 166.

sort of quantitative but in the later ones, the approach is more of a qualitative one where architectural elements in seals are discussed in detail. study of two different categories of seals, chapter seals on one hand and bishop's seals on the other. In chapters 2 and 3 there is a more quantitative approach that provides an overview and classification, while chapters 4-7 can be labelled as more qualitative, or in-depth study of individual seals. Therefore, the material in each Part is studied from different perspectives and serves different purposes. The quantitative approach in chapters 2 and 3 make the specific studies in chapters 4-7 better comprehensible in the greater context. It also stands for itself in providing an overview of the development of these seal types over these approximately three centuries, from mid-13th century to mid-16th century.

The main aims of the thesis are in layers: Chapters 2 and 3 draw together in one place the published Norwegian bishops' and chapter seals and group them together with the same categories of the less published Icelandic seal material. That leads to the first group of research question: What kind of pattern does that mapping form? Furthermore, which seals are the most similar and in what areas are new stylistic features introduced (and where might they come from)? What can that reveal about the cultural exchange at each given period of time? Related to that is the question of whether the authority of the archbishop in Nidaros is somehow reflected/detectible in the imagery of the seals of the suffragan bishops. In other words, did the imagery of the archbishop's seals impact the imagery of the suffragan bishops? Did the imagery of the metropolitan chapter have impact on the seals of the other chapters?



The aim of chapters 4-7 is to investigate architectural elements in both chapter and bishop's seals. Because of the different nature of chapter seals and individual seals, different questions will apply to each category, but a general one which is applicable to both, is whether the architecture or the architectural elements reflect in some ways the appearance of some parts of the built environment relevant to each seal. In the case of the chapter seals, are the church

images in the seals reflections of the actual buildings on each site? If so, to what extent? Is there a correlation between elements in the Icelandic seal images with buildings in them and the local building tradition? In the case of the bishop's seals: What part of the built environment would be presented in such a seal? How would that relate to the identity or the experience of the bishop? These questions rest on the nature of seal images to represent the identity of their owners in one way or another. This type of study has not been done systematically before, although there have been some estimations on individual seals. The aim of the discussion in chapters 4-7 is to explore the dimensions of "topographical accuracy" of seal images in detail and discuss whether the seal images from the Icelandic dioceses could be truly visual source material on long lost buildings.

Part of the general purpose of seals is to express the identity of the seal owner in one way or another, as they were meant to authenticate charters and letters. The visual identity of a seal image would at least be received as type, for example an enthroned king or a vested bishop.¹⁵ However, this visual identity could extend to actual persons where the seal image provides a clear identification of a particular person.¹⁶ The king's image was first a royal type but secondary personal; but in some cases, it is clear that the figure in the seal image bears resemblance of the appearance of the royal person itself. Such an example would be emperor Frederick Barbarossa, who is always depicted with a beard in images, as well as in his seal (fig. 2). The example of the seal of queen Elizabeth I (fig. 3) speaks for itself: It shows a clear female figure in a distinctive outfit.¹⁷



Fig. 2 A detail from the seal of Frederick Barbarossa. – Fig. 3. The seal of Elizabeth I.

These examples show very clearly that seal images, although often presented as types, can, in some cases, be clear portraits of the seal owners, thus providing extreme accuracy of the visual verification of the documents these seals were attached to. This provides a solid ground for addressing some of the research questions of this thesis that are related to how architectural copies were perceived in the Middle Ages. Richard Krautheimer presented his observations on this in his pioneering article "Introduction to an "Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture""

¹⁵ Bedos-Rezak, *When ego was imago*, 29.

¹⁶ Svanberg, *Furstebilder från folkungatid*, Jan Svanberg has pointed out that the images of kings and emperors did have some traits related to other sources on their appearance. For example, all images of Fredrick Barbarossa in different mediums always had a bearded figure. 27-31.

¹⁷ The seal of queen Elizabeth I.

published in 1942. Although much of it was later criticised, some core of his theories are useful in this study, especially how “citation of forms” can be presented in simplified ways.¹⁸ These simplified citations have relevance here and are brought up because of the absence of preserved medieval church buildings in Iceland. To get an idea of that lost heritage, many sources need to be used in order to get some vision of what they may have looked like. To do this, various scholars have presented information from different resources, mainly archaeological and written sources and often the combination of both. Reliable visual resources only extend back to the 18th century, but the ones older than that have not truly been evaluated. However, one pioneering study was made in an article in the 1970s in which four different images, one of which was a seal image, were used to draw attention to possible building types in use in medieval Iceland.¹⁹ Part of this thesis will be devoted to take that type of investigation further and examine how a church image in a seal can be interpreted and perhaps used as a visual source of the appearance of a building at a given site.

As mentioned, seals are such multi-faceted items that they allow for a large variety of approaches, materiality being one of them. The matrix as an item, most commonly metallic, but there are curious examples in other means such as walrus and gemstones. The metallic ones also have varieties such as lead, tin, and more precious metals like copper and silver. These items can provide information on the way they were produced (engraved or cast), and the handles of the matrices provide grounds for dating and other aspects. The wax impressions have other kinds of material qualities that can be studied: the composition of the wax itself, the colours which were added to it, the variety and significance in colour use, contamination items such as hair or insects, fingerprints, the formats of the wax lumps, and the patterns on the back of them. Seal bags for protection is an increasing area of interest in the most recent years. Then there are the variations of the ways of attaching the wax impression to the documents.²⁰ This study focuses more on traditional visual aspects, the iconography itself and what comparative studies within that field does reveal. The other aspects can better apply where there is already some basic research on the visual representations in the seals which are studied here and will hopefully form a basis for further research in the other areas.

Status of knowledge

¹⁸ Krautheimer, "Introduction to an "Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture", " 1-33. A relatively recent study of sameness in Medieval art does not challenge Krautheimer's theory on the copy although it does on other parts on his studies. See, Vibeke Olsson, "The Significance of Sameness", 165-168.

¹⁹ Hörður Ágústsson. "Fjórar fornar húsamyndir." *Árbók Hins íslenska fornleifafélags* (1977): 135-159.

²⁰ See for example: *Catalogue of the medieval seals in the Durham Cathedral Muniments* I, xvi-xxix; Grandjean, *Dansk sigillografi*, 37-99 and <https://www.imprintseals.org>. Many other introduction chapters in the seal literature include similar information.

There has been an intensive increase in various aspects of seal research in the past few decades, and I would like to name a few of these publications although these new approaches do not affect the point of view of this present study. A very recent edition by Brill in 2019, *A companion to seals in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Laura J. Whatley, displays many of the fields of study within European sigillography in various articles by different authors. This is quite a comprehensive introduction and reflects in many ways new approaches on seal research in the past few decades, as well as more traditional iconographic aspects. This applies, for example, to the materiality of seals, seal bags and revision of earlier antiquarian approaches. This applies mainly in the English-speaking world, but also France and Germany. In another recent multi-approach volume from 2018, *Seals. Making and marking connections across the medieval world*, edited by Brigitte Bedos-Rezak, the point of view is more global and cross cultural.

Substantive publications have come out of different conferences, for example (from year 2000 on), *Middelalderlige seglstamper i Norden* in 2002, *Good impressions and Mikroarkitektur* in 2008, *Pourquoi-les-sceaux?* in 2011, *Microarchitecture* in 2018 etc. All of them contain important contributions relevant for this thesis and articles by various authors are used in different parts of this thesis. They are the ones by Guðmundur Magnússon, Erla Hohler, Alf Hammervold, Toni Diedrich, Brigitte Bedos-Rezak, Erla Hohler, Virginia Glenn, Julian Gardner, Markus Späth, Marc Gil, James Cameron, Matthew Sillence, Sabine Berger, and Achim Timmermann have all been of use in this work.

The various editions on multiple aspects of seal material and its context in Medieval Europe include the work of Brigitte Bedos-Rezak, Jean Luc Chassel, Ambre Vilain, Elizabeth New, Philip Schoefield, Julian Gardner, Harvey & McGuiness, Heslop. In addition to the Scandinavian literature on seals presented here below, the works of Harvey & McGuiness and New are very useful handbooks on general sigillography. A bibliography of pre-1981 seal-literature is conveniently accessible in Pastoureau, *Les Sceaux*. In addition to this, it is necessary to mention the important work of Markus Späth on aspects of architecture in seals (in 2008, 2011, 2015), which speak directly into the research in the second part of this thesis. The same applies to Emanuel S. Klinkenberg's research on church models. The doctoral dissertation on bishops' careers in the North Atlantic region by Michael Frost has proved extremely useful in the chapters on the bishops' seals.

The sources

The source material which forms the basis of the work presented here is mainly Norwegian and Icelandic. In the context of the various recent approaches in seal research, this present study is rooted in existing studies of more traditional iconography, which serves this type of

study best. That can be considered a necessary basis before other studies are made, a kind of groundwork. What is innovative here is the use of this traditional iconography to explore the relationship with the visual material world in a systematic way. The discussion of the material from the point of view of dioceses in different countries instead of nations, providing a comparison is also innovative.

Concerning the use of seal material in this study, a deliberate choice was made to use wax impressions that are still attached to their documents as the basis for the work. This provides secure dating and provenance. In addition to this, there is some use of seal drawings which were made while the wax impressions were in a better state of preservation than they are now. A number of these drawings were made on behalf of Árni Magnússon in the 18th century, some on behalf of Christian C.A. Lange, published in the first edition of *De norske klostres historie i middelalderen* in 1847. In both collections of drawings, there are some which are now the only known documentations of certain seals, although some have been re-discovered during the work on this thesis. In many cases, comparison is possible between preserved wax impressions and the drawings. In general, the drawings have proved to be very accurate, and in the case of the ones made on behalf of Árni Magnússon, they seem to have been made in or very close to their accurate size, in scale 1:1.²¹ The 18th century drawings made on behalf of Árni Magnússon are very important documentations since they sometimes record the seals in better states of preservation than they are now. This is particularly important concerning the legends which tend to fracture off with time. The etches based on the Árni Magnússon's drawn material published in Thorkelin's, *Diplomatarium Arnarnagænana* are also very valuable as seals of dignity and counterseals of bishops are presented in elucidative manner, showing the different iconography of each type and the ratio in their size. The drawings in the Arnarnagæn manuscript NB, MS 75 8^{vo} are mostly of known seals but are in some cases the only documentation of a few.²²

In addition to these 18th century drawings, there are those made on behalf of Norsk historisk kjeldeskriftinstitutt preserved in *Segltegningsamlingen* in Riksarkivet in Oslo, made around 1900. These are made by two draftsmen, Eilif Peterssen and Hakon Thorsen, who had quite different styles of drawing. When these drawings were made, they were sometimes made from

²¹ The author has made several measurements of the drawings in *Sigilla Islandica* and some of the accessible wax impressions. In all cases, the difference is hardly over 2 mm when measured between the ridges shown on the drawings, which are the same as the margins of the original matrices. This slight variation is explained by the fact that the overall forms of the matrices are not strict mathematical circles or ellipses, but bear witness to being made by hand.

²² For example, the seal of Helge, bishop of Oslo. The manuscript is of great interest in itself but cannot be explored further here but is on the agenda for post-doc research.

matrices when preserved but more often from wax fragments, and, in some cases, the original seal image was reconstructed by using many fragments, when available.

Additionally, it is curious to observe how seals were perceived in medieval narrative sources, such as the bishops' sagas. In these sources, the seal of bishop Gissur of Skálholt (1082-1118) is mentioned, but no evidence of it has yet been discovered.²³ The importance of seals in that society is very clear from that material, and these narratives provide insight on the sealing process itself and the circumstances around individual.²⁴ According to *Hungurvaka*, bishop Ísleifur brought a letter with him to Iceland sealed with the one of emperor Henry III, whom he met during his ordination trip.²⁵

Status of knowledge and the sources

Very limited work has yet been done on the Icelandic seal material, and there are no published catalogues in the style of *Danske gejstlige sigiller fra middelalderen* or *Norske sigiller* on the matter except for a facsimile of 18th century detailed examination made by Árni Magnússon of limited number of seals (AM 216-218 8vo). This was first published in 1965-67 under the name of *Sigilla Islandica*. The catalogue of charters, *Islandske Originaldiplomer indtil 1450*, edited by Stefán Karlsson presented the condition of the charters and they are described in detail, including whether their seals are preserved or not. However, the actual seals are excluded from the facsimile of the charters.

Seal research in Europe goes back to the 16th century, at first as part of historical and genealogical studies as well as documentary evidence.²⁶ The detailed studies on seals made by Árni Magnússon and partly published in *Sigilla Islandica* and Thorkelin's edition, *Diplomatarium Arnarnagæana* with detailed drawings are in accord with European research in 17th and 18th century.

The Norwegian sigillographic material includes catalogues on the matter as well as studies where Norwegian seals are placed in wider perspectives. The works of Harry Fett from 1903 and Thor Kielland from 1927 are still very important despite their age. Hallvard Trætteberg has made important contributions to Norwegian seal history by publishing and analysing the seals of the dioceses of Bergen and Oslo in the greater perspective of the Roman Catholic Church especially pointing out some striking likeness of British and Norwegian seals through

²³ *Biskupa sögur* I, 159. It was Jón Ögmundsson who had a letter from Gissur and his seal with him on his ordination trip to Lund.

²⁴ *Biskupa sögur* I, 160, 701, 741, 809, 851.

²⁵ *Biskupa sögur* I, 61.

²⁶ Bedos-Rezak, *Perspective of research on seals*, <http://www.sigillvm.net/research/>

iconographical analysis.²⁷ Trættemberg has also conducted some important surveys on Norwegian seals and seal images which are published in *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for Nordisk Middelalder (KHL)*. In fact, there are several small articles on various aspects of seals and sealing practises in the *KHL* by various authors. The catalogue *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, from 2012 is of great importance. That edition can be viewed as a continuation of the 19th century catalogues as it forms part of the series *Norske sigiller*. Only with more modern introduction and more extensive bibliography on Norwegian seals and related fields. The fourth volume in this series was published in 2015, *Geistlige segl fra Hamar bispedømme*.

The fact that Árni Magnússon's studies on seals was not published until mid-20th century is indicative of the lack of seal research in Iceland. In many ways, the current status of seal research is now similar to the situation in Norway and Britain around mid-19th century before the great catalogues were published. The accurate examination Árni Magnússon made on the legends of the seals is very important in addition to the drawings which were made by Magnús Einarsson and Hjalti Þorsteinsson. Some of these seals are preserved but others are lost, so the drawings have great documentary value. In the cases of both drawing and seal being preserved, there is a good opportunity to evaluate the accuracy of the drawings. In this facsimile edition there are drawings of the seals of seven bishops of Skálholt, five bishops of Hólar, two Officialis seals, ten Augustinian seals, 17 Benedictine seals (there were only these two monastic orders in Iceland) and 22 priests' seals. There are no seals from Kirkjubæjarklaustur or Möðruvallaklaustur in this edition.

The mid-20th century publication of *Sigilla Islandica* can be viewed as a late trend in cataloguing in the 19th-century manner. The seal studies of Árni Magnússon are not fully published. There is more in AM 222a 8vo and in the Apographa of charters in the Árni Magnússon Institute. The manuscript MS 75^{8vo} also has important drawings of the same sort. Jón Sigurðson, (1811-1879) the first editor of *Diplomatarium Islandicum*, wrote an essay on seals and personal marks (Lbs. JS 496 4to) in line with the research emphasis of his time. That essay was published in 2016 with an introduction by Theresa Dröfn Njarðvík.²⁸ Apart from that essay and Þór Magnússon's brief text on seal matrices in *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for Nordisk Middelalder*²⁹, the only general overview of Icelandic medieval seals forms part of an article by Guðmundur Magnússon on seal matrices in *Middelalderlige Seglstamper i Norden*

²⁷ Trættemberg, Hallvard. "Geistlige segl i Bergens bispedømme ca. 1250-1530." In *Björgvin bispestol. Frå Selja til Björgvin*, 63-112. Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1968; *Geistlige segl i Oslo bispedømme ca. 1200-1537*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1977.

²⁸ This was a project on behalf of the Árni Magnússon institute (Nýsköpunarsjóður HÍ). See *Árbók hins íslenska fornleifafélags*, 2016.

²⁹ Þór Magnússon, "Sigill, Island," 221-222.

in 2002. The most recent Icelandic publication touching partly on seals is Þór Magnússon's book on Icelandic gold- and silverwork, published in 2013.

Seals are sources that have so far mainly been used in works on Icelandic church history to emphasize texts on certain persons or institutes, especially the seals published in *Sigilla Islandica*. Unusually rich examples of such use are found in *Biskupa sögur* III and in the general work on history of Christianity in Iceland from 2000 (*Íslenskt samfélag og Rómakirkja*), which contains some important seals and detailed descriptions.

Icelandic seal studies have mostly been in the form of examinations of individual seals and seal matrices. A few articles on individual seals or seal matrices have been published in recent decades. In *Árbók hins íslenska fornleifafélags* (1981), Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson presented an Icelandic matrix found in Denmark and proposed the origin of it. Vilhjálmur published the seal matrix of Steinmóður, abbot of the Augustinian monastery of Viðey in Iceland, in 1984. In 1977, Hörður Ágústsson made the first attempt to interpret the chapter seal of Reynistaður. Making use of the *Sigilla Islandica* publication, Ágústsson made a study on the church figure in that chapter seal. His conclusion is that the seal reveals an Icelandic type of church, possibly representing the convent church at Reynistaður itself. In his monograph *Íslensk silfursmíð* from 2013, Þór Magnússon opposed this interpretation and did not find the image valid as a particular building but rather a general representation of a church.

I explored some of the Icelandic monastic seals in an article from 2016, "Myndefni íslenskra klausturinnsigla." Parallel to that, also in 2016, Stefan Drechsler published an article titled "Reynistaðakirkja hin forna," placing that seal in the wider intellectual context of manuscript culture and church government in Iceland.

In the past few years, there has been a revolution in digitalization of various kinds of source material on seals and related studies. It would have made a great difference if all that had been accessible at the start of the thesis. Much of the older print catalogues are now online, such as the publications by Petersen (1886), Hildebrand (1862-1867), Laing (1850) and Pedrick (1902). Now many museum collections are online, for example:

<https://www.unimus.no/>

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

<http://www.sigilla.org/>

One of the most important digital achievements is the online unification of the Árni Magnússon manuscript collection, which is placed in various institutions, both in Iceland and Denmark into the digital gates: <https://gefin.ku.dk/q.php?p=ds/hjem/mapper/4544>

or <https://sprogsamlinger.ku.dk/q.php?p=ds/hjem/mapper/4544> This site contains 20th-century black and white photographs of documents in different formats, all in the Arnamagnæan collection. However, there are some gaps in the material. Some digitized photographs are missing which would have been of use in this project.

With increasing interest in seal research in recent years, a number of databases have been launched, for example:

<https://www.digisig.org/>

<https://www.imprintseals.org>

<https://portugal-sigillvm.net/>

There are a few limitations of the source material such as when only a drawing exists and the wax impression is lost. This could be considered critical but is hardly an issue due to the proven accuracy of the drawings in the Árni Magnússon collection. It is actually more of a limitation in the cases where no older drawing exists, and the wax impression is not clear enough. Reading of the legends from wax impressions can be difficult, and in a few cases almost impossible. Then there is always the possibility of falsifications of seals, but even so, their imagery would always be the product of their time and therefore in a way usable in this discussion. Falsifications can be hard to detect, especially concerning loose found matrices, but by using mainly wax impressions attached to verified documents this risk of bias is significantly reduced. Matrices tend to be loose-finds and often with unclear origin, so the risk is higher in the study of that part of the seal material.

Some aspects of the long use of chapter seals can be defined as certain kind of limitation. That applies mainly to the cases when the iconography of a seal and its style seem old, but the only impression preserved is very late medieval. That involves less accuracy and the reliance of stylistic analysis which is less accurate than having the precise dating of an attached wax impression at an early age.

One problem or a limitation of the seal material is closely tied to one of the major research questions in this thesis: whether a church building in a seal is interpreted as topographically accurate or plain imaginary or idealised. In fact, Toni Dietrich addresses this problem in his new taxonomy, which was briefly mentioned above. He takes this into an account and has a group for each of the types. In his system, group D. 23 is called “Siegel mit idealisierter Architekturdarstellung” and in D 24 it is called “Siegel mit realistischer Architekturdarstellung”.³⁰ The fact that these two groups are defined in this way presents this dilemma of

³⁰ Dietrich, *Siegelkunde*, 55.

the research question in on the architectural elements in a nutshell. Chapters 4-7 of this thesis are devoted to examining these types of seals and providing examples where seal images clearly reflect real buildings as a whole or parts of them. There is also a discussion on how imaginary or idealisation of buildings can still reflect some stylistic trends of the time or even the topographical surroundings.

2. Overview of the seals of cathedrals, royal and monastic chapters from the Norwegian and Icelandic dioceses

2.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to give an overview or some mapping of the chapter seals in Norway and Iceland with the addition of St Magnus cathedral, Orkney. Another aim is to point out the larger context which the seals with architectural elements are part of. This overview is intended to group together similarities and bring forward the differences in all the various groups of chapter seals. That leads to the following questions: What could be the reasons for the likenesses and the differences? In the case of the monastic chapter seals, do the monastic rules of these houses matter when it comes to the iconography of the common seal?

The chapter seals in question have the subcategories of cathedral chapter seals, royal chapter seals and monastic chapter seals. All of them are the seals of communities, not of individuals which are presented in the following chapters. At the cathedrals and the royal churches there were the communities of secular canons, but at the monasteries these communities were regular, that is, under monastic rules. In Iceland, there were only two of these rules, Benedictine and Augustinian, and no cathedral chapters. In Norway, on the other hand, there was much greater variety of monastic rules. The other orders which have preserved chapter seals were the Cistercians, Premonstratensians, the Mendicant orders, Dominicans, and Franciscans and then the Bridgettines, which have preserved chapter or some communal seals. In addition to the cathedral and royal chapter seals, this first part of the thesis, covers the communal seals of the monastic houses but not the seals of individual monastic officials, such as abbots or abbesses. The state of preservation is a factor in how complete this overview can be, and there is some variety in what kind of seals are preserved from each monastic house. For example, the abbot's seal from Hovedøya in Oslo diocese is preserved but not the chapter seal.

The main research questions presented in the general introduction which apply here are: What kind of pattern does the visual mapping form? That is, which seals are the most similar and in what areas are new stylistic features introduced (and where might they come from)? What can that reveal about the cultural exchange at each given period of time? Did the imagery of the metropolitan chapter seals have impact on the seals of the other chapters?

Unlike the seals of individuals, such as kings or bishops, which were only used through the years in office, those communal seals tended to be in use for a very long time. This first part of the thesis provides a mapping of the iconography that these communities in various ecclesiastic sites in the Norwegian and Icelandic dioceses found appropriate for their common seals.

Although the preservation of the chapter seals from Norway and Iceland is far from complete, there is quite a diversity of the imagery in the still existing ones. This chapter aims to provide an introduction to each seal and an overview, mostly based on existing editions on the matter. The preservation of possible chapter seals in the Scottish Islands which were part of the Nidaros archdiocese is not known, and they are therefore not part of this survey.

In addition to their seals of dignity, the cathedral chapters also had subsidiary seals, but such are only preserved from Nidaros, Bergen, Stavanger and Oslo, and, in the case of Nidaros, it is ambiguous whether some of the subsidiary seals were perhaps used as main seals at some earlier point in time. Due to some cases of re-engraving of matrices, it is also ambiguous how the chapter seals are counted, and this applies specially to the chapter seals of Nidaros cathedral where details were added to the background at later stages. In contrast to the cathedral chapters, there do not seem to be preserved any monastic subsidiary seals.

The total amount of communal seals in question, divided according to categories are the following:

	Seals of dignity/Main seals	Subsidiary seals
Cathedral chapters	7	8
Royal chapters	2	0
Monastic chapters	27	1-2?

The overview starts with the cathedral chapter seals, moving on to the royal chapter seals and finishing with the numerous monastic chapter seals, which are geographically arranged. The seals from each diocese are described and grouped together and listed according to their monastic order, usually the Benedictines first and the younger orders, such as the mendicants last. The order of presentation is: Benedictine, Cistercians, Augustinians, Premonstratensians, Dominicans and Franciscans.

Concerning the monastic chapter seals, there is some variation of the terms which are used about these chapter seals in their legends and in the documents they are attached to. This will be commented on in the section of the monastic seals where possible, given the state of preservation.

Here the aim is to provide an overview with descriptions of the seals. Because of the emphasis on the architecture in the chapter seals in the later sections, those features will mainly be discussed there.

2.2. Cathedral chapter main seals

An assembly of canons existed at the metropolitan see in Nidaros and in addition to that in the dioceses in Bergen, Hamar, Stavanger and Oslo in mainland Norway and in Kirkwall in the Orkneys. Although there is evidence of an appointment of a canon to Hólar, Iceland, in the year 1430³¹, such community seems not to have been fully established at the Cathedral of Hólar. The cathedral chapter seals are presented here in topographic order, arranged roughly from north to south.

Nidaros, metropolitan

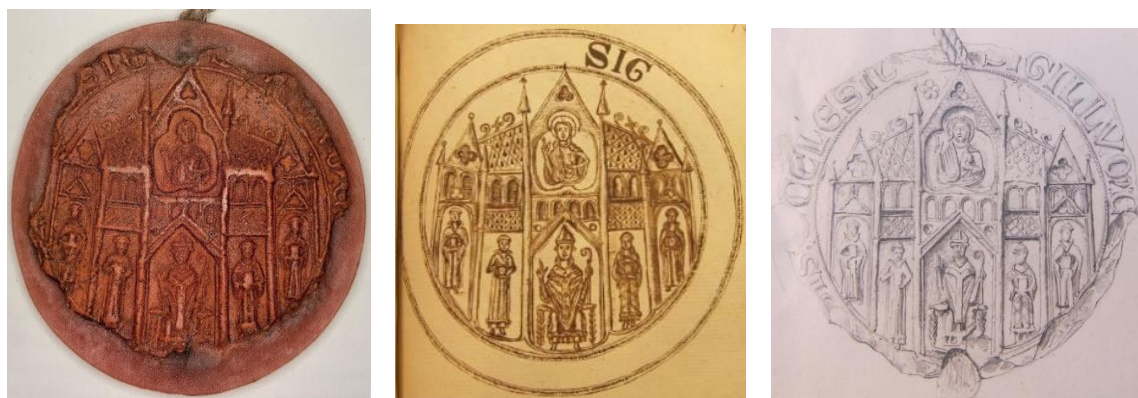


Fig. 4. Nidaros, cathedral chapter, main seal. Wax impression and 18th and 19th century drawings.

The main cathedral chapter seal of Nidaros exists in two versions, one with plain background and the other with small flowers above the rooftop of the central architectural structure in the seal image. It is round, 85mm in diameter, and the legend is fragmentary. The legend is better preserved on the version with the flowers and reads “...IGILLVM ... CCLESIE ...” which is interpreted as: “SIGILLVM CAPITULI NIDROSIENSIS ECCLESIE”. The older version with the plain background is preserved in two impressions, both from 1281, and a younger version, with added rosette in the background, is preserved in later impressions or from 1307-1448.³² The reason for the two versions has been thoroughly discussed by Erla Hohler in her articles in 2008 and 2009 where she argues that these variations can be explained by a severe dispute between the canons of the chapter and the archbishop during the archiepiscopacy of Jørund (1288-1309)³³

³¹ DI IV, 410-411, nr. 452.

³² *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 93-96. A document from 1307 confirms that this seal was perceived as the main seal, seal of dignity as it is phrased: “sættom ver firir þetta bref vart mæira commons insigli” DN II, nr. 87.

³³ See Hohler, Erla B. "The re-engraved matrix: Bishop versus chapter in Nidaros around 1300." In *Good Impressions. Images and Authority in Medieval Seals*, edited by Noël Adams, John Cherry, and James Robinson. London: British Museum, 2008 and Hohler, Erla Bergendahl. "The Re-engraved Matrix. Bishop v/s chapter in Nidaros around 1300." *Collegium medievale* 22 (2009): 111-127.

Apart from the small difference in the background of the two versions of the seal, the main design is the same.

Description

The seal presents a church building with clerics inside. The building itself is the most dominant design of the seal and consists of a central two-storey gable, flanked with turrets. To each side is a two-storey part with upper and lower roof. Between the roofs, there are round arched windows, and the surface of the roof is diamond patterned. Furthermost to the right and left are gables, also flanked with turrets. Instead of natural perspective, each part is frontally placed on the surface of the seal. The central gable has a smaller simple (triangular) gable on the lower level with very small quatrefoils to the sides, and above four round arched windows. Above that, is a niche and a trefoil above, at the tip of the main gable. The end gables have a quatrefoil at that same place. In the end gables, there is a round arched opening with a triangle above which splits up between two round arched windows. The ridge between the side and the central gables is ornamented with leaf-like pinnacles.

Within the structure there are six figures, five at ground level and one above. The central figure is sitting, vested in a chasuble with a pallium and a mitre, clearly meant to represent the archbishop. He is holding a staff in his left hand and lifting the right one up in a blessing position. To both sides there are two sets of figures in monastic habits with tonsured hairstyle, holding books. They must be meant to represent the canons in the Nidaros cathedral chapter. In the central gable on the upper level is the fifth figure, with long hair, wearing a sort of toga holding some item in the left hand and lifting the right hand in a blessing gesture. That one must represent Christ himself.

Since the figures are clearly meant to represent the archbishop and the chapter of canons the building in the seal must represent Nidaros cathedral itself. The composition of building parts is rather open to interpretation in comparison to what is authentic of the remaining building parts of the cathedral as it stands today.

The whole design of the seal image thus is representing a basilica-shaped church building where the components of the church are placed in such a way that they were understood by those who received the seal at the time.

Nidaros, second main seal



Fig. 5. Later main seal of the cathedral chapter of Nidaros. The figure is St Andrew. Wax impression and 19th century drawing.

This later main chapter seal of Nidaros cathedral must have come into use after 1448, which is the youngest impression of the older seal. The oldest impression of this seal only dates from 1532 so the matrix must be made sometime in that year span. In fact, all the examples date from that same year. It is 40 mm in diameter and the legend is well preserved and reads: “SIG NE CAP LI ECCLIE NIDROSIEN”³⁴

The image consists of a male figure, placed within a roofed niche. The bearded figure is identified as St Andrew by the X cross by his right side. The figure pose is relaxed and the folds of the garments flow freely. The niche surrounding the figure is in clear renaissance style with ornamented quadrangular piers resting on a profiled podium. Above is a round ornamented arch within a rectangular roof. To the outer sides of the structure there is floral ornament in the renaissance style. Below the whole structure is a curious item: Three letters which seem to be Hebrew and are not commented on in the 2012 edition nor in Trættembergs preliminary catalogue from 1953. According to the Hebrew alphabet, they could be D or L and two K/Kh or N In this context DNN or DKN might be considered most likely as some abbreviations of the Nidaros chapter. There is no clear explanation of this use of Hebrew, but it may indicate some historical interest. Similar use of Hebrew letters can be seen at an imported altarpiece at Víðimýrarkirkja in Iceland from a later date, or 1616.³⁵ Unlike the clear Romanesque archaic qualities of the earlier main seal this seal represents a clearly different style, the plant ornament, the vestment of the figure and the letter style in the legend all contribute to additional renaissance qualities to the structure of the niche itself.

The editors of the 2012 edition suggest that the matrix was made by the same engraver that made the seal for archbishop Olav Engebriktsson (1523-1537) as the stylistic likeness is quite

³⁴ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 96, 106-107; There is no specification of the seal in the three documents the seal is preserved attached to. It is simply referred to as seal, “innsigli”. DN, VIII, nr. 672, IX, nr. 719, nr. 725.

³⁵ Guðrún Harðardóttir, “Víðimýrarkirkja. Kirkjubúnaður og messuföng” 278-279.

evident. They also comment on that the reason for using St. Andrew instead of St Olav has not yet been discovered.³⁶

Bergen

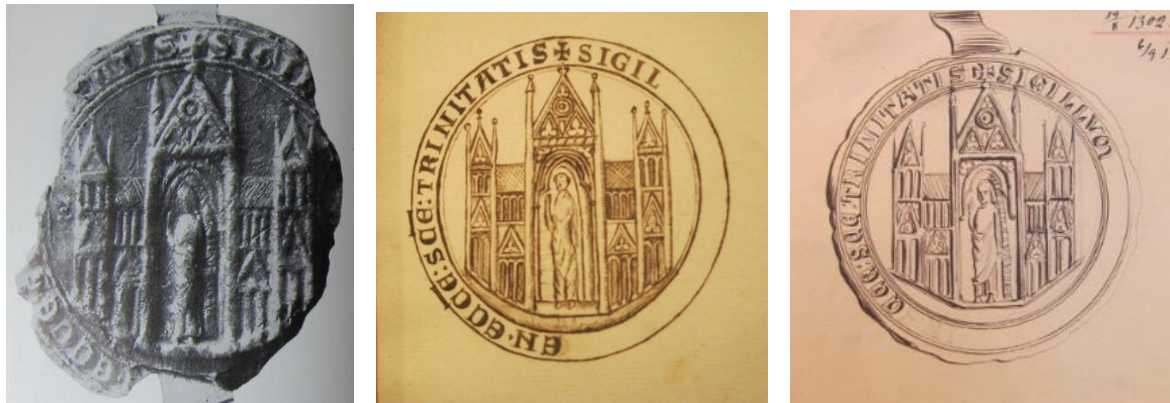


Fig. 6. Bergen cathedral, main seal. Wax impression and 18th and 19th century drawings.

The main seal of the cathedral chapter of Bergen is 65 mm in diameter and preserved in a number of wax impressions attached to charters dating from 1302-1463. The legend reads “SIGILLVM ... CCE SCE TRINITATIS” and has been interpreted as “SIGILLVM: (CAPITVLI: BERGENS: E)CCE: SCE: TRINITATIS”. My description of the seal image is based on a published wax impression from 1303, which consists of a church building with a saint’s figure standing in its main doorway. The central figure in the middle holds a band of an inscription: “SCTA: SUNNIVA: VIRGO”. This saint’s figure has therefore been identified as the Norwegian or Irish local saint, Sunniva. Her legend is a bit complicated, but in brief, she was a Christian Irish princess who refused to marry a pagan Viking chieftain. At first, her shrine was located at a monastery in the location of her martyrdom on Selja Island, off the west coast of Norway, between Trondheim and Bergen, but later it was moved to the Bergen cathedral. The main dedication of the cathedral, on the other hand, was to the Trinity and the legend of the seal is in accordance with that.³⁷

The building in the seal has a central block with lower and symmetrical side blocks. The central one appears as a giant doorway with a gable on top and thick turrets to the sides which rise above the gable. The pattern in the gable is two triangles with a round form on top. The cross where the legend starts is straight above the gable. The lower blocks which unite the frontal blocks, consist of roofed areas in a side view, which appears on two levels, a frontal view of windows or doorways with triangular gables with trefoil or quatrefoils inside (difficult

³⁶ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 106-107.

³⁷ Trættemberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme", 74-75/75-77. The dates of the wax impression are: 1302, 1303, 1426 and 1463. The seal is not specified in these documents, for example “sigillo nostri capituli.” See DN III, nr. 51, nr 54, VIII, nr. 277, and XVI, nr. 217. For Sunniva see Daae, *Norges helgener*, 137-142.

to observe in the wax impression, but the drawings are clearer) at a lower level and on upper level three round arched windows at each side with a finely patterned roof. The far end structures are presented in a frontal view as the centre part. They are on two levels, with two round arches at the lowest level, topped with triangular shape/gable with a trefoil inside. The upper part consists of three round arches, topped with triangular gables with clear trefoils. Slim turrets rise to the sides at the gable level. The whole design of the seal image is clearly a schematic representation of a basilica type church building in a composite style. The arches on upper and lower level are Romanesque in style, but the trefoil decoration on the gables is Gothic in style, as well as are the colonettes on either side of each gable.

There are many interesting aspects of the Bergen seal. In addition to the architectural features which are discussed in chapter 5, there is a striking likeness to the reverse of the double chapter seal of the Augustinian Inchaffray abbey in Scotland (fig. 7). At first glance the two seals seem identical, but a closer look reveals differences. Hallvard Trættemberg was the first to point this out as he made a thorough study on the two seals, both stylistically and the whole cultural context around them. That brought forward that there was evidence for gift exchange between kings and monastic delegations between Norway and England, as well as Norway and Scotland in the 13th century.³⁸



Fig. 7. Bergen cathedral chapter seal in comparison to the chapter seal (reverse) of Inchaffray abbey.

Trættemberg mentions indirectly the possibility that the two seals were possibly made by the same workshop.³⁹ He suggests that the matrices must have been made at a very similar time, possibly around 1275.⁴⁰ That brings him to the question of which was made before the other. In order to answer that, he explains the diplomatic communication between Norway and Scotland at that time. King Håkon Håkonsson received a double seal as a gift from King Henry III of England in 1236. There are confirmed diplomatic missions from Bergen to Scotland in

³⁸ Trættemberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme," 75-77.

³⁹ Trættemberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme," 76-77. The comment on this is in speculation about the architecture "Dersom gravøren av Bergen-Inchaffray seglene har ment å gi..."

⁴⁰ Trættemberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme," 76.

the years 1263-1265. There were also meetings at Perth in 1266 and Winchester in 1269. Trætberg puts focus on a certain person, Askatin, the probably-English born chancellor of king Magnus *lagabætir*, who later became bishop in Bergen and founded the Apolstelkirken there. Trætberg then asks the question whether Askatin would have honoured Inchaffray with a new matrix at this time or ordered a seal for the chapter of Bergen like Inchaffray. The question had to be left open, but in the speculations on the architecture in the seal, Trætberg hints that the two seals were made in the same workshop. In fact, he continues with speculations on the similarities of both seals, as is obvious since they are almost identical.⁴¹ This context provided by Trætberg is a firm ground to evaluate similarities based on a similar iconographical type or a simple copying of one work to another, sort of a transfer. In these particular examples, it is truly hard to tell. Both ecclesiastic institutions are of high status, but what do the simple measurements reveal?

In an article from 1999 on thirteenth-century seals in the Tayside, Fife area in Scotland, Virginia Glenn also addresses the likeness of the seals of Inchaffray and Bergen.⁴² She examines Trætberg's dating of the Bergen seal to around 1275 and considers it plausible as stylistic elements in the seal are in accordance with panel painting at the time. In addition to this she points to a similarity of the Inchaffray double seal to yet another seal, also double, which could have been the model for the two in question. This is the town seal of King's Lynn, which has a similar image of eagle as the obverse as the Inchaffray seal. She speculates on the influence of the saint's figure on the reverse on to the Inchaffray one.⁴³ Glenn addresses the question of which seal, Bergen or Inchaffray, was made before the other and is inclined to think that the Scottish one would be the original and the Bergen one the copy.⁴⁴ The rich English influence on the Norwegian church is well known, and a recent coverage on the carrier of Gilbert of Hamar throws some further light on the various types of relations between Norway and Scotland and the Isles in the 13th century. As somewhat comparable to Matthew of Paris, the connections of Gilbert of Hamar may have contributed to Norwegian seal history although it may not be possible to point directly on one thing.⁴⁵ Further discussion of the architecture in the seal and its research history is in chapter 5.

⁴¹ Trætberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme," 76-77. It should be noted that in his PhD thesis from 2017 on illuminated manuscripts, *Making manuscripts at Helgafell in the fourteenth century*, Stefan Drechsler traces communication and artistic influences between East Anglia, Bergen and Iceland via the Hanseatic commercial network. Although Inchaffray is in Scotland this resonates strongly with the discoveries by Trætberg on the similarities of Norwegian and British seals.

⁴² Glenn, "Thirteenth-century seals - Tayside, Fife and the wider world," 157-160.

⁴³ Glenn, "Thirteenth-century seals - Tayside, Fife and the wider world," 157-158.

⁴⁴ Glenn, "Thirteenth-century seals - Tayside, Fife and the wider world," 159-160.

⁴⁵ Ayers: "Bishop Gilbert of Hamar, 203-227.

Hamar



Fig. 8. Hamar, chapter seal. Wax impression and 19th century drawing.

The chapter seal of Hamar cathedral is preserved in four wax impressions, all late medieval; the oldest one is from 1485 and the youngest from 1534. It is round, 50 mm in diameter and has the image intact. There are also detailed drawings by Peterssen in the Segltegningsamling at Riksarkivet, Oslo. The legend is well preserved and reads: “SIGILL ECCL CAPITVLI HAMAREN” which is interpreted as “SIGILLVM : CAPITVLI : ECCLESIE : hAMARENSIS” in the 2015 edition. The letter style in the legend indicates a date somewhere around 1300.⁴⁶

Description

The main subject of the seal image is a building without figures. It consists of a central block with a round arched doorway and a tower-like structure above. To the sides there are slightly smaller blocks. The stone blocks in the walls are clearly drawn, and so are the tiles in the roof surfaces. The central tower has two round arched openings and a triangular rooftop. On the block to the left there is a small tower on the roof with two round arched openings at the base and triangular rooftop with a cross on top. The block to the right, on the other hand, has only a cross on the rooftop, which is slightly lower than the one on the right. Above that, as part of the background, is a sign of the moon and to the side of the small tower at the left is a star-like sign, the sun.⁴⁷ The difference between the elements on the left and the right side of the central block indicates a schematic side view of the church building, not a frontal one.

The discussion on the architecture and the cathedral building is in chapter 5.

⁴⁶ *Geistlige segl fra Hamar bispedømme*, 91-92. The documents the seal is attached to only state that it was the chapter seal of Hamar cathedral, there were no further specifications. See. DN I, nr. 940, nr. 1052, II, nr. 1022, VIII, nr. 723; Cat. of seals of Durham I, lviii.

⁴⁷ *Geistlige segl fra Hamar bispedømme*, 91-92.

Stavanger

Stavanger cathedral had two seals. The older one, Stavanger I, is preserved on letters from 1288 and 1307 and the younger one, Stavanger II, on letters from 1319 to the 16th century.⁴⁸

There is no overview edition yet on the Stavanger seals along the lines of the other Norwegian dioceses. However, the older seal has been described in detail by Oluf Kolsrud in 1933. His essay was incorporated into an edition on the Stavanger cathedral itself.⁴⁹

Stavanger I, first seal

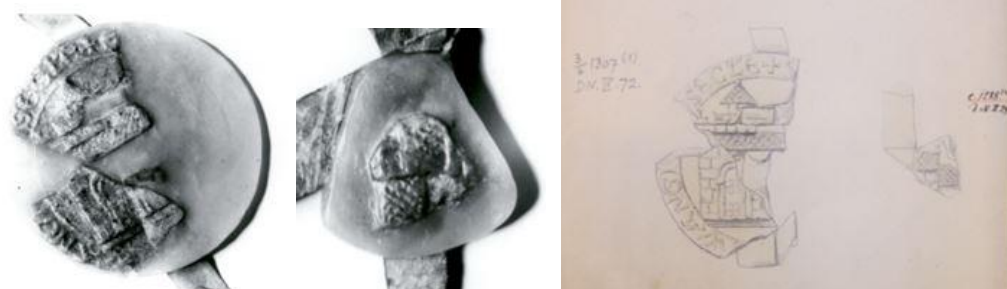


Fig. 9. Stavanger, first chapter seal (Stavanger I). Wax impression and 19th century drawing.

The preservation of the earlier Stavanger chapter seal is incomplete and therefore the whole seal design is not entirely visible. However, a fragment from 1307 presents more than half of the seal image. A smaller fragment, from 1288, presents another part, most likely the choir area. The diplomatic context of the larger fragment of the seal, from 1307, confirms that it is the chapter seal of Stavanger cathedral.⁵⁰

The smaller fragment from 1288 is more difficult to treat. It is attached to a will where Gaute af Tolga donates goods to many churches. It seems, however, that since he is giving and paying for stone-building parts in Stavanger cathedral, it is relevant that the members of the chapter mentioned are indeed the ones in Stavanger rather than Bergen. “varo her i hia aller korsbr/oe/ðr oc sattv her firi sitt insigli till vitnisbvrðar.”⁵¹

Drawings which were made of the seal fragments in the late 19th century were compared by Kolsrud in 1933 to the remaining wax fragments before restoration work on the seals which slightly obscured some details. He confirmed that the drawing truly interpreted what could be

⁴⁸ *Riksarkivet Oslo*, Segltegninger, kirkelige segl B, Stavanger.

⁴⁹ *Stavanger domkirke. En historisk-arkeologisk utredning*. Stavanger: Foreningen til norske fortidsminnesmerkers bevaring, Stavanger afdeling, 1933.

⁵⁰ “Ollum monnum þeim sem þetta bref sea æða h/oe/yra j Klepskirkiu sogn. senda korsbr/oe/ðr i Stafangre q. g. ok sina. ver vilium yðr kunnikt gera ... Ok till sanzt vitnisburðar setto ver firi þetta vart bref ok forboð vart insigli er skrifat var j Stafangre” DN IV, nr. 72.

⁵¹ DN II, nr. 24. Here it is important to bring forward that the donation is to St. Swithun “till Svithvns kirkiv gef ek korsbr/oe/ðrom .vj. manaðama- tabol i Griothæimi. við þvisa mote at br/oe/ðr skolo halda artið mina oc aller till ganga með vikariis a hværimv xij manaðom æfenlega. sva skolo þæir ok lata ringia at staðenom oc vm b/oe/nn. En till kirkivnar iattar ek sva miklv sem bref mitt vattar þat er liggr i Vtstæini. till krostvkæ gef ek sva mikit at stvkan verði vp gor oc hvælfð oc stæind”

detected in the wax fragments.⁵² This gives a trustworthy ground for the description of the seal image.

Description

The main subject of the Stavanger I seal is a side view of a church building with a tiled roof and a small tower above. On the ground level, there is a round arched doorway to the left. Although now not visible on the wax itself, the 19th century draughtsman interpreted the walls as made up of large stone blocks. In the small fragment from 1288 it is difficult to tell if it consists of some of the same parts of the roof as in the larger fragment or if it shows a different part of the church building as suggested by the draughtsman. What is left of the legend reads: "S ... WANGE ... S ECLE".⁵³

The type of building presented in the seal image, is a Romanesque style stone church with a southern round arched doorway with a door with decorated ironwork, indicating which way the door opened. On top of the tiled roof there is a type of tower structure, whose interpretation is discussed in detail in Kolsrud 1933.⁵⁴ Because of the state of preservation of the seal, the choir area is only visible in the smaller fragment from 1288 but the fragment from 1307 presents almost half of the seal, what is to be interpreted as the western part of the church, seen from the south.

Further discussion of this seal and its architecture is in chapter 5.

Stavanger II, second seal



Fig. 10. Stavanger, second main seal, wax impression and a 19th century reconstruction drawing from various fragments.

⁵² Kolsrud, "Tillegg," 29. "Ved foretagen sammenligning med de i 1930 uforandret bevarte originale segl viste tegningen sig å være omhyggelig og nøiaktig utført, med riktig opfatning av enkelthetene." Engl tansl. (GH): "In comparison between wax seal and drawing, ... The drawings seemed to be an accurate interpretation of the items on the wax fragments. The wax fragments are in AM Dipl. Norv. Fasc. XXX, 17 and XXXI, 28. On the drawings see: *Geistlige segl fra Hamar bispedømme*, 15-16. The drawings of the older Stavanger seal were made by H. Thorsen and preserved in Segltegningsamlingen in Riksarkivet, Oslo. The period he drew seals was 1871-1898.

⁵³ Kolsrud, "Tillegg," 30.

⁵⁴ See Kolsrud, "Tillegg," "Tillegg," 29-47.

The younger Stavanger seal is preserved in several wax fragments attached to charters dating from 1319 to as late as 1581.⁵⁵ The seal draughtsmen in the 19th century used several of these fragments to make a reconstruction drawing where these pieces are put together and present a complete appearance of the seal and its legend.⁵⁶ According to the reconstruction drawing, the legend reads: "SIGILLVM...RINITATIS : STAVAN...ENSIS : ECCLESIE"

Description

This description is based on the drawing made after the wax fragment from 1581 but with the assistance of the fragments from 1319 and 1320, as well as the reconstruction drawing. The image consists of a church building in gothic style with a central structure containing figures on two levels and on ground level.⁵⁷

The seal image consists of a symmetrical church building with figures inside. At the bottom there is a row of stone blocks which form a base for the building as well as the figures on the ground level. In the centre is a transept or tower-like structure. There, in a niche on the ground level, is a sitting figure, clad in episcopal vestments with a mitre on the head, a staff in the left hand and the right hand raised in blessing. To the left and right are two tonsured men, holding one book each. Between the straight niches are trefoils and above the middle ones two quatrefoils. At the gables of the church structure there are trefoil shaped openings in the centre and a small circle above. Columns of the same type as the one that frame the centrepiece separate the niches with the figures.

On the second level in the transept or the tower-like structure, above a Romanesque style arcade, is a figure with a large halo, a book in the left hand and the right one raised in a blessing position, most likely meant to represent God the Father.

On the third level of this tower-like structure is a bell hanging from the rooftop which is crowned with a battlement. The roof of the church building has diamond pattern with alternating flowers and crosses inside the diamond forms. On top of both side gables are bird images, probably weathervanes. Above the roof, on each side of the centrepiece, are flying angels with thuribles. Further discussion of this seal and its architecture is in chapter 5.

⁵⁵ Kolsrud, "Tillegg," 41.

⁵⁶ *Riksarkivet Oslo*, Segltegninger, kirkelige segl B, Stavanger

⁵⁷ Kolsrud, "Tillegg," 41.

Oslo



Fig. 11. Oslo, chapter seal, matrix (mirrored) and 19th century drawing.

The chapter seal of St Hallvard cathedral in Oslo is both preserved as a matrix and in wax impressions, which date from 1299 to 1436. The matrix is now in the Kulturhistorisk museum Oslo, nr. C 35007 but was earlier in National Museum Copenhagen, DNM 11078. It measures 76 mm in diameter, and the legend reads: "S CAPITVLI ECCLESIE SANCTI HALWARDI DE ASLOIA". The image consists of a gothic cathedral building with figures inside and angels with thuribles above.⁵⁸

Description

The design of the chapter seal of Oslo cathedral consists of a side view of a building (or a house formed shrine), either way clearly representing a church, with figures inside. When viewed from an impression, the west front is to the left and the east end the right. At the bottom there is a row of stone blocks which form a base for the building, as well as the figures on the ground level. Although off-centre, what is clearly the transept of the church building forms an emphasis in the design. On the ground level, there is a sitting figure, with a crozier in the left hand and the right one raised in a blessing position. To the left of the transept, there are four niches and to the right there are three. These seven standing figures are all with tonsured heads and wearing capes, representing the canons of the cathedral chapter. The two next to the transept are facing the sitting figure, the middle one on the right is facing away from that point towards the end figure to the right which is facing forward. On the left part, the end figure is facing inwards towards the transept and the two in the middle are facing forward. On the second level in the transept there is a figure with a large halo, dressed in a toga. There is a small dove on the figure's right shoulder and a globe by the left shoulder. This can be interpreted as a representation of Christ, as king with the Holy Spirit. Above the building, two winged angels

⁵⁸ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 31-33; Hammervold, "Seglstamper og produktionsteknikker," 52.

are shown in the act of censuring. Signs of sun and moon are in front of them to each side of the transept.

The church building itself is high gothic in style and is presented in a side view, with the choir in the east end to the right and the west front to the left. Above the niches over the heads of each chapter canon, there are quatrefoils, which seem intended to represent clerestory windows. In between them are small turrets, probably intended to represent parts of the side wall or the flying buttresses. The roof of the church itself has diamond pattern with dots inside and some along the ridge. The west gable to the left has a circle around similar quatrefoil as on the side, indicating a rose window. At the top or the end of each buttress, gable and turret there are small crosses, the biggest ones on top of the west gable, the turrets at the transept and the one by the choir at the east end. Above the Christ figure in the upper niche of the transept is a tripartite arch within the gable, and above it there is a tall spire with a weathervane at the top.

In his thesis on the ecclesiastic seals of Oslo diocese, Hallvard Trætteberg suggests that this is a second seal of St Hallvard church and provides evidence for the existence of an earlier chapter seal mentioned in documents from 1224 and 1226 and possibly made around 1200. However, no traces seem to have survived of this seal.⁵⁹

This discussion was indirectly continued by Virginia Glenn in her article from 2002. Glenn made a comparative study of the second chapter seal of Dunkeld, which dates to the late 13th century, and the chapter seal of Oslo. She brought forward some interesting elements the two seals have in common based on stylistic analysis of the general design elements. She came to the conclusion that these two matrices, Dunkeld and Oslo, as well as the town seal of Leiden, were made by the same workshop..⁶⁰ Glenn explored the connections between Scotland and Norway in the 13th century, including the many threads of diplomacy between these areas, leading to a suggestion on that these matrices may have been made in Paris⁶¹ around the same time as the treaty between Norway and Scotland in 1293. ⁶² This is close to Trætteberg's conclusion on the age of the Oslo matrix. He suggests a date between 1285 and 1289, after a similar exploration of Norse-Scottish diplomacy at the time as mentioned above.

An example of these Norse and Scottish connections at the time, is that King Eirik Magnusson (king 1280-1299) was married to Margaret daughter of Alexander III of Scotland and later to Isabella Bruce, grandchild of the Scottish king Robert Bruce.⁶³ There had also been

⁵⁹ Trætteberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 31.

⁶⁰ Glenn, "The late 13th-century chapter seals," 441, 445.

⁶¹ Glenn, "The late 13th-century chapter seals," 446.

⁶² Glenn, "The late 13th-century chapter seals," 445-452.

⁶³ Glenn, "The late 13th-century chapter seals," 445.

delegations from Norway to Scotland in preparation of the peace at Perth in 1266 and again in 1269 at Winchester.⁶⁴ Further discussion of this seal and its architecture is in chapter 5.

Kirkwall



Fig. 12. Kirkwall, chapter seal, matrix (mirrored) and impression.

The chapter seal of St Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall is preserved both as matrix and in wax impressions. The matrix is in the National Museum of Scotland (H.NM 114) and is 75 mm in diameter. The legend reads: SIGILLVM CAPITVLI ORKADENSIS ECCLESIE SANCTI MAGNI and the letters are Lombardic in style.⁶⁵ The seal image consists of a porch-like structure with a central figure, who had been identified as St Magnus, and two flanking accompanying ones inside a tripartite architectural framing.⁶⁶

Description

The seal image is composed of three arcades or gables with figures placed in each one of them. The central gable is formed by tall columns to the sides, which accentuate the centre and the figure below. The figure stands on a console vested in a mantle which reaches over its shoulder. The figure is bearded with shoulder length hair and holds a sword. The other arm is obscure because of the folds in the garment it is wearing. The tracery decoration in the gable turns into almost a crown-like effect over the head of the figure. On the roof of the gable is a foliage decoration and above that rises a structure accentuated by vertical lines, and the tapered roof above has a dotted texture. The gables to the sides are of equal height to the central one, and they have similar type of ornament, only slightly different beneath the gable, but the same kind of foliage above. The figures in the side gables are kneeling in prayer, each one towards

⁶⁴ Trætterberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme," 76.

⁶⁵ Glenn, *Romanesque & Gothic decorative metalwork*, 121-123.

⁶⁶ Glenn, *Romanesque & Gothic decorative metalwork*, 121-123.

the centre, and they are vested in hooded garments and seem to be tonsured. Above these gables are also structures but simpler than the one in the centre. All these structures have clear points or dots where outlines are connected. Both the rims of the legend have a pearl-band shape.

2.3. Royal chapter seals

Under the initiative of King Håkon Magnusson, there was a formation of clergy assemblies in connection with churches at the Royal estates. There were 14 royal churches, but, according to a papal letter from 1308, four Royal churches were granted the status of collegiate churches with assemblies of clergy. These were the Church of the Apostles in Bergen, church of St Mary in Oslo, the church of St Michael in Tønsberg and the St Olav's church in Agvaldsnes. Seals from the latter two seem not to be preserved, but the ones of the church of the Apostles in Bergen and St Mary in Oslo are.⁶⁷

Bergen

Church of the Apostles (Apostelkirken)

The Church of the Apostles held a highly prestigious position in the royal and ecclesiastic context in Bergen. It had three building phases, the earliest version perhaps in timber, founded around 1110, but the second version was built in stone and consecrated by the papal legate, Cardinal Bishop Guillaume of Sabina in 1247. The earliest impression of the chapter seal dates from this second phase of the church. This is a clear example of direct cultural contact between a peripheral archdiocese and the centre of ecclesiastic government in Rome. The third version of the church of the Apostles was built on behalf of king Magnus Håkonsson (*lagabætir*) and consecrated in 1302. That one was modelled on the St Chapelle in Paris and even had a piece of the precious Crown of Thorns relic, which had been acquired from King Philip III of France.⁶⁸

The seal of the chapter of the royal church of the Apostles (Apostelkirken) in Bergen is preserved in wax impressions dating from at least 1380. (fig. 13. a.) It is ca 52-53 mm diameter, and the legend reads: "CAPIT...IE APOSTOL CAPELLE REGIS ...RW...SIS BERGIS." This is based on drawings made while the state of conservation was better than now.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Trættemberg, "Kapitelsegl," 271-273.

⁶⁸ Trættemberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme," 79; Lidén & Magerøy, *Norges kirker: Bergen*, 137-138; DN XII, nr. 8: "korsbrødhir at Postola kirkiu incigle sith"

⁶⁹ Trættemberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme," 79. According to Trættemberg and DN the seal is missing to the charter, but the fragment in the photograph is attached to AM Dipl Norv. Fasc. C, 9b which is referred to in DN I, nr. 465.

Description

The image depicts a scene from the narrative of the Pentecost.⁷⁰ Because of the state of preservation, the image is difficult to describe. According to the drawing, (fig. 13. b.) the scene appears to be the one where the apostles received the Holy spirit. Judging from what is left of the wax fragment, the seal seems to have been a work of good quality.



Fig. 13. a.-c. *Apostelkirken*, chapter seal. a. Wax fragment b. 19th century drawing; c. The seal of cardinal Annibale Annibaldi.

Discussion

Representation of the Pentecost is quite uncommon in seal images in general. It is for example not present among the preserved seals from England and Wales discussed by Elizabeth A. New in her article on Biblical imagery in seals from those areas.⁷¹ A similar scene to the one of the chapter seal of the Apostle church in Bergen is in the seal of a Cardinal Annibaldo Annibaldi from 1270, (fig. 13. c) who was appointed to a church dedicated to the Twelve Apostles. In both cases the dedication of the churches presents itself in the iconography of these seals.⁷² Other examples of churches which have a dedication to the Apostles or the Pentecost are St Aposteln in Köln and the Church of 12 Apostles in Rome and in Constantinople. This type of iconography is rooted in the byzantine tradition of church council iconography.⁷³

⁷⁰ Trættemberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme," 79, 102.

⁷¹ See, New, Elizabeth "Biblical imagery on seals in medieval England and Wales, 451-468. New does not mention this motif among the ones mapped in the seal material from England and Wales.

⁷² Gardner, "Some cardinal seals," 83, pl. 10k; "The architecture of cardinal seals," 449.

⁷³ See: Walter, *L'iconographie des conciles*, 204-209.

Oslo

Church of St Mary (Mariakirken)



Fig. 14. Mariakirken, chapter seal. Matrix and 19th century drawing.

The seal of the Royal chapter in Oslo is preserved both as matrix and in wax impressions. It is 52 mm in diameter and preserved in the Kulturhistorisk museum in Oslo (C35008), but earlier in the National Museum in Copenhagen (11079). The wax impressions are preserved attached to documents dating from 1344 to 1542. The legend reads: S' ECCL'IE. BE. VIRGINIS CAPELLE REGIS. NORWAGIE OSLOEN.⁷⁴

The church of St Mary in Oslo was made into a royal chapel around 1308, which makes the preserved matrix no older than that.⁷⁵ In fact, it is an interesting example of both clear dating and long use of a chapter seal.

Description

The seal image consists of a standing St Mary with the child. The crowned figure stands in an elegant, swayed position and the folds of her garments form an accent to the posture. To her right side is a kneeling crowned king figure holding a church model, and to her left there are four tonsured canons, also kneeling. The Virgin's right hand is blessing the church model, which is made of a central block with towers to each side and a large one in the middle. An open round arched doorway is in between the lower side towers, which end in a cross as well as the central tower.⁷⁶ Above the figures is a tripartite canopy, where each section is also tripartite in a clear gothic style. Above the canopy is an arched building with tiled roof and gables to both ends. The overall design of the seal is in high artistic quality, and the whole iconography is very relevant to the circumstances. That is, the king, as the patron of the St Mary in Oslo, offering a representative of the church to its patron saint and the canonical community kneeling in prayer to her.

⁷⁴ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 36-38.

⁷⁵ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 36-38.

⁷⁶ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 37, 126.

2.4. Monastic chapter seals

The overview of the chapter seals from the monasteries in Norway and Iceland are arranged first by dioceses in a topographical order: first the Norwegian ones and then the Icelandic ones. Within each diocese the arrangement follows the monastic rules in their order of age, which places the Benedictines first and the Franciscans/Brigittines last. The relatively brief descriptions are followed by further analysis in the conclusion chapter.

Nidaros

Nidarholm, Benedictine, Cluniac



Fig. 15. Nidarholm, chapter seal. Wax impression and 18th and 19th century drawings.

The Benedictine Nidarholm abbey was founded around 1100 and was dedicated to St Laurence. It was founded by a *lendeman* of king Magnus *barefoot*, Sigurd ullstreng (*woolstring*). This is the oldest monastic foundation in Norway and belonged to the Cluniac subdivision of the Benedictine rule.⁷⁷

The chapter seal is round, 62 mm in diameter and is preserved in wax impressions attached to charters dating from 1281 to 1516. On the published wax impression, what is left of the legend reads: “S CAPI... HOLM”. However, the seal image is also preserved in various drawings where the legend has been fully spelled out and reads: “S: CAPITVL'I STI : BENEDICTI : DENIDARHOLM :”⁷⁸ In the letters the seal is attached to, it is most often referred to as “our seal”, but sometimes the chapter and sometimes the convent. The example of the use of the word convent is from 1516: “Till ytther meer sanningh her om henghe wi wart jnsigell och conuentess nedhen for thetta breff”.⁷⁹ An example of the word chapter is in a document from 1280 where it is phrased in latin: “nos Gyrido et Arno monachi et procuratores

⁷⁷ Bratberg, “Nidarholm kloster,” 7-8; Lunde, “Klosteranleggene,” 113; Lange, *De norske klostres historie i middelalderen*, 200-201; DN III, nr. 16.

⁷⁸ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 111-113; MS 75 8^{vo}.

⁷⁹ DN I, nr. 1050. In another example from 1307 there is similar phrasing which indicated that this is not directly linked to late medieval examples as can be observed in this phrase: “nos prior et conuentus supradicti sigilla nostra”. DN III, nr. 66.

conuentus cenobij Holmensis sigillum nostri capituli.”⁸⁰ Here the word *conuentus* is used for the community itself at the same time as *sigillum capituli* for the seal itself.

Description

The seal image consists of a round church building with round-arched central doorway, flanked with four round towers. The main building is presented with a clear and regular square pattern representing the stone blocks of the building. The roof of the central building consists of vertical stripes, and it seems that the roofs of the towers are represented in a similar way although it is not clear enough judging from the wax impression. Instead of stone blocks, the fabric of the towers consists of round openings on five levels, three openings on each level on the towers at the front but it is less clear on the ones in the back. On each of the conical roofs is a knob out of which a Latin cross is extended. The background is clear and without any pattern or ornamentation. No figures are presented in this seal image.⁸¹

Bakke, nunnery, most likely Benedictine



Fig. 16. Bakke chapter seal. Wax impression and 19th century drawing.

The nunnery at Bakke was founded sometime in the 12th century and is thought to have been of the Benedictine order.⁸² The seal of the community is preserved in wax impressions dating from 1432 and 1536. It is 50 mm in diameter, and the legend reads: “S COVET ... LIV ECCES DE MARIE DE BACCA.” All the letters S in the legend are mirrored. It is also interesting that the word *capituli* is not used but *convent* is instead. This is a variation which is apparent occasionally in the monastic seal material.

Description

The seal image consists of a seated and crowned St Mary with a child within an architectural frame. The frame has composite columns to the sides and a trefoil arch above. The floral

⁸⁰ DN III, nr. 16.

⁸¹ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 111-113.

⁸² Lunde, “Klosteranleggene,” 115.

decoration of the frame reaches up into the legend and the central one forms the signum at the start of the legend. The base of the seat is decorated with small, dense arcades. The garments of the Virgin flow in broad and lofty folds over her slightly tilted feet. This motif type has been stylistically dated to around 1300.⁸³

Helgeseter I, Augustinian, older seal

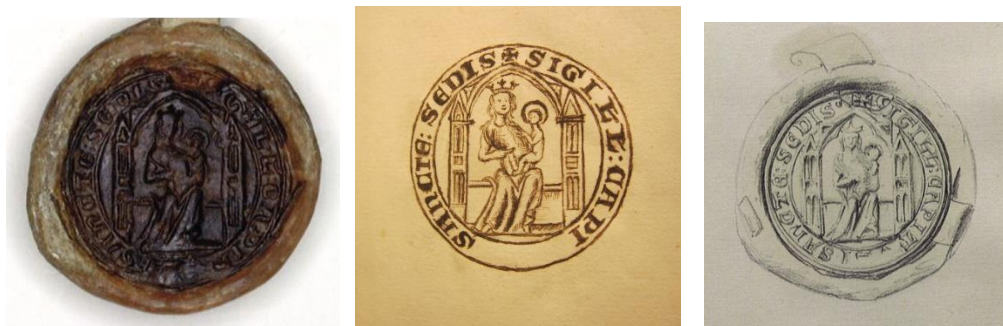


Fig. 17. Helgeseter, older chapter seal (Helgeseter I) Wax impression and 19th century drawing.

The Augustinian Helgeseter abbey was founded by archbishop Øystein. The exact year is not known, but no later than 1183 when it was first mentioned in written sources. The abbey was closely tied to Nidaros cathedral, and its buildings were involved in the power struggles between king Håkon Håkonsson and his earl Skúli.⁸⁴

The earlier Helgeseter seal is preserved in only one example, attached to a document dating from 1281. It is slightly damaged on the edges, so the diameter has been estimated to have been around 43 mm. Because of this damaged state of preservation, the legend is not legible. According to the drawing made in the 19th century, there is only the remains of LL which would form part of the word sigillum. Despite the poor state of preservation, the overall design is visible, and it is of the same iconographic type as in the Bakke seal, that is, a seated Virgin Mary with the child set in an architectural frame.⁸⁵

Helgeseter II, Augustinian, younger seal



⁸³ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 122-123.

⁸⁴ Lunde, "Klosteranleggene," 114.

⁸⁵ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 124-125.

Fig. 18. Helgeseter, younger seal (Helgeseter II). Wax impression and 18th and 19th century drawings

The younger version of the chapter seal of Helgeseter survives in wax impressions attached to documents which date from 1309 and 1540. It is ca43 mm in diameter and the legend is well preserved: “SIGILL : CAPI ... SANCTE : SEDIS”.

Description

The image consists of a seated and crowned St Mary with the child placed within an architectural setting. She is sitting in a tilted pose with the flowing folds of the garment around her tilted feet. A halo is detectible around the head of the child. The architectural setting is different from the seals of Bakke and the earlier Helgeseter. Here, there are tower-like structures to both sides which are connected by fine trilobe pointed-oval roof structure. The tower-like structures to the sides consist of two stories of double arched pattern and have gables on top.⁸⁶

Dominicans



Fig. 19.

The Dominican house in Nidaros was founded in 1234⁸⁷, and its common seal is preserved in several wax impressions. The earliest one is from 1281 and the latest from 1307. It measures 50x30 mm and the legend reads: “S CONVENTUS FRATRVM PREDICATORVM DE NIDROSIA,” as interpreted in the drawing which is based on many individual fragments of different parts of the seal.⁸⁸

The seal is pointed oval in form, and the image consists of two sitting figures, a St Olav with an axe and an archbishop with mitre and crozier. Below this hagiographic scene are three tonsured heads, representatives of the Dominican community.

Other monastic houses in Nidaros diocese

The monastic chapter seals from Nidaros diocese which are not preserved according to the present knowledge are the ones from the Cistercians in Munkeby and Tautra, the Franciscans in Nidaros and the nunnery in Rein, which was of unknown order.

However, in some instances the seals of the officials of these abbeys are preserved, such as Tautra.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 125-126.

⁸⁷ Lunde, “Klosteranleggene,” 116.

⁸⁸ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 133-134.

⁸⁹ Observation of the author.

Bergen diocese

Munkeliv, Benedictine



Fig. 20. Munkeliv, chapter seal. Wax impression and 18th and 19th century drawings

The Benedictine Munkeliv abbey was founded by king Øystein Magnusson early in the 12th century and consecrated to St Michael.⁹⁰ Its chapter seal is preserved in only one wax impression attached to a document from 1420. It is 55 mm in diameter and the legend reads “S’ CO ... ENT MON SCI MICHAEL ... OI ... S”. Drawings made in the 19th century and the earlier 18th century provide better readings of the legend than is possible through the preserved wax impression.⁹¹ The rule was changed into Brigittine in the 1420s.

Description

The chapter seal of the Benedictine Munkeliv consists of a gabled building with additional block (transepts?) on each side, all on three levels. The side blocks are shown in a primitive perspective. At ground level there are three arches with a figure in each. In the centre, a slightly trefoil pointed arch, or niche contains a figure of St Michael and the dragon. In the niches, slightly smaller but similar in form, to both sides are kneeling figures; the one to the left is holding a crozier, and the other figure is less clear but seems tonsured. Above the level with the figures is a storey with 6 narrow round arches in the centre and two larger on the side of the side blocks. The top level consists of clear Romanesque style arches in the block in the centre an again two on each side of the side blocks. Each block has triangular gables with a band of decoration beneath and a pattern in the central gable. The details are not completely clear on the wax impression, but there is an interpretation of it in the drawings which were made in 18th and 19th century when the state of preservation may have been better than today. To both sides of the building are winged figures holding censers.

For the Bridgettine version of the Munkeliv seals after the 1420s, see discussion on Hovedøya after conversion to the Bridgettine order.

⁹⁰ Lunde, “Klosteranleggene,” 102.

⁹¹ Trættemberg, “Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme,” 79-80.

Further discussion of this seal and its architecture is in chapter 6.

Lyse, Cistercian



Fig. 21.

The only known documentation of the seal of the Cistercian Lyse abbey is in Lange's monastic history from 1847. According to the drawing, what is left of the legend reads: "OR ... SANCTE AB." Estimated size is ca 53 mm. The image consists of a seated Virgin Mary with the child set in rich architectural framework. St Mary wears a crown over a long veil, and she is vested in a large garment with floating folds. The Christ child is standing beside her with a halo surrounding his head. To the sides there are aisle-like elements as in church building with tracery at the top. Above the head of the St Mary is multi-gabled roof with pinnacles. To the sides of the architectural structure is a floral pattern.⁹²

Hallvard Trættemberg suggests ca. 1340 as stylistic dating for the seal image, which is in tune with regulations within the Cistercian rule. In the early Middle Ages, the communities of the rule were not allowed to have a chapter seal, but that changed after 1335 when it was allowed by the general chapter. Such seals should all have the same iconographic content, that is a seated St Mary, with or without an architectural setting.⁹³ It is of interest in this context that Lyse abbey was the daughterhouse of Fountains abbey in Yorkshire in England.⁹⁴ However, it also had strong affiliation to Alvastra abbey in Sweden.⁹⁵ This is discussed further below.

Halsnøy helligåndskloster, Augustinian

Fig. 22



The seal of the abbey of Holy Spirit in Halsnøy is only preserved as drawing made for the first edition of Lange's history of monastic houses in Norway from 1847. According to the drawing, the legend reads: "S' CAPITVLI : MONASTRII : SANCTI : PARACLITI". The seal image consists of a representation of the Trinity in the form of an iconographic type, which is usually referred to in Christian iconography as the *Throne of Mercy*. This motif

⁹² Trættemberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme," 83, 107.

⁹³ Trættemberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme," 83; Hallberg, Norberg, Odenius, "Benediktinernas, Cluniacensernas och Cisterciensernas ämbetssigill," 60, 65-66.

⁹⁴ Lunde, "Klosteranleggene," 108; Nybø, "Lyse kloster," 170-171.

⁹⁵ Hallberg, Norberg, Odenius, "Benediktinernas, Cluniacensernas och Cisterciensernas ämbetssigill," 58.

emerged in France in the 12th century, hand in hand with a growing passion devotion and later spread to Germany and further North. This is generally perceived as a late medieval motif.⁹⁶

In the seal of Halsnøy, God the father sits on a rainbow with the crucified Christ in his lap. Usually there is an image of dove in the scene as well, but it appears omitted in this drawing. The God the Father figure is in a frontal position but with abundance of folds of the garment around the forward pointing feet. To the right and left of the figure is the sun and moon placed on an ornamented background that fills the whole space. This motif is in tune with the dedication of the monastery to the Holy Spirit, which was founded by Erling Skakke (*the scew*) in 1163/64 near Hardangerfjord, by then a central position (but only first mentioned in preserved written sources in 1287). Hallvard Trættemberg suggests a stylistic dating for the seal as ca 1250-1300.⁹⁷

Dominicans



Fig. 23.

The communal seal of the Dominicans in Bergen, which was founded around 1235, is only preserved as a drawing made for the first edition of Lange's history of monastic houses in Norway from 1847. The form of the seal is pointed oval, and the measurements 54x32 mm have been observed before the original got lost. According to the drawing, the legend reads: "S CONVENTVS BERGEN ORD FRM PREDICATOR."⁹⁸

The image space is divided into two parts by a tall, thin column supporting a church model with a tall, round tower on top. To the right of it is a figure which is identified as St Olav, according to text in a banderole above the figures head. To the left of the central column is another figure, likewise identified as St Erik. The background behind the figures is ornamented with continuous diamond pattern. Beneath this scene in a double arched niche are four kneeling tonsured figures, representing the community of the friars. Trættemberg suggests around 1280 as a stylistic dating for the seal.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Kilström, "Nådstolen," 416.

⁹⁷ Trættemberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme," 82-83, 106; Lunde, "Klosteranleggene," 107-108.

⁹⁸ Trættemberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme, 80-81, 104.

⁹⁹ Trættemberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme, 80-81, 104.

Olavs-kloster Vågsbotn, Franciscans



Fig. 24. *St Olav abbey, Bergen (Olavskloster, Vågsbotn)*

The Franciscan house in Bergen (Olavskloster, Vågsbotn) was founded during the reign of king Håkon Håkonsson (d.1263), but the exact date is not known. The community took over an older church in Vågsbotn, which was made into the cathedral of Bergen after the Reformation.¹⁰⁰

The chapter seal of the abbey is preserved both as matrix in the University Museum in Bergen (Universitetsmuseet i Bergen) (nr. 151) and in wax impressions. It is the only Norwegian monastic matrix preserved. It is 40 mm in diameter and the legend reads: “S CONVENTVS FRATRVM MINORVM BERGVVS.”

The design is placed within a quadrilobe space and presents an enthroned St Olav. It is some kind of investiture scene where angels hand him the attributes of kingship and martyrdom, the crown and the axe. The king’s figure has a frontal position and sits on an ornamented but simple throne. The angel on his right hands him the axe and both angles place a crown on his head. The wings of the angels are curiously placed; one turns down, parallel with the angel figures while the other rise above St Olav’s head, forming a sort of an accent to the divine blessing hand which reaches the down from above. The stylistic dating provided by Trættemberg according to the letter types in the legend is ca 1280.¹⁰¹

On other monastic houses in Bergen diocese

The monastic houses which do not seem to have preserved chapter seals are the ones from the Benedictine Selja, the Cistercian Nonneseter, which was changed into Antonine house in 1507, and the Augustinian St John’s priory (Jonskloster).¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Lunde, “Klosteranleggene,” 106-107.

¹⁰¹ Trættemberg, “Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme, 81-82, 105; Vea, “Litt om klosterseglene”, 224.

¹⁰² Observation by the author.

Stavanger diocese Utstein, Augustinian

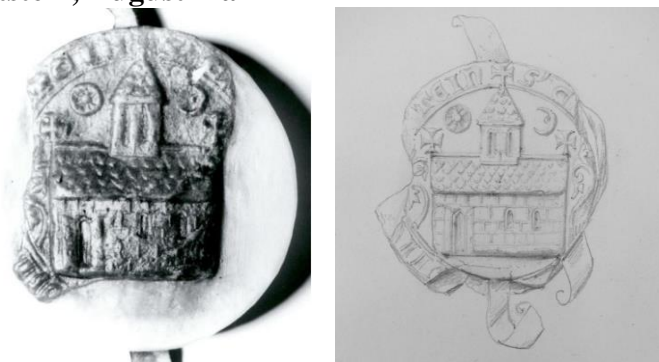


Fig. 25. Utstein, chapter seal. Wax impression and 19th century drawing.

The abbey was founded during the reign of king Magnus *lagabætir* (1263-1280) and was dedicated to St Laurence. It was based on an earlier foundation, the Augustinian Olavskloster, which was operating in the 12th century and then moved to Utstein. Little is known of the earlier foundation, and there is no information on any seal.¹⁰³

The chapter seal of the Augustinian Utstein abbey is preserved in wax impression from 1387 and 1444, and the legend reads: “S’ C...II ...TEIN.”¹⁰⁴ The documents the seal is attached to refer to it as chapter seal. It is interesting that in both documents the words convent and chapter are used together and in one of them, the abbot writes: “setti conuentan j Wtzstæini sitt capituli jnsighli.”¹⁰⁵ In both documents there is the use of the phrase “capituli jnsighli.”¹⁰⁶

Description

The seal consists of an image of a church building with a centrally-placed roof tower. A round arched doorway is to the left and two round narrow windows to the right. The fabric of the wall is represented in clear blocks of stone and the roof of some type of shingles. The tower on the ridge has two narrow round arched openings and a triangular roof with the same pattern as the church roof. This clearly represents a longitudinal view of a church with a door on the south side with Greek crosses extending above each gable and the tower. Above the ridge of the roof there is a stylized sign of the sun on the left of the tower and a sign of the moon to the right. To each side of the church gables there is a plant ornament stretching out from the ridge of the legend. No figures are represented on the seal. Further discussion of this seal and its architecture is in chapter 6.

¹⁰³ Lunde, “Klosteranleggene,” 100-101; Lange, *De norske klostres historie i middelalderen*, 377-378.

¹⁰⁴ *Riksarkivet Oslo*, Segltegninger, kirkelige segl B, Stavanger, Utstein; Fett, “Studier over middelalderens norske sigiller,” 91.

¹⁰⁵ DN IV, nr. 537.

¹⁰⁶ DN IV, nr. 892. There, the invocatio is: “Veer Henrik mæder gudz tolmoodh abothe j Wsteine capitulum oc conuentu brødher þær sama stadz helsom...” and the comment on the sealing in the end is: “Till meira visso sette varer brødher þeira capituli jnsigle mæder waro firir þetta bref”.

Hamar diocese

There is documentary evidence from 1511 of a Dominican house in Hamar, possibly in connection with the cathedral. As far as is known, no seals are preserved deriving from that house.¹⁰⁷

Oslo diocese

Gimsøy, Benedictine nunnery



Fig. 26. Drawing in Lange. – Drawing of fragment from 1413.

The seal of the Benedictine nunnery in Gimsøy has a hazardous preservation history. The best-preserved original was lost in a fire in 1766. Before that, the seal was drawn and published as an engraving. However, a few small fragments are left of the seal from various points in time, for example one from 1413. The seal measured ca 60-62 mm in diameter and the legend reads: “SIGILLVM CAPITVLI GYMSØY.” In the etch, the A in the legend is misinterpreted as M.¹⁰⁸

The seal image consists of a Crucified Christ on a simple cross, and the background is set with stars. Traits in the Christ-figure renders it gothic in style, and it is unusual to have the Crucifixion scene without St John and St Mary.¹⁰⁹ Trættemberg suggests a stylistic dating ca 1300.¹¹⁰ The nunnery at Gimsøy was founded in the middle of the 12th century by Dag Eilivsson, lendeman of Sigurd Jorsalafari.¹¹¹ According to the image type and the letters in the legend, the seal could have an even earlier date than Trættemberg suggests.

¹⁰⁷ Lunde, “Klosteranleggene,” 98; DN IV, nr. 1055.

¹⁰⁸ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 59-60, 139.

¹⁰⁹ New, “Biblical imagery,” 458-459.

¹¹⁰ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 59-60, 139.

¹¹¹ Lunde, “Klosteranleggene,” 99; Lange, *De norske klostres historie i middelalderen*, 456.

Dragsmark, Premonstratensian, (Mariaskog kloster)



Fig. 27.

The seal of the Premonstatensian Mariaskog kloster i Dragsmark is preserved in two known wax impressions, both dating from 1492. It is ca 40 mm in diameter and the legend reads “S CONVENTVS SCE MARIE DE DRAXMARC.”¹¹²

This seal image consists of a seated crowned Virgin Mary with the child within an architectural frame with trilobe formed roof. To each side there are columns or symbolic side aisles with gables on top. The tower-like structure above the head of the St Mary reaches up into the legend, marking its starting point. Trættemberg proposes the year span 1300/1350 as a stylistic dating and comments that the church-like structure does not have correlation with the ruins still visible at the site.¹¹³ The image is strikingly similar in composition to the second chapter seal of the Augustinian Helgeseter.

Dragsmark monastery was founded by king Håkon Håkonsson (d.1263)¹¹⁴, so that the stylistic dating may indicate that it was made soon after the foundation of the house.

Tønsberg, St Olav's priory (Olavskloster), Premonstratensian



Fig. 28. 19th century drawing of the seal fragment.

A small fragment of the lower part of the chapter seal of St Olav priory in Tønsberg (Olavskloster) is what is now preserved of the seal. The folds and the feet in the wax fragment could be interpreted as a St Mary just as well as a St Olav, but an observation by Lange before 1847 when the fragment was in a better state of preservation confirms that the figure was holding a globe in one hand, which is a clear indication of St Olav. The dedication of the monastery to St Olav further supports that interpretation. Judging from the drawing, the feet of the sitting figure are in a slightly tilted position with rich broad folds falling over them. The background appears ornamented, and a star or a flower is visible on an undefined fine pattern. The only visible part of the legend reads: “I : OLAVI”¹¹⁵ In the letter this fragment in the drawing is attached to, the seal is referred to as “conuænz jnsighli”.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 60-61, 140.

¹¹³ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 60-61, 140.

¹¹⁴ Lange, *De norske klostres historie i middelalderen*, 473.

¹¹⁵ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 55-56, 135.

¹¹⁶ DN I, nr. 365.

The St Olav priory in Tønsberg was founded before 1191 and was the first house of the Premonstratensian order in Norway. It was founded directly from the mother house in Premontre in France.¹¹⁷ An excavation in 1970-1971 revealed a round church, which is the largest one of that kind in the Nordic countries. The abbey church is the only round Norwegian one.¹¹⁸

St. Olav's priory (Olavskloster) Dominican



Fig. 29.

The Dominican St Olav priory (Olavskloster) in Oslo was founded before 1240, which means it falls on the reign of Håkon Håkonsson and most likely founded by him. Possibly it was founded along with the other Dominican houses in Bergen and Nidaros around 1230.¹¹⁹

The communal seal of the house is preserved in several wax impressions dating to the years 1373 and 1461. The seal is pointed oval in form and measures 55x32/33mm. The legend reads: “S FRM PDCATORVM CONVENT ASLOEN” and the band beneath the throne reads: “S OLA W S REX”.¹²⁰

The image consists of two parts; in the upper one is an enthroned St Olav. The seat has dragonheads to the sides, and the human figure holds a sceptre in his right hand. In the lower part there is a group of friars, representative of the community of the monastery. Trættemberg refers to this seal image a local production and a climax in the medieval Norwegian seal production.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Lunde, “Klosteranleggene,” 98-99; Lange, *De norske klostres historie i middelalderen*, 446-447.

¹¹⁸ Lunde, “Klosteranleggene,” 98-99; Ekroll, *Med kleber og kalk*, 169-170.

¹¹⁹ Lange, *De norske klostres historie i middelalderen*, 436-438.

¹²⁰ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 54, 134. In the text of the documents with the seal attached it is referred to as “sigillum conventus nostrum”, DN II, nr 431.

¹²¹ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 54, 134.

Franciscans, Oslo



Fig. 30.

The abbey of the Franciscans in Oslo was founded on royal support shortly before 1300.¹²² The communal seal is preserved in only one incomplete example from 1482. The seal was pointed oval, and its original size is estimated as ca. 44 x25/26mm, but the size of the fragment is 39x18mm. What is left of the legend reads: “... ASLOENSIS...” The image is poorly preserved, and the only item visible in the drawing of the seal is a suppliant cleric.¹²³

Franciscans, Marstrand



Fig. 31.

The Franciscan house in Marstrand (now belonging to Sweden) was founded by the end of the 13th century, clearly after 1277, but is first mentioned in 1291.¹²⁴

The seal of the Franciscans in Marstrand is pointed oval in form and 45x28 mm in size. It is preserved in only one example, attached to document from 1423. The legend reads: “S CONENTVS FRA MIN ORV I MALSTRAND”. The image consists of a Bible scene from Luke 2:22-39 that tells of Jesus as a young boy in the Temple. The Jesus child is standing on an altar facing St Mary to his right and old Simeon to his left. Above is a roof structure with tripartite arch underneath, and the cross of the gable reaches up into the legend thus forming the cross where the inscription starts.¹²⁵ This way of depicting the Christ child on the altar can be interpreted as a foreshadowing of the real-presence of Christ in the host. This scene, the *Presentation of Christ in the Temple*, is a rare iconographic type in the seal context, but another example of it happens also to be from a Franciscan house, the one in Exeter in Southern England.¹²⁶

¹²² Lunde, “Klosteranleggene,” 92.

¹²³ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 54-55, 134.

¹²⁴ Lange, *De norske Klostres Historie*, 486; Moorman, *Medieval Franciscan houses*, 291.

¹²⁵ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 61-62, 141.

¹²⁶ *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 61-62, 141; Hallberg, Norberg, Odenius, “Franciskanska ämbets-och konventssigill,” 79. The three authors interpret the figure to the right as Josef and not a priest in the temple. Therefore they suggest that the iconography is not the presentation at the temple. They changed their interpretation in a later publication, see: Hallberg, Norberg, Odenius, “...tillegg om Fransiskanernas,” 18. I think Trættemberg and the later interpretation of the three authors are right in interpreting the figure with the halo as Simeon which is part of narrative in Luke 2:22-39.; New, “Biblical imagery,” 456.

Franciscans, Tønsberg



Fig. 32.

The Franciscan convent in Tønsberg was founded by King Håkon Håkonsson (†1263) and was the location of the important consensus between the church and the king, generally referred to as the treaty of Tønsberg in 1277.¹²⁷

There are two preserved examples of this communal seal, (fig.) one from 1485 and the other from 1535. The seal is pointed oval in form and measures 62x40 mm. The legend, in minuscule, reads: “s firm mi oru : conve tiis : tansbergens”. The image consists of a St Catherine of Alexandria, with the wheel by her feet, inside an architectural setting, a nave of a church with side aisles. Trættemberg suggests 1400/1450 as stylistic dating.¹²⁸ The central frame is supported by a conical console, almost renaissance in form, and is closed at the top with three tall pinnacles. The side aisles are on upper level and are in the form of double windows with traceries and pinnacles on top.

These three Franciscan seals all have the same form: they are all pointed oval and have depictions of saints or Biblical scenes. The iconographic motifs are discussed in larger context in the conclusion of chapter.

Bridgettine houses, Hovedyøya/Munkeliv

Munkeliv, after changing to Bridgettines order in 1426 and the temporary residence at Hovedøya

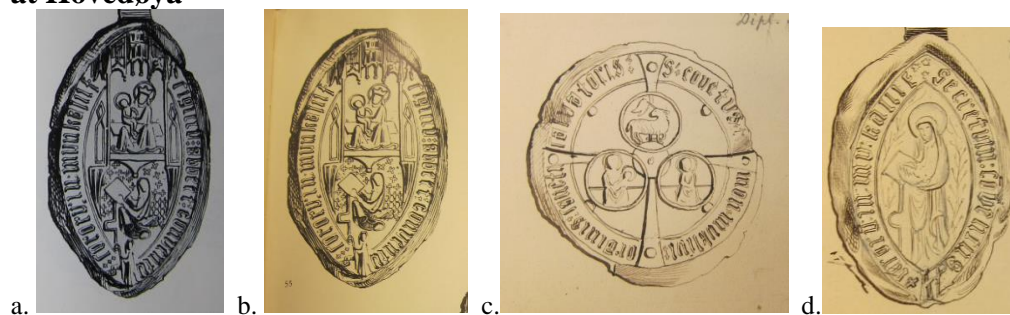


Fig. 33. a.-d. Bridgettines, in Bergen and Oslo. The Oslo house used the Bergen version.

In the Bridgettine order, there were double convents with both monks and nuns. The former Benedictine Munkeliv in Bergen was changed to the Bridgettine order in the 1420s and founded

¹²⁷ Lunde, “Klosteranleggene,” 97; Moorman, *Medieval Franciscan houses*, 478. There it is only referred to as before 1291.

¹²⁸ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 56-57, 137. The seal is referred to as convent seal in one of the text of the document it is attached to although that copy of the seal is now lost. See DN XI, nr. 253.

by monks directly from the mother house in Vadstena. It can be considered fully established in 1427. Although Munkeliv was the only Bridgettine house in Norway, the order had temporary stay at Hovedøya in Oslo diocese after a fire in Bergen in 1455. Meanwhile, the Cistercians of Hovedøya occupied and rebuilt the Munkeliv complex in Bergen.¹²⁹ The same seals, were, however, in use during this time; there is just the variation of location where sealed. The legends are always the same.

The seals of the Bridgettine order were somewhat different from those of the older orders. The chapter seal was a combined seal of the abbess and the convent. Such seal for Munkeliv is preserved in one wax impression (fig. 33 a) attached to document from 1478. There, it is referred to as “conuentz jncigle”.¹³⁰ It measures 73 x 40 mm and the legend, in minuscule, reads “sigillu abeet conuentu sororu in munkaliif”. This same seal (fig. 33 b) was used during the Bridgettines stay in Hovedøya in 1466-1479.¹³¹ The image has two main elements. In the upper part, a St Mary in an architectural framework, and in the lower part there is the figure of St Bridget by a lectern. The veiled figure is by a lectern and the background is ornamented with small crosses.

The convent of the brethren had a different communal seal (fig. 33 c) which was round and 54 mm in diameter. The legend, in minuscule, reads: “S covetus mon mu klivii ordinis sancti salvatoris”.¹³² The image consists of the three main elements: The Lamb of God, St Mary and St Brigitta, each placed in circles which are triangularly arranged on a clear background. In addition to this, there are dots, symbolic of blood drops of Christ. The circle in the centre could be interpreted as the Host.¹³³

The seal of the sisters (fig. 33 d) is preserved in wax impressions from 1474, 1480 and 1495. It is pointed oval and measures 50x31mm. The legend in miniscule reads: “secretum conventus sororum in munkalif.” The image consists of a St Bridget standing at a pulpit with a halo around her head. Below is a miniature abbess figure with a staff.¹³⁴ In two of the documents it is attached to it is only referred to as seal and in one: “conuentz jncigle” without a specification.¹³⁵

¹²⁹ Lunde, “Klosteranleggene,” 102; Lange, *De norske klostres historie i middelalderen*, 53-65; 289-303.

¹³⁰ DN VIII, nr. 403; Trættemberg, “Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme,” 107.

¹³¹ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 52.

¹³² Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 52-53, 133. The actual name of the rule of what was later called Bridgettines is the Savior’s rule. Lange, *De norske klostres historie i middelalderen*, 55. The legend of this version of the convent seal bears witness to that, “ordinis sancti salvatoris”.

¹³³ Trættemberg, “Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme,” 84, 108.

¹³⁴ Trættemberg, “Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme,” 83, 107.

¹³⁵ DN I, nr. 905, nr. 982, XII, nr. 248.

Other houses without preserved seals

Fig. 34



As far as we can tell, there are not preserved chapter seals from the following houses in the Oslo diocese although some seals of their officials are preserved: Hovedøya as Cistercians, the Benedictine Nonneseter, the Johanniter Varna (the only one of that rule in Norway), the Augustinians and the Franciscans in Kunghälla.¹³⁶ However, there is a seal with the Annunciation scene (fig. 34) without a clear origin which may or may not be from one of these houses.

Concerning the Cistercians at Hovedøya, it is worth mentioning that its earliest abbot's seal (fig. 35 a) has an unusual form where the abbot's figure is not frontal but is shown in a three-quarter or profile view. This is similar in style to the unique type in the seals of some Scottish bishops in the early 13th century, (fig. 35 b) first introduced by Bishop Roger of St Andrews (1198-1202)¹³⁷ Hovedøya was a daughter house of Kirkstead, which was a daughter-house of Fountains.¹³⁸

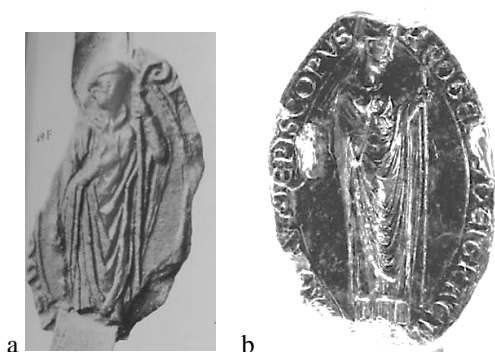


Fig. 35 a-b. Non-personal abbot's seal of Hovedøya ca. 1250– Bishop Roger of St Andrews (1198-1202).

In addition to this it should also be noted that a matrix was found in the neighbourhood of Hovedøya by metal detectors in 1983 and now in the Kulturhistorisk museum (C35857). It is pointed oval and measures 41x22 mm. Because of the unclear context and unclear appearance of the matrix, it cannot be commented on at this point.

Skálholt diocese

In the two Icelandic dioceses, Skálholt founded in 1056 and Hólar in 1106, there were only two monastic rules, the Benedictines and the Augustinian.

¹³⁶ Lunde, "Klosteranleggene," 85-128 and the observation of the author of this thesis.

¹³⁷ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme* 49-50, 131; Glenn, "Glasgow, Italy and France," 42-43.

¹³⁸ Lunde, "Klosteranleggene," 88.

Kirkjubæjarklaustur, Benedictine nunnery

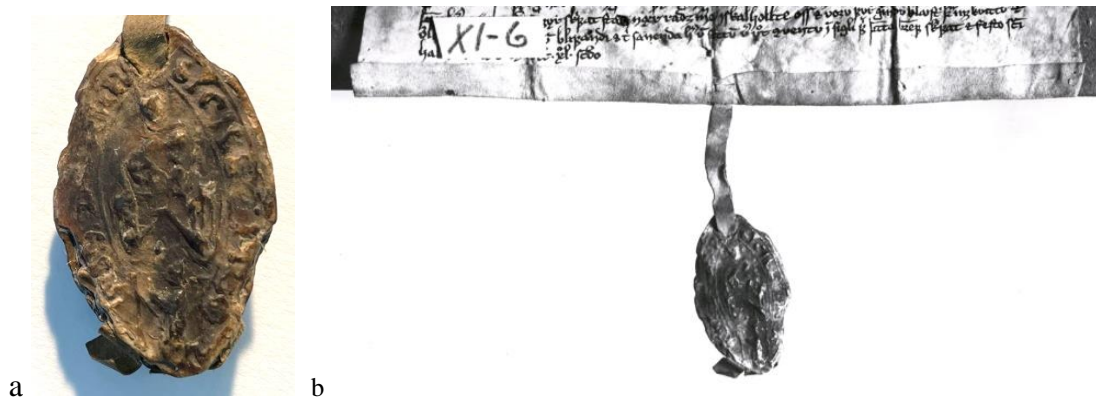


Fig. 36 a-b Kirkjubæjarklaustur chapter seal?

The intended chapter seal of the Benedictine nunnery at Kirkjubæjarklaustur exists in one wax impression which is in a very poor state of preservation. It is pointed oval in form and measures 40x25 mm, and the image consists of what appears to be a figure of St Mary with the child in the upper part and a figure kneeling beneath under an angled structure. The seal is attached to a letter dated to 1442 where it is clearly stated that the sisters attached their chapter seal to the letter. It is also clear that the letter only had one seal attached to it.¹³⁹ (fig 36. b) This is a hagiographic type of seal where the saint occupies the upper part and the seal owner is represented in a niche below. The single suppliant figure in the niche under St Mary visually points to a seal of an individual, in this case the abbesses. This is unlike some seals of communities where more than one figure is represented under the saints' scene, for example in Olavskloster in Oslo where a group of friars is represented below the saint. Because of the limited state of conservation there is not a clear answer to these speculations.¹⁴⁰

What is left of the legend is now hardly legible but could possibly be interpreted as "SIGILL S(ororum) ... KIR." Árni Magnússon documented the seal in the 18th century and interpreted it as: "SIGILLU : PRIO RIS D KKB".¹⁴¹ This has to remain a speculation, but in the document to which the seal is attached, it is referred to as "conventv jnsigli".¹⁴²

¹³⁹ DI IV, 625-626, nr.670. AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. XI, 6.

¹⁴⁰ Although there is an English example where the seal of an individual was used as a common seal it may not be applicable in this situation. Harvey and McGuinness, *A guide to British medieval seals*, 96.

¹⁴¹ AM Dipl. Isl. Apografa, 2966.

¹⁴² DI IV, 625-626, nr.670.

Viðey, Augustinian



Fig. 37 a-b. Viðeyjarklaustur, chapter seal. Wax impression and 18th century drawing.

Viðeyjarklaustur abbey was founded in 1226 by chieftains Þorvaldur Gissurarson and Snorri Sturluson and was of the Augustinian rule. According to the observations of Árni Magnússon in *Sigilla Islandica*, this is most likely the chapter seal of that monastery. However, the drawing was made from a wax fragment which was already detached in the days of Árni Magnússon, but it was at that time in the context of letters from Skálholt.¹⁴³

This loose wax fragment (fig. 37a) turned out to be still preserved, and I discovered that it was in Rigsarkivet in Copenhagen. It must indeed be the same as drawn by or on behalf of Árni. The measurement of the fragment is very close to the size of the drawing, or 44 mm, while the drawing measures 40mm. The drawing (fig. 37b) is therefore slightly reduced compared to the wax impression, but still close to the scale 1:1.¹⁴⁴ The legend, which Árni Magnússon was able to record before it was eroded, reads: “SIGILLVM CAPITVLI FRATRUM DE V...” but because of this lack of attachment to a document and the missing few letters of the legend, Árni speculated about whether the seal belonged to the chapter of Viðey or Ver (Þykkvabæjarklaustur was in the region Álftaver or Ver in South-East Iceland). Due to the known dedication of Viðey to St Mary, Árni Magnússon suggested that Viðey was the more likely one of the two.¹⁴⁵ The dedication of Ver is not known.¹⁴⁶

The image consists of a seated Virgin Mary with the child, set in a quadrilobe frame of threefold lines with cusps in between the lobes. St Mary is represented with both crown and a halo, and the Christ child has a halo around his head. The throne has high armrests to each side, and some items are shown there above, a floral element on her right and something which could be a chalice or a monstrance to her right, beside the Christ child.

¹⁴³ *Sigilla Islandica* I, 136-139.

¹⁴⁴ *Sigilla Islandica* I, 139. In the cases where there is a possibility of comparison of seal drawings and preserved wax imprints, the drawings in *Sigilla Islandica* seem to be made in approximately 1:1. The diameter of this seal image can be interpreted as fairly accurate.

¹⁴⁵ *Sigilla Islandica* I, 136-139.

¹⁴⁶ Cormack, *The saints in Iceland*, 169, 233.

Other houses in Skálholt diocese without preserved seals

The early houses of Bær (1030-1049) and Hítardalur (1066-1201/37) were operating at a period from which there is not a general preservation of seals. Concerning other monastic houses without a preserved chapter seal there are a number of abbots' seals preserved. For example from Flatey (1172-1184)/Helgafell (1184-1543), Þykkvibær (Ver) (1168-1538) and Skriða (1193-1554). As far as we can tell, there are no preserved chapter seals from these houses. However, some abbot's and prior's seals are preserved from these houses.

Hólar diocese

Reynistaðarklaustur, Benedictine nunnery



Fig. 38 a-b. Reynistaðarklaustur, chapter seal. Wax impression and 18th century drawing.

The Benedictine nunnery at Reynistaður was founded by Bishop Jörundur in 1295. The seal is preserved as a detached wax fragment (fig. 38a) which I discovered in Rigsarkivet in Copenhagen, but it is better known from a drawing made on behalf of Árni Magnússon in the 18th century published in *Sigilla Islandica*. The drawing (fig. 38b) was made after a wax impression, which, by then, was still attached to a charter dating from 1459. Although detached now, it may still be the impression the drawing was made from. The charter itself still exists with some other seals attached. The diameter of the wax fragment is 34 mm but 32-33 mm of drawing. This suggests that the drawing is made approximately in the scale 1:1. The legend reads: "S ' * CAPITVLI * REVNS * MONA".¹⁴⁷ This is a solid witness to the important documentation work Árni Magnússon made on the Icelandic seal material.

Description

¹⁴⁷ *Sigilla Islandica* I, 222-223, DI V, bls. 192-193.

The image consists of a single building, which is reminiscent of a stave church where dragonheads rise out to the sides from the gables of a tower-like roof structure. A square form with a broad horizontal band is at the base and on top of that, a patterned roof with dragonheads to each side. In the middle of the roof, which seems to have shingles on it, is a smaller square structure with vertical lines and swaying forms to each side in the same direction as the dragonheads. In the middle of the top of this is a thin pole reaching all the way up to the legend. As presented in the drawing, the large structure with the dragonheads is placed at the front but in the back, there are vertical lines on what appears to be a lower part of a building. This could therefore be interpreted as a church gable with a vertical boarding. Therefore, the seal image as a whole seems to contain a composite design where a church gable with vertical banding forms a background and a different structural element is placed in front of it. That structure in the forefront could either be a detached bell tower (ísl. *klukknaport*) or a roof tower (nor. *takryttare*). These two items, the gable and the tower-like structure seem to be presented from different points of view. There are no figures involved, just the architectural elements.

Pingeyraklaustur, Benedictine



Fig. 39 a-b. Pingeyraklaustur, chapter seal. Wax impression and 18th century drawing.

The chapter seal of the Benedictine abbey of Pingeyrar, the first monastic house in Iceland, founded in 1133, is documented in a quite well-known drawing published in *Sigilla Islandica*. (fig. 39b) Additionally, the seal exists in several less known wax impressions (fig. 39a) dating from 1424 to the reformation in Hólar diocese in 1550.¹⁴⁸ Comparison of the wax impressions with the 18th century drawing, provides valuable information on the accuracy of the drawing. The legend reads: “S : CAPITVLI : THINGVRIS.”¹⁴⁹ Measurement of the edges of the legend in the wax impressions turned out to be almost the same as the diameter of the drawing, or around 40 mm but in the drawing it was 38 mm. In addition to the examples from Viðey and

¹⁴⁸ *Sigilla Islandica* I, 165; AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. VIII, 10, L, 23, LI, 25.

¹⁴⁹ *Sigilla Islandica* I, 163-165.

Reynistaður, this is a strong indication that the drawings made for Árni Magnússon and published in *Sigilla Islandica* were made close to the scale 1:1.¹⁵⁰

Description

The seal image presents a gable or a west front of a church building. It has a large round arched doorway and massive and textured side turrets. On top of each turret is a pinnacle with a leaf like cross on top which reaches the legend and forms part of it. The edges of the gable are thick, and it also has a leaf-like cross on top of it, which is incorporated in the legend above. Between the doorway and the side turrets there are X-shaped patterns. In the drawing, there are two on the right, or the south side, but there seem to be three on the left, or the north side. In one of the preserved wax impressions the third X could be interpreted, making the seal design fully symmetrical. In the gable over the doorway there is also a larger X shape. No special ornament is detectable in the seal image, and it consists of a building only, no figures involved.

Munkaþverárklostur, Benedictine

The Benedictine monastery at Munkaþverá, founded in 1155 by bishop Björn Gilsson, and is the only house from which there are two versions of the chapter seal preserved: an earlier one in one wax impression attached to a charter from 1375 and a later one preserved in wax impressions from the later 15th and 16th centuries. Neither of these seals are published in *Sigilla Islandica*.

Munkaþverárklostur I, first seal



Fig. 40 a-b. Munkaþverárklostur I, first seal. Wax impression and digitized “line drawing.”

¹⁵⁰ This is the observation of the author. There are variations in this, so just measuring the drawing can give 37-40 mm according to where the diameter is taken. The same applies to the wax impression.

This earlier seal of Munkaþverárklaustur is preserved in one wax impression attached to a document dating from 1375.¹⁵¹ It is 35 mm in diameter and the legend reads: “SIGILLVM CAPITVL...”. This is the only known copy of this seal and the name of the monastery is not readable. The diplomatic context, however, secures the identification of the seal.¹⁵² It is referred to as chapter seal (“kapitula jnnsigli”), although the brethren are addressed as brothers of the convent (“conventvbræðr”).¹⁵³

Description

The seal image presents a basilica-shaped church building at a three-quarter bird’s eye view. The south side of the building is divided up into five bays. The building has turrets on each corner ending in a type of broad pinnacle or a spire. The aisle roof and the main roofs have diamond pattern impressed on them and the wall parts on the aisles as well. At the west front is a large arched doorway. There could be a hint of cresting along the ridge of the roof. There is only the building within the frame of the legend, no outer decoration or figures involved.

Munkaþverárklaustur II, second seal

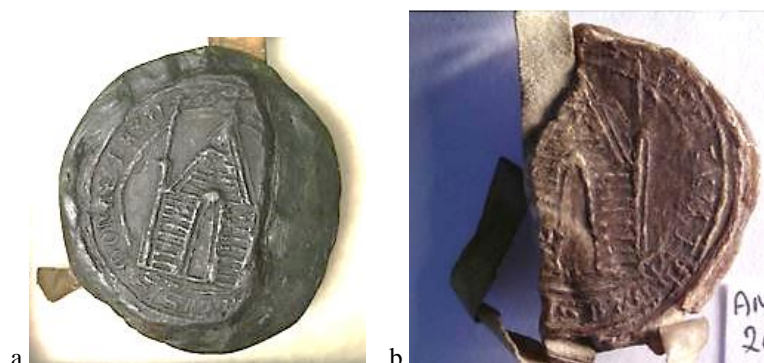


Fig. 41 a-b. Second chapter seal from Munkaþverárklaustur abbey (Munkaþverá II). Two wax impresions.

The second seal of Munkaþverá abbey (fig.) is preserved in several wax impressions attached to documents dating from the 15th and 16th centuries. It measures 37-39 mm in diameter and the legend reads: “.L VM... APIT..SIS MONAST...”¹⁵⁴

Description

The seal image consists of a large church gable with a large round-arched doorway. To the sides there are decorated turrets, and the ridge of the gable has a similar texture. The top parts of the turrets seem to have a slimmer end, reaching to the ridge of the legend. The gable itself

¹⁵¹ DI III, 297-298, nr. 242.

¹⁵² Guðrún Harðardóttir, "Myndefni íslenskra klausturinnsigla," 220-222.

¹⁵³ “ok varir conventvbræðr sitt kapitula jnnsigli” DI III, 297-298, nr. 242.

¹⁵⁴ Guðrún Harðardóttir, "Myndefni íslenskra klausturinnsigla," 220-221.

has horizontal pattern, and in the top of it is either some damage to the matrix or this might be a slight hint of a trefoil. The discrepancy in the horizontal pattern is visible in those wax fragments where the gable is visible. No other decoration or figures are involved in the design.

When the earlier and the later seals from Munkaþverá are compared, it is evident that the craftsmanship in the earlier one is of better quality. The three-dimensionality of the Munkaþverá I is quite unusual, also in a larger context, while the frontal later one is almost primitive in some details, such as the border-rim itself around the legend. Munkaþverá II has some parallel in the Þingeyraklaustur seal. Both are frontal and the turrets to the sides are quite similar

Other monastic houses in Hólar diocese without preserved chapter seals

Two monasteries from Hólar diocese are without preserved chapter seals. One is the early house of Saurbæjarklaustur (ca. 1200-1224) and the other is the Augustinian Möðruvallaklaustur (1296-1551). It is of interest that in a number of charters where the other Hólar houses are sealing with their chapter seals, there is only the seal of the prior at Möðruvellir (fig.). It is also of interest that is not a personal seal but remains unchanged through a long time, similar to many of the chapter seals. It can therefore be argued that it was used as a communal seal which was representative of the community at Möðruvellir and not only the prior's. Its legend is well preserved and reads: "S PRIORIS MONASTERIS MODROVOLL."¹⁵⁵ Examples of the seal are from long range of time, for example 1449 and 1512.¹⁵⁶ Lack of chapter seal at Möðruvellir may have something to do with the status of the monastery which was closely connected to the bishop of Hólar.¹⁵⁷



Fig. 42. Möðruvallaklaustur, impersonal prior's seal.

Other dioceses

Monastic seals from the Scottish islands which were part of the Nidaros diocese have not yet been identified according to the present state of knowledge. They will have to be left out of this study. The same applies to the preservation of possible chapter seals from Garðar diocese

¹⁵⁵ Guðrún Harðardóttir, "Myndefni íslenskra klausturinnisigla," 212-213.

¹⁵⁶ *DI* VIII, 413; *AM Dipl. Isl.* Fasc. XLI, 11.

¹⁵⁷ Through my work on the Norwegian and Icelandic seals, I have not come across a proper chapter seal of Möðruvellir. But this anonymous prior's seal was in long use, similar to many chapter seals.

in Greenland and Kirkjubour diocese in the Faroe Islands. I hope to be able to work on that material as another project at some point.

2.5. Subsidiary chapter seals

The preservation and or edition of subsidiary seals of both cathedral chapters and monastic chapters in the Norwegian and Icelandic part of the archdiocese seems to be rather limited. Here is the presentation of what is available of that material.

Cathedral chapters

Nidaros

As explained in the introduction on the Nidaros cathedral chapter seal of dignity, the disputes between Archbishop Jørund and the canons of the chapter had some impact on the cathedral's seal material. Erla Hohler has presented plausible explanations of the variations in the Nidaros seals, including those representing the St Olav figure.¹⁵⁸

Seal I of St Olav



Fig. 43

The oldest version of a St Olav's seal, from before the disputes between the chapter and the archbishop, is attached to a document from 1225. The image is composed of a sitting figure with a sceptre, interpreted as an image of a St Olav, and no legend is preserved. The seal is preserved only in a fragmental state, so the image is not complete. The one example of this seal is attached to a charter from 1225, which does not specify what type of seal it is.¹⁵⁹ The size of the fragment indicates that the seal must have been of similar size as the later versions of the St Olav's seals of the cathedral, which measure 56mm. The figure clearly presents a figure with royal authority.¹⁶⁰

Seal II of St Olav– Three versions

A. On documents from 1263/4 to 1281

¹⁵⁸ See Hohler, Erla B. "The re-engraved matrix: Bishop versus chapter in Nidaros around 1300." In *Good Impressions. Images and Authority in Medieval Seals*, edited by Noël Adams, John Cherry, and James Robinson. London: British Museum, 2008. Hohler, Erla Bergendahl. "The Re-engraved Matrix. Bishop v/s chapter in Nidaros around 1300." *Collegium medievale* 22 (2009): 111-127.

¹⁵⁹ It is referred to as "staðarins innsigli" DN I, nr. 8.

¹⁶⁰ Hohler, "The re-engraved matrix," 78; *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 97-98.

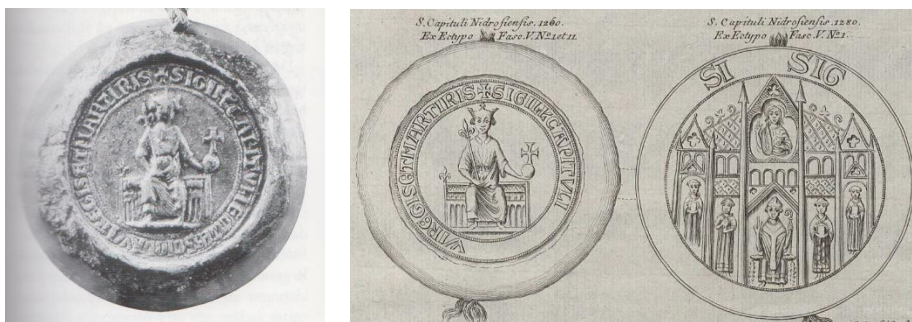


Fig. 44 Seal II of St. Olav version A. Wax impression and 18th century etches that present clearly that this seal is pressed onto the back of the main seal with the church image.

The image of this version of the St Olav's seal consists of a seated crowned figure, with a sceptre in his right hand and a globe in his left. The seat has arched structures to the sides of the feet of the figure. The background is clear, without any decoration. The seal measures 56 mm in diameter and the legend reads: "SIGILLVM CAPITVLI ECCLESIE SANCTI OLAWI REGIS ET MARTIRIS".¹⁶¹

This version of the seal is preserved in four wax impressions attached to documents from 1263/4, 1277 and two from 1281. In all these documents the seal does not have specifications in how it is referred to. Examples of that are: "sigilla nostra" and "vart insigli".¹⁶²

The same applies to this type of the St Olav's seals as the main seal of Nidaros cathedral, it exists in two versions, an original one is without flowers and a younger one with flowers to the sides of the head of the figure.

B. On a document from 1303

Fig. 45



This version of the St Olav's seal measures ca 58 mm in diameter and the legend is incomplete: "IES(C)...IOLAWI ...TI..." It has been assumed to be the same as in the other St Olav's seals. Although the image is fragmentary, it is clear that it presents a seated royal figure which is designed very similar to the earlier seal from before 1300. In the background, towards the right elbow of the figure, there is a star or a flower and the figure is sitting on a throne very similar to the one in the earlier seal. This version of the seal seems to have been made after the Archbishop Jørund

¹⁶¹ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 99-100.

¹⁶² DN I, nr. 59, II, nr. 17, III, nr. 16, nr. 22.

(1288-1309) took both the main seal and the St Olav's seal with him during a severe dispute between the canons of the chapter and the archbishop.¹⁶³

In the documents themselves it is referred to as: "sigillum nostrum commune" and "sættokorsbrødr commons insigli sitt" so its further categorisation is not specified.¹⁶⁴

C. On documents from 1307-1448



Fig. 46. Version II, c of the St. Olav's seal. Matrix and 18th century drawing.

This version of the St Olav's seal is preserved as bronze matrix in the Vitenskapsmuseum, Trondheim, NTNU (T 1504), as well as in numerous wax impressions attached to documents dating from 1307 to 1448. It measures 56 mm in diameter and the legend reads: "SIGILLVM CAPITVLI ECCLESIE SANCTI OLAWI REGIS ET MARTIRIS".¹⁶⁵ In most of the documents the seal is attached to, it is referred to as simply sigillum, but in the oldest version, from 1307, it is a counterseal to the large seal with the church building which is labelled as great seal: "til sanz vitnisburðar vm þetta a lændar sættom ver firir þetta bref vart mæira commons insigli."¹⁶⁶ This fact makes it reasonable to count these St Olav's seals rather as subsidiary than main seals.

St. Andrew seal

This St Andrew seal (fig. 47a) only exists in post-Reformation examples but is considered to date from late 15th century according to its style. It is curious that the seal of the Nidaros cathedral chapter no longer has St Olav as a subject, but there seems not to be a clear explanation of this. It measures 37 mm in diameter and the legend reads: "SIGILLV CA...IT ... NIDROSIE" The letters N and S are mirrored.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 104-105; Hohler, "The re-engraved matrix," 78-79. The size in the text for fig. 6 is clearly an error, it was 2 mm wider in diameter to the type with and without flowers. The matrix itself measures 56 mm and the other is 58 mm.

¹⁶⁴ DN IV, nr. 57 and II, nr.68.

¹⁶⁵ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 104-103

¹⁶⁶ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 95; DN II, nr. 87.

¹⁶⁷ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 107-109.



Fig. 47 a-b. Nidaros, smaller seals.

Ad causas seal

A matrix, preserved in the Vitenskapsmuseum (fig. 47b) has the legend: “CAPITVLVM NIDRO AD CAUSAS”. It is 26 mm in diameter but no wax impressions are preserved. The image consists of a six petal rose called “Rosa Nidrosiensis” and this is the only chapter seal with this *ad causas* category in the legend. It is not included in *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*.¹⁶⁸ Much is unclear about the use of this seal and Trættemberg suggests that it dates from around 1600.¹⁶⁹

Bergen

The secret seal of Bergen cathedral chapter (fig. 48a) is preserved in two wax impressions attached to documents dating from 1524 and 1610 (paper). It measures ca 45 mm in diameter and the legend, in minuscule, reads: “s secretum capituli berge eccle.”¹⁷⁰

The image consists of the persons of the Trinity; God the father is holding a crucified Christ in his lap and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove is over Christ’s head. This is the *Throne of Mercy* type. Trættemberg suggests 1450/1500 as a stylistic dating for the seal and that seems quite plausible.¹⁷¹

Hamar

No subsidiary chapter seals seem to be preserved from Hamar.

Stavanger

The secret seal of Stavanger Cathedral chapter (fig. 48b) is preserved in one wax impression from 1445. The legend reads: “SECRETV... APITVLI STAV... RENS.” and across: “S

¹⁶⁸ *Unimus*, online catalogue, nr. T11789. Originally belonging to Bergen museum, documented in correspondence from H. Schetelig to Th. Petersen 19.12. 1917. This seal was not included in *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*.

¹⁶⁹ Trættemberg, *Domsigill. Norge: Domssegel, kgl. justissegel, sigillum ad causas*,” 224.

¹⁷⁰ Trættemberg, “Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme,” 77, 101.

¹⁷¹ Trættemberg, “Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme,” 77.

SVITVN” The letter to which the seal is attached does not indicate the type of the seal but only states that it was the seal of the chapter.¹⁷²

The image consists of a sitting bishop’s figure, which, by the inscription, is identified as St Swithun, the patron saint of Stavanger cathedral. The figure is vested and mitred with a crozier in his left hand, lifting the right one up in blessing. The throne he sits on has two animal heads and the background is ornamented in continuous diamond pattern.¹⁷³ The background and the types of garments point to an older age than the letter it is attached to; in fact, the background is similar to bishop’s seals dating from the first part of the 14th century, but the staff is typologically older according to the observations of Harry Fett in his overview of the Norwegian seals.¹⁷⁴ An additional point here is that there is some overall likeness of both figures and legend to the seal of Jón, bishop of Garðar (1343-1357), who later became the bishop of Hólar with a different seal.¹⁷⁵

Oslo

The secret seal of St Hallvard cathedral chapter in Oslo (fig. 48c) is preserved in several wax impressions dating from 1415 to 1546. It is 35mm in diameter and the legend reads: “SECRETV CAPITVLI ECCE ASLOE.” It is clear both from the legend itself as well as some of the documents the seal was attached to that it is really referred to as secret seal.¹⁷⁶

The image consists of a figure of St Hallvard holding his attributes, a mill stone and an arrow, set in an architectural frame. The figure wears a mantle and a cape, and the architectural frame it is set in is made of two narrow, but composite columns united with tripartite arch. The central one is also tripartite in a clear Gothic style. Trættemberg suggests 1290/1300 as a stylistic dating and points out that this would be the oldest representation of a St Hallvard in a seal image.¹⁷⁷

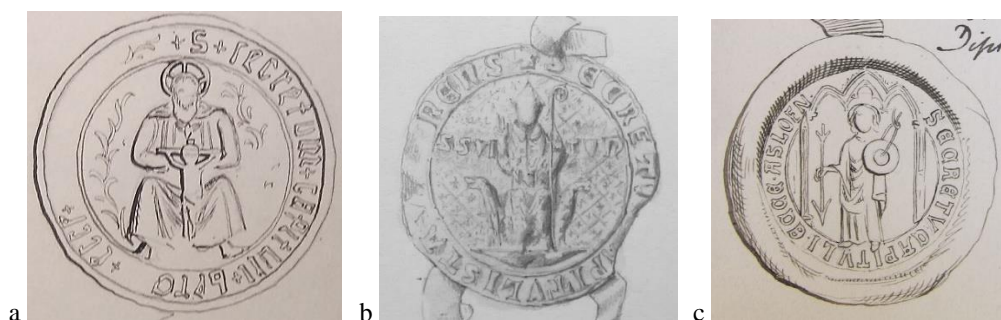


Fig. 48a-c. Secret seals of the cathedral chapters of Bergen, Stavanger and Oslo.

¹⁷² DN IV, nr. 894.

¹⁷³ *Riksarkivet Oslo*, Segltegninger, kirkelige segl B, Stavanger.

¹⁷⁴ Fett, “Studier over middelalderens norske sigiller,” 84.

¹⁷⁵ *Riksarkivet Oslo*, Segltegninger, kirkelige segl A, Grønland (Gardar).

¹⁷⁶ See for example: “wars capituli secreto henges firir þettæ bref”, DN II, nr. 635.

¹⁷⁷ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 33-34, 125.

Kirkwall

No subsidiary seals seem to be preserved from St Magnus cathedral.

Subsidiary seals of monastic chapters

Not much seems to be preserved of subsidiary seals of monasteries in Norway. I only example is the late medieval Bridgettine period in Munkeliv in Bergen which was also used in Hovedøya for a short period of time. No seals of this type seem to be preserved from Iceland.

2.6. Analysis of the chapter seals

This overview of cathedral, royal and monastic chapter seals in Norway and Iceland, both main seals and subsidiary ones, provides a ground to evaluate the material and map the imagery in these seals. It also forms a basis to answer the questions which were set forward at the beginning: What kind of pattern does the visual mapping of the seals form? That is, which seals are the most similar and in what areas are new stylistic features introduced (and where might they come from)? What can that reveal about the cultural exchange at each given period of time?

It is very clear that all the cathedral chapter main seals have a representation of building of some sort. These seals of dignity fall into two groups: one with building only and the other with building and figures. The royal chapter of the Apostelkirken (Church of the Apostles) in Bergen has a Biblical scene from the *Pentecost* and the St Mary in Oslo has a presentation of the Virgin and both in accordance with their main dedication. All these cathedral chapter seals are round in form and rather large in size, or 50-75 mm in diameter and the Nidaros chapter by far largest, or 85 mm in diameter.

The monastic seals are much smaller in size, mostly 35-60 mm in diameter and provide a greater variety of iconography. Their form is most often round with a few pointed oval exceptions. Most of them contain images of saints or Biblical scenes but some have images of buildings. The total amount of the monastic chapter seals discussed here is 27. To get some quantitative idea of the distribution of the iconographic motifs in the monastic material, there are seven of them with the Virgin Mary in some form as a main motif. In addition to that, St Mary occurs in joint motifs in one of the Bridgettine seals, and she is a part of Biblical scenes in three seals. They are the *Presentation of Christ in the temple* in the seal of the Franciscans in Marstand and the *Annunciation* from a house with unknown origin. The third Biblical scene is the *Crucifixion* in the seal of the Benedictine nunnery at Gimsøy, which often has a St John and St Mary involved but not in this one, which renders it an ancient type of this scene. All the seals with the Biblical scenes happen to be from Oslo diocese. Four of the monastic seals have

a figure of St Olav. They belong to the Dominicans in Nidaros, the Dominican Olavskloster in Oslo, the Franciscan Olavskloster in Vågsbotn, Bergen, and the Dominicans in the city of Bergen (partly). Other saints presented in the monastic material are St Erik in the Dominican Bergen seal (partly), St Catherine in the seal of the Franciscans in Tønsberg, Oslo, diocese and St Bridget in the Bridgettine seals of Munkeliv, Bergen/Hovedøya. One monastic main seal has a representation of the Trinity in the form of the *Throne of Mercy*, which belonged to the Augustinian Halsnøy in Bergen diocese.

The chapter seals with images of buildings are most interesting. They are all treated in detail in chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis and are therefore not commented much on here. In the larger context of all the monastic seals from the Icelandic and Norwegian dioceses, it is interesting to observe their distribution. There are relatively few monastic seals with buildings deriving from the Norwegian dioceses and relatively many Icelandic examples, which are all from Hólar diocese. The three Norwegian examples are from the Benedictine Nidarholm in Nidaros diocese and Munkeliv in Bergen diocese and then the Augustinian Utstein in Stavanger diocese. This is different in the material from the Icelandic dioceses, where there are four with buildings, all from Hólar diocese and all Benedictine and two with St Mary, both from Skálholt diocese, but one Benedictine and the other Augustinian.

Seals with St Mary

There is a considerable variety in the presentation of St Mary, and it is curious to group these images according to their visual or iconographic similarities. The seals of the Benedictine nunnery at Bakke, which was founded around 1150, and the older seal of the Augustinians at Helgeseter, which was founded around 1180, both in Nidaros diocese, have a similar type of image: an enthroned St Mary with a canopy above. The state of preservation of the two varies, where the Bakke seal is clear but only preserved in a late copy, attached to a document from 1432. The older Helgeseter seal is in a rather bad state but preserved in a much older copy or from 1281. Stylistically they seem to date from a similar period, and the date suggested for the Bakke seal is around 1300¹⁷⁸

It is quite striking how similar the later seal of Helgeseter is to the Premonstratensian Dragsmark in Oslo diocese. At first glance they seem almost identical, but the details, such as the canopies, are clear enough to determine that they are not made from the same matrix. Despite being miles apart, they may have originated in a similar period and a shared taste by the monastic houses which commissioned them. The monastery at Dragsmark is founded

¹⁷⁸ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 122-125.

during the reign of Håkon Håkonsson (d. 1263), but the earliest preserved example of the later Helgeseter seal is from 1309, which makes this similarity not too far fetched.

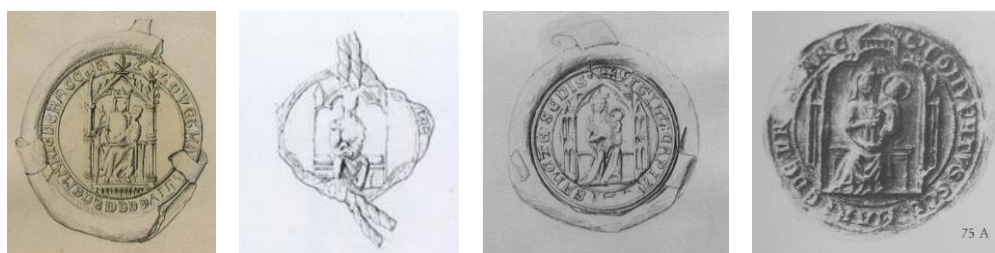


Fig. 49 a.-d. The chapter seals from a. Bakke and b. Helgeseter I c. Helgeseter II and d. Dragsmark.

Seals of Cistercian houses stand apart. According to proceedings of the rule early in the 13th century, monasteries of the order were not supposed to have special chapter seals, but in 1335 the pope instructed that each house should have one with an image of the Virgin Mary.¹⁷⁹ Although sometimes used among other monastic rules, the Cistercian method of founding new abbeys was always to send a group of monks from existing houses to found new ones, and it is known that the Cistercian rule in Norway was such direct import from England. For example, Lyse in Bergen diocese was the daughter-house of Fountains abbey in Yorkshire and the Cistercian Hovedøya abbey in Oslo diocese was a proliferation from Kirkstead in Lincolnshire. In addition to this, there was a close connection between Lyse and Alvasta abbey in Sweden.¹⁸⁰ Because of these direct connections, the question arises whether there were special similarities in the iconography of the seals of mother and daughter-houses other than simply having a St Mary as a main image. A comparison of the seals of mother and daughter-houses is of general interest, but the state of preservation plays a part here. In the case of Fountains and Lyse, only the early abbot's seal of Fountains, which by then was used as a common seal, is preserved but not the chapter seal proper. In the case of Kirkstead and Hovedøya, the situation is turned around. The seal of the mother house Kirkstead is preserved, (fig. 51d) but the one of the daughter-house Hovedøya is not. In this context, it is interesting to note that Kirkstead and Lyse have the same Cistercian "genealogical" status, that is, both are daughter-houses of Fountains. The other Cistercian houses in Norway do not seem to have preserved seals.¹⁸¹ Such "genealogical" study is not applicable to the Icelandic seal material since there were only two monastic orders there, the Benedictines and the Augustinians.

¹⁷⁹ Trætteberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme," 83; Hallberg, Norberg, Odenius, "Benediktinernas, Cluniacensernas och Cisterciensernas ämbetssigill," 67, 98.

¹⁸⁰ Hallberg, Norberg, Odenius, "Benediktinernas, Cluniacensernas och Cisterciensernas ämbetssigill," 98.

¹⁸¹ The rest of the Cistercian genealogy in Norway is that Tautra in Nidaros diocese was founded from Lyse and Munkeby (also Nidaros diocese) was founded from Tautra. Nonneseter in Bergen diocese seems to be somewhat obscure.



Fig. 50 a.-e. Augustinian Viðey and Cistercian Alvastra. Cistercian Lyse, later cathedral chapter seal of Ribe and Benedictine Kilwinning.

Despite that, it is curious that the seal of the Augustinian Viðey, which has no close parallel among the Norwegian seals, has some resonance with the seal of Alvastra, the other mother of Lyse.¹⁸² The Maries are both sitting on an open bench with ornaments to the sides. The Alvastra one has fleur-de-lis only, but in the Viðey seal, a floral item is to the left of the Virgin but to the right, something which appears as a chalice or a monstrance. Here it is clearly a visual reference to the host and the Christ child is on that same right side of the Virgin. On the other hand, the Virgin in the Alvastra seal holds the Christ child in her left hand. Both Maries are crowned, but the surroundings are different. The Alvastra one has a hammered background, but the Viðey one is framed with a quadrilobe form, pointed with small angles.

Although the type of St Mary and the child in the Lyse seal does not have direct parallels in the Nidrosian material, the type was rather common, and, to provide some comparison, the second seal of Ribe cathedral chapter has a similar iconography. Another example is from the other side of the North Sea from Kilwinning in Scotland. Both these comparison examples date from around 1400.¹⁸³



Fig. 51 a.-e. Kirkjubæjarklaustur, Benedictine. – The counter seal of archbishop Sørli. – Olavskloster, Oslo, Dominican.

The seal from Kirkjubæjarklaustur in Skáholt diocese differs the most from the other chapter seals with images of St Mary, firstly by the form itself: it is pointed oval while the others are round and secondly by the image type, the saint above and the suppliant seal owner below. In fact, this is a design which was common in subsidiary seals of the higher officials such as bishops, like the seal of Archbishop Sørli. The suppliant figure in the niche under St Mary visually points to a seal of an individual, in this case the abbess. However, the charter it is attached to makes it very clear that it is the seal of the community. Although the form is unusual in the context of other Marian chapter seals and most preserved chapter seals are round, there are other seals with this pointed oval form in the Norwegian dioceses, for example the ones of

¹⁸² Observation by the author.

¹⁸³ Petersen, *Danske gejstlige Sigiller*, 72, pl. xlix, nr. 836; Glenn, *Romanesque & Gothic decorative metalwork*, 129.

Olavskloster in Oslo and the Dominicans in Nidaros. The Kirkstead seal has a similar shape, but, it features not just one suppliant figure but many, including representatives of the community. The legend in the Kirkjubæjarklaustur seal is so fragmentary that it does not give indication of the nature of the seal. However, there is an English example where impersonal seal of an abbess was used as a communal seal.¹⁸⁴ There is also an Icelandic example where a seal of an individual may have served the function of a common seal in addition to the individual use. That is the seal of the prior of Möðruvellir in Hólar diocese and is a non-personal seal, used by many generations of priors.¹⁸⁵ Both possibilities are therefore open. This could be an abbess's seal used as a common seal or a common seal in an unusual format in the context.

In addition to the monastic chapter seals, the seal of the royal St Mary in Oslo has an image of the Virgin which is different from the monastic ones. A standing St Mary with the child and the overall design of the seal is in high artistic quality, and the iconography is very relevant to the circumstances. The king, as the patron of the St Mary in Oslo, is shown kneeling, offering a model of the church to its patron saint and the community of canons kneeling in prayer to her.

Seals with St Olav and Biblical motives



Fig. 52 a.-e. The Dominicans, Nidaros. – Olavskloster, Oslo. – Olavskloster Tønsberg. – Domicans, Bergen.- Premonstratensians Tønsberg

Given the popularity of St Olav in Norway, it is a bit surprising that not more monastic seals contain his image. In fact, there are mainly the mendicant orders, the Dominicans and Franciscans, which use a representation of St Olav of some sort in their chapter seals. In addition to the afore-mentioned Dominican Olavskloster in Oslo, which is considered some of the finest works in Norwegian seal material, there are still others: the Franciscan Olavskloster in Vågsbotn, Bergen and the Dominicans in Bergen and Nidaros.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Harvey and McGuinness, *A guide to British medieval seals*, 96.

¹⁸⁵ Most of the preserved examples are very late where the prior was appointed in judgement acts of various sorts. However, there are some instances where the seal can be interpreted as the seal of both individual and a community. See for example DI VIII, 158-159 (nr. 137): "Seldi priorum og klaustrinu á Möðruvöllum..."

¹⁸⁶ Trættemberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme,"; 80-81, 104-105; *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 54, 134. (55, 135) Tønsberg; Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 59.

The folds and the feet in the fragment of the seal of the Premonstratensian Olavskloster in Tønsberg could in its present state of preservation be interpreted as a St Mary just as well as a St Olav, but an observation by Lange before 1847 confirms that the figure was holding a globe in one hand which is a clear indication of St Olav, given the dedication of the monastery.¹⁸⁷ In addition to these monastic examples, a number of seals of the Nidaros cathedral, which can be interpreted subsidiary seals, had images of St Olav for obvious reasons.

Three of the monastic seals have clear Biblical scenes. The Annunciation scene is represented in a seal from Oslo diocese but the context of this loose fragment makes it difficult to determine the origin, although Tønsberg may be a possibility.¹⁸⁸

In the seal of the Benedictine nunnery at Gimsøy in Oslo diocese, there is an image of the *Crucifixion* with stars in the background. Stylistically it is related to Norwegian artwork from around 1300. In such crucifixion motives, it is more common to have St Mary and St John to each side of the cross.¹⁸⁹ In the seal of the Franciscans in Marstrand, also in Oslo diocese, there is an image of the *Presentation of Christ in the Temple*. This is a rare iconographic type in the seal context, but another example of it happens also to be from a Franciscan house in Exeter in Southern England.¹⁹⁰



Fig. 53 a.-e. a. Unknown house, b. Gimsøy, c. Marstrand, d. Apostelkirken, e. Cardinal Annebaldi.

In addition to the Biblical scenes, although not monastic, is the seal of the royal chapter of Apostelkirken (Church of the Apostles) in Bergen. The image depicts a scene from the narrative of the Pentecost which was also rare motive on seals. Because of the state of preservation, the image is difficult to describe. According to the drawing, the scene appears to be the the apostles receiving the Holy spirit. Judging from what is left of the wax fragment, the seal seems to have been a work of good artistic quality.

Representation of the Pentecost is quite uncommon in seal images in general. It is, for example, not present in the seals from England and Wales presented in a recent study on that

¹⁸⁷ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 55-56, 135.

¹⁸⁸ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 58, 138.

¹⁸⁹ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 59, 139; New, "Biblical imagery," 458-459.

¹⁹⁰ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 61-62, 141; *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 61-62, 141; Hallberg, Norberg, Odenius, "Franciskanska ämbets-och konventssigill," 79.-Hallberg, Norberg, Odenius, "...tillegg om Franskiskanernas," 18; New, "Biblical imagery," 456.

subject by Elizabeth New, but there is a similar iconographic type in a seal of a cardinal from late 13th century.¹⁹¹ These two seals are therefore almost contemporary.

Although not strictly a Biblical scene, the representation of the Trinity is relevant in this context. Only one of the monastic chapter seals has a representation of the Trinity. This is the seal from the Augustinian Halsnøy which was founded around 1160, and is in Bergen diocese. The abbey was dedicated to the Holy Spirit, one of the three persons of the Trinity. Another example of the Trinity is in the subsidiary seal of Bergen cathedral which was dedicated to the Trinity itself. The iconography presented in both of those seals is the same *Throne of Mercy* type where God the Father holds the crucified Christ in his lap and a dove, the symbol of the Holy spirit, hovers above the cross. The Halsnøy seal presents an older type, where the God-figure sits on the rainbow with the sun and the moon to the sides, with ornamented background. A close parallel to this type is in an *ad negocias* seal of Roskilde cathedral chapter, of which the oldest impression dates to 1380.¹⁹² The image in the Bergen seal is less clear but the minuscule legend is a late medieval development.¹⁹³



Fig. 54 Chapter seals with *Throne of Mercy*. Halsnøy abbey, the secret of Bergen cathedral and a later seal of Roskilde cathedral (*ad negocias*).

Seals with buildings

The seals of dignity of the Norwegian and the Orcadian cathedral chapters all have images of buildings. Most of them show a combined image where figures are incorporated in the buildings, but two of those seals have plain church buildings without any figures. They are the seal of Hamar and the earlier of the two seals of Stavanger cathedral.

¹⁹¹ New, "Biblical imagery," 451-468. New does not mention this motif among the ones mapped in the seal material from England and Wales; Gardner, "Some cardinal seals," 83, pl. 10k. The seal owner was cardinal Annibaldo Annibaldi (d.1272) acquired the seal when appointed to the church of the Twelve Apostles.

¹⁹² Petersen, *Danske gejstlige Sigiller*, 18, plate XIII.

¹⁹³ The minuscule in the legends were introduced in the latter half of the 14th century and was the dominant type in the 15th century. See for example: Grandjean, *Dansk Sigillografi*, 213.



Fig. 55 The chapter seals of St Magnus, Kirkwall and Bergen cathedral in comparison the seal of Ely cathedral (obverse).

The cathedral chapter seals with a mixture of buildings and figures are the ones of Nidaros, Kirkwall, Bergen, Stavanger (second seal) and Oslo. All of them are preserved in wax impression, and the matrices themselves are preserved for the Oslo and the Kirkwall seals. In the Nidaros, Stavanger II and Oslo, seals the figures within the buildings are the bishops and the canons of each cathedral but in the seals of Bergen and Kirkwall the figures are the saints of importance to those churches: St Magnus at Kirkwall and St Sunniva in Bergen.

The composition in the seals of Stavanger II and Oslo is the same as in the Nidaros seal, which could suggest that the Nidaros one was in that respect an inspiration for the iconographic type of the other two which are most certainly of later dates. The Nidaros seal is the oldest one of them; the oldest wax impression is from 1281, but the style indicates an earlier date. The archdiocese was founded in 1152/53, so it must not be older than that but can be considered a likely date for the matrix or soon thereafter.¹⁹⁴



Fig. 56 The chapter seals of Nidaros, Oslo and Stavanger in comparison to the chapter seal of Norwich cathedral (obverse)

In the Danish and the Swedish seal material there seems to be a strong inclination towards having the patron saint as a main subject in the seals of cathedral chapters from the dioceses in those countries, for example, St Laurentius in Lund and St Mary in Ribe and Skara. In rare cases there are also buildings involved, such as in the chapter of Roskilde cathedral where the patron saint, Pope Lucius is placed in front of a two-towered church building. The oldest copy

¹⁹⁴ Hohler suggest an earlier date for the chapter's seal of dignity than the smaller St. Olav's seals of the chapter. Hohler, "The re-engraved Matrix," (2009), 123-124.

of it is attached to a charter from the middle of the 13th century, but stylistically, it has been dated to the 12th century. Around 1380, a new design comprised the Trinity in the form of the Throne of Mercy. The Norwegian cathedral chapter seals differ significantly from these Danish and Swedish ones by having church buildings as the main iconographic theme in the seals.¹⁹⁵ However, many British cathedral chapter seals have very similar composition of buildings and figures.¹⁹⁶ It does not seem to matter whether these cathedrals were monastic or secular. To take some examples, the chapter seals of Norwich (second seal) and Ely correspond to the iconographical types of the Norwegian ones: the Nidaros, Stavanger and Oslo group where a bishop with his canons are placed within a complete church building is in resonance with the obverse side of the Norwich seal. The Kirkwall and Bergen group is more in line with the type presented in the Ely seal, where saint figures occupy large doorways.¹⁹⁷ Other clear indications of similarities between the British Isles and Norway is the fact that the cathedral chapter seal of Bergen is almost identical to the seal of Inchaffray abbey in Scotland.¹⁹⁸



Fig. 57 The three Norwegian monastic chapter seals with buildings, Nidarholm, Munkaliv and Utstein.

Another interesting pattern presents itself in the monastic material. Only a few of the monastic chapter seals from the Norwegian dioceses have images of buildings, or three out of 27, but four out of six of the Icelandic houses have a building depicted in their chapter seals. Two of these Norwegian ones and all the Icelandic ones are of the type with plain church building without figures, all preserved as wax impressions. The type of letters in the legends in the Þingeyrar and Reynistaður seals are of very similar type, different from those in the Nidarholm seal. This is particularly evident in the letters C, T and A, and there is a non-Latin

¹⁹⁵ Scheffer, "Domkapitelssigill," 201-203. See also Petersen, Henry, *Danske gejstlige Sigiller fra Middelalderen*. Kjøbenhavn: C.A. Reitzel kommisjonær, 1886 and Hildebrand, Bror Emil, *Svenska sigiller från medeltiden*. Stockholm: Kongl. Witterhets historie och antikvitets akademien förl., 1862-1867. For the Roskilde seal, see Petersen, 18, plate XIII. Hallvard Trætteberg has pointed this out, for example in "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme," and discovered how similar these seals are to many of the British ones.

¹⁹⁶ Heslop, "Medieval conventual seals," 443-450.

¹⁹⁷ Hallvard Trætteberg pointed this out in his writing on ecclesiastic seals in Bergen diocese. Trætteberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme," 67. For the Norwich and Ely seals see Späth, "Memorialising the Glorious Past," 167-168 and Heslop, "The medieval conventual seals," 447-448.

¹⁹⁸ Trætteberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme," 75-77.

variation of the letter combination EY, which is part of both words, Reynistaður and Þingeyrar. This is a clear indicator of a local production and even the same workshop or engraver.



Fig. 58 The four Icelandic monastic chapter seals with buildings, Þingeyrar, Munkaþverá I, Munkaþverá II and Reynistaður.

An answer to one of the questions presented in the introduction on whether the monastic rules matter when it comes to the iconography of the common seal of a monastery may be unfolding here. It is somewhat positive, but there are many complications and overlaps. In fact, there is substantial variation in the whole pattern revealed in this mapping of the monastic seal material. There seem to be certain inclinations towards certain iconographic themes according to some monastic rules, partly in the legends and partly in the imagery.

It seems that the word “convent” is more frequent than “capitvli” in the legends of the chapter seals discussed here. There seems to be a slight Benedictine inclination towards the use of the word capitvli in the legends while other orders have the word convent in some form.

Observation on how the seals were perceived in the documents they are attached to reveals that both the words chapter (capituli) and convent (conventus) are both used for the chapter seal of the older orders. For example, the term “sigillum nostri capituli” is used in a document in Latin from 1280 but not specified in a letter from 1309.¹⁹⁹

It differs a bit how the phrasing of the seals is made in the letters. Sometimes it is only referred to as sigillum nostrum, sub sigillo but often it is more specified, such as “conventus innsigli” for Helgseter, which still has sigillum capituli in the legend.

To further sum up, it is useful to observe how iconographic themes are distributed among the types of institutions. The Biblical themes present themselves within the houses of the Mendicant orders (mainly Franciscans) apart from the Crucifixion in the Benedictine Gimsøy seal. Seals with St Olav also fall into the frame of the Mendicant orders or within the section of the Dominicans. All the seals with St Olav seals belong to various Dominican houses, apart from the Premonstratensian from Tønsberg. Many of these houses were founded during the reign of king Håkon Håkonsson (1217-1263).

¹⁹⁹ DN III, nr. 16, nr. 81.

The Marian seals show a different pattern towards the link between seal image and monastic rule, and there is the most variation in that largest iconographic group. The rules which have a St Mary in some form in their seals are Benedictines, Cistercians, Augustinians, and Premonstratensians. This means that St Mary is accepted in all rules except for the Franciscans. As presented, the seals reveal various Marian types, and each type seems to be applied in almost every monastic rule. Different monastic rules could have similar iconographic types in their seal which the very similar St Maries at Augustinian Helgeseter and Premonstratensian Dragsmark or Augustinian Viðey and Cistercian Alvastra bear witness of.

An additional observation is that the category of monastic seals with images of buildings has quite a strong Benedictine inclination, although there are some Augustinian touches. The similarity of the representation of buildings in the Norwegian cathedral chapter seals to representation of building in seal of many British cathedrals is quite striking. The architectural elements in these seals are further discussed in chapter 6, as well as their possible topographical accuracy.

3. Overview of episcopal seals of dignity and subsidiary seals from the Norwegian and Icelandic dioceses

3.1. Introduction

Bishops' seals have a long history in Christian Europe. Their form has changed slowly through several centuries from being circular into being pointed oval or vesica shaped and into being circular again. For example, the seal of the archbishop of Trier from the middle of the 10th century was circular, while the seal of Anselm of Canterbury (1093-1109) was growing out of the circular form towards the pointed oval and can be categorized broad oval. From the 13th century on, most bishops' seals in the Nidaros archdiocese were pointed oval in form, and, by the middle of the 15th century, the round form became dominant again.²⁰⁰

The presentation of the bishops' seals from the Nidaros archdiocese depends on the state of preservation of the charters with the seals attached, and that varies between dioceses and points in time. There is evidence from the text of a lost document dating back to 1195 that there were the seals of 6 bishops attached to it. In the narrative sources there are several instances where seals are mentioned. It is indeed very interesting that, according to Hungurvaka, the first bishop of Skálholt, Ísleifur, brought with him a letter with the seal of the Holy Roman emperor Henry III, whom he visited during his ordination trip.²⁰¹ The seals of the archbishops in Hamburg and later Lund must have been familiar to these early bishops and the ecclesiastic elite.

The oldest actual preserved seal image linked to the Norwegian mainland is on a matrix of lead found in a church ruin in Mejlby in Denmark in 1878. According to its legend the matrix belonged to Henrik bishop of Stavanger in 1207-1224, but no wax impression had been observed which authenticates its use. The seal of Archbishop Sørle is the earliest preserved archbishop's seal "in situ", that is, attached to a document from 1253. The earliest preservation of the seals of the bishops who were suffragan to the Nidaros archbishop is dependent on one document--the confirmation of the crowning of king Erik Magnusson from 1280. Although there are several gaps in the preservation, the corpus is complete enough to bring forward some lines of development, as has been done to some extent, especially in the writings of Hallvard Trætteberg.

This overview aims to bring forward the general stylistic trends in the Norwegian and Icelandic dioceses with some comparison from other areas. Clear distinction is made as much as possible between types of seals: seals of dignity are treated as a whole corpus, while

²⁰⁰ Bautier, "Apparition, diffusion et evolution typologique du sceau episcopal," 232-234. Trætteberg, "Sigill II (Sigill, andliga)," 197-201.

²⁰¹ Biskupa sögur I, 61 (Hungurvaka), 129-130 (Páls saga).

secrets/contra seals/minor seals and ring signets as another corpus to the extent possible. The main focus will be on the seals of dignity, and I will use the following categories, which grew out of working with the material, for their presentation:

- Effigy types with plain background
- Effigy type with ornamental background (from early 14th century)
- Hagiographic type with architectural elements (from mid-14th century)
- Effigy type with architectural elements (appears around mid-14th century)
- Round seal/rotundum (first half of 15th century)

This type of presentation or classification of the Norwegian seal material has not been done systematically before, and the Icelandic material has not been presented as a corpus until here. However, there are certain interactions between seal types that need to be addressed briefly: the imagery in subsidiary seals tends to take over the seals of dignity over the course of the centuries.

Within this frame of presentation, I will discuss important earlier comments on each archbishops' seal and some of the others. Although a century old now, the observations and writings by Harry Fett and later Thor Kielland on the art and iconography of the Norwegian seal material are in many ways still quite valid, although some aspects have been reviewed by later scholars. The extensive writings of Hallvard Trætteberg are also of central value in this work.

The section on the archbishops' seals draws mostly from catalogue *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme* (2012) but will in some instances be taken further and put it into a wider context. The year span in parentheses after the name of bishops in this whole chapter is always the time they are known to have been in office, not their lifetime. It is logical that the first year of office of each bishop must be the year of production for their seals. That is because they could not be in office without a proper seal. Seals were basic essentials for the administration of ecclesiastic officials. However, in some instances, bishops had new seals of dignity made during their episcopacy, but those are rare cases and will be commented on when they occur.

The part of the research questions which applies to this chapter are: Did the imagery of the archbishops' seals impact the imagery of the suffragan bishops? What kind of pattern does the visual mapping form? That is, which seals are the most similar and in what areas are new stylistic features introduced (and where might they come from)? What can that reveal about the cultural exchange at each given period?

3.2. Seals of dignity – Effigy seals

Effigy types with plain background

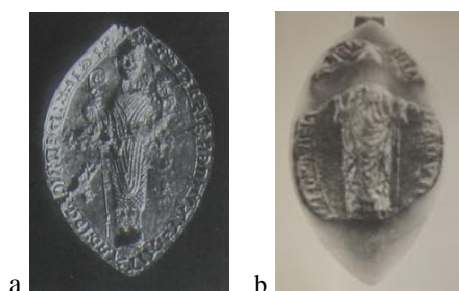


Fig. 59 Stavanger, Henrik (1207-1224), matrix. - Oslo, Håkon (1248-1267)

The oldest of the bishops' seals within the Nidaros Archdiocese is the lead matrix, attributed to bishop Henrik of Stavanger (1207-1224)²⁰² with the legend "SIGILL HENRICI DEI GRATIA STAVANGERENSIS EPI". It is an effigy type where the bishop's figure is fully frontal and the character of the figure and the folds in the vestments are clearly Romanesque in style.²⁰³ (fig. 59a)

Within the field of preserved wax impressions attached to dated charters, the oldest preserved one comes from Oslo diocese. The oldest one is the seal of Håkon of Oslo (1248-1267) The seal of Håkon (fig 59b) shows a frontal effigy type with a bishop vested in, alba, amictus, dalmatica, casula, wearing a mitre and a bishop's staff turning towards the figure. The right hand is lifted up in a gesture of blessing, representing the bishop's authority (three fingers upwards). The preserved impression is attached to a letter dated to 1264, but the image is believed to be from the start of Håkon's office in 1248.²⁰⁴ This seal pre-dates the oldest preserved archbishop's seal, the one of Sørle.

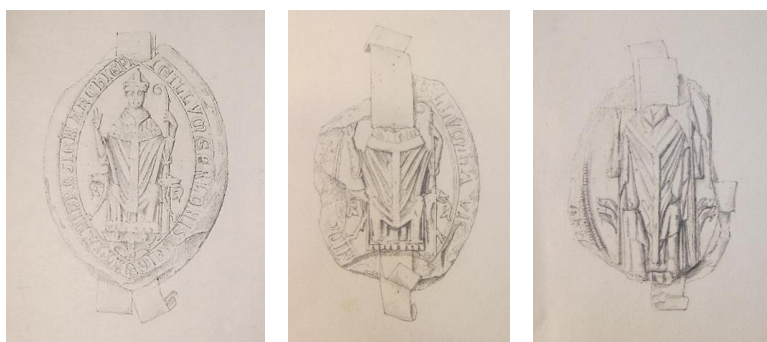


Fig 60 a. Nidaros, Sørle (1253-1254). – b. Nidaros, Håkon 1267 (reuse of the one of Sørle). c. Nidaros Jon raude (1268-1282).

The earliest preserved seal of dignity of the archbishops of Nidaros is the one of Sørle, (fig. 60a) who was in office 1253-1254, some one hundred years after the first archbishop was

²⁰² Trætteberg, "Sigill II: Norge (Seglstampar)," 216.

²⁰³ Fett, "Studier over middelalderens norske sigiller," 67.

²⁰⁴ Trætteberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 9-10.

consecrated. His seal as arch-electus is also preserved, but the iconography is in line with general priests' seals. Sørle's seal of dignity is pointed oval, 80x55 mm in size and presents the figure of a vested archbishop with pallium, mitre and bishop's staff seated on a throne with lion heads. It is only preserved in one impression from 1253.²⁰⁵

The seal of the next archbishop, Einar Smørbak Gunnarsson (1255-1263), is not preserved but the one of Håkon is. (fig. 60b) He was in office only in 1267, and the seal is preserved in only one impression from the same year. It is a clear reuse of the seal image from Sørle, but the legend is renewed. It is therefore most likely that Einar Smørbak also had the same seal image.²⁰⁶ In his article from 1903 on medieval Norwegian seals, Harry Fett describes the seal of Sørle/Håkon and points out various features of the vestments. Then he discusses the symmetry of the pallium and how the Romanesque style is present in the composition and suggests the type had older forerunners and as such been a type for the archbishops.²⁰⁷ Thor Kielland also points out the archaic qualities of the seal of Sørle/Håkon. He comments on the frontal Romanesque style as well as the folds of the vestments. Kielland suggests that the matrix was made by a goldsmith in Trondheim.²⁰⁸ Concerning the throne the figure sits on, such thrones or chairs were common in French kings' seals from end of 11th century until mid-15th century and in German imperial seals from 1100 on.²⁰⁹ Concerning these seals of Sørle and Håkon, it is of interest in this context that there is a clear resemblance to the seal of the archbishops of Lund, former metropolitan of the Scandinavian countries. Fragments of the oldest one, of Andreas Sunesen (1201-1223), and the one of Uffe (1228-1252) show quite similar design featuring seated/enthroned figures wearing the proper archbishop's vestment.²¹⁰

The next archbishop in Nidaros, Jon II raude (1268-1282), must have had a new matrix made since the image in his seal is slightly different from Sørle/Håkon, although similar in style. (fig. 60c) This is most visible in the form of the drapery, the pearl-band which surrounds the legend and in the types of lion heads on the throne. The head is missing in all three preserved impressions.²¹¹ Fett and Kielland do not comment particularly on this seal, but the double-headed throne is of interest.

The seal of Archbishop Jon raude is contemporary to a group of seals which are all attached to the same charter, a testimonial from 1280. The seal of Archbishop Jon is the only one

²⁰⁵ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 40-41.

²⁰⁶ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 43-44.

²⁰⁷ Fett, "Studier over middelalderens norske sigiller," 85-86.

²⁰⁸ Kielland, *Norsk guldsmedkunst i middelalderen*, 122.

²⁰⁹ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 41; Grandjean, *Dansk Sigillografi*, 144-145.

²¹⁰ Petersen, *Danske gejstlige Sigiller*, 1; planche I.

²¹¹ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 44-45.

missing, but his seal is preserved attached to other documents.²¹² The seals of the suffragan bishops attached to the 1280 document are more or less uniform in style.²¹³ The order in which they are placed on the charter is: Andreas of Oslo, Jörundur of Hólar, Erlendur of Kirkjubøur in Faroe Islands, Árni of Skáhholt, Arne of Stavanger, Narve of Bergen and Torfinn of Hamar. This arrangement is based on the order in which the bishops are named in the charter itself, and although the legends are fragmentary, enough is left of the first one to confirm that it is the one of Andreas in Oslo.²¹⁴ Many of these bishops enter their office at a similar time: Andreas and Jörundur in 1267, Erlendur and Árni in 1269, Arne 1271, Narve and Torfinn in 1278. This clearly corresponds with the row of seals as they are placed on the charter itself; that is, their order is evidently based on the time the bishops had been in office.



rei evidenciam sigillum suum apposuit vna cum sigillis venerabilium patrum. domini Andree Osloensis. Jorundi Holensis. Erlendi Ferensis. Arnonis Skalotensis. Arnonis Stawangrensis. Nerue Bergensis. Thorfinni Hamarensis suffraganeorum Nidrosiensis ecclesie. Actum viii. Kal. Augusti loco et anno supradictis.

Fig. 61 Seals of some of the suffragan bishops in Nidaros archdiocese attached to a charter from 1280. The text below is copied from the edition of the charter itself.

All the seals present frontal figures with a clear background. The figures are standing except the one from Stavanger where the figure is sitting enthroned in a similar manner to the archbishop's seal.



Fig. 62 Drawings by Thorsen of the same seals as attach to the 1280 charter with the addition of the missing one of Jon raude. Nidaros Jon raude (1268-1282). - Oslo, Andreas (1267-1287) - Hólar, Jörundur (1267-1313). - Kirkjubøur, Erlendur (1269-1308), Skáhholt, Árni Þorláksson (1269-1298) - Stavanger, Arne (1277-1303). - Bergen, Narve (1278-1304), first seal. - Hamar, Torfinn (1278-1285).

This became the continuous style of later Stavanger bishops, and this sitting position has not yet been fully discussed, although this fact has been briefly pointed out by scholars like

²¹² *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 44-45.

²¹³ Trættemberg, "Sigill II, Norge (Geistlige segl): Biskopssegl," 199-200; *Biskupa sögur* III, colorplate 2.

²¹⁴ DN I, nr. 96; Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 10, 100

Trættestberg.²¹⁵ Despite this post-1280 tradition in the Stavanger seals, the early matrix of Henrik presents a standing figure. This situation raises a number of questions: Did this diocese have a higher rank than others within the archdiocese (sitting=authority)? Or is there an external stylistic explanation? And why is the figure in the matrix of Henrik standing while all later Stavanger bishops' seals are with sitting figure? What is of interest in the greater perspective of the archdiocese is that in the seals of both archbishops and bishops within the dioceses of Lund and Uppsala, the bishops' figures are generally presented in a sitting position,²¹⁶ but in English bishops' seals, the figures are generally standing.²¹⁷ German bishops seem mostly to be presented sitting and enthroned, but French bishops are typically standing.²¹⁸ This brings forward a pattern of closer relationship between Nidaros conventions to British traditions rather than Danish and Swedish, except for the Stavanger seals.²¹⁹

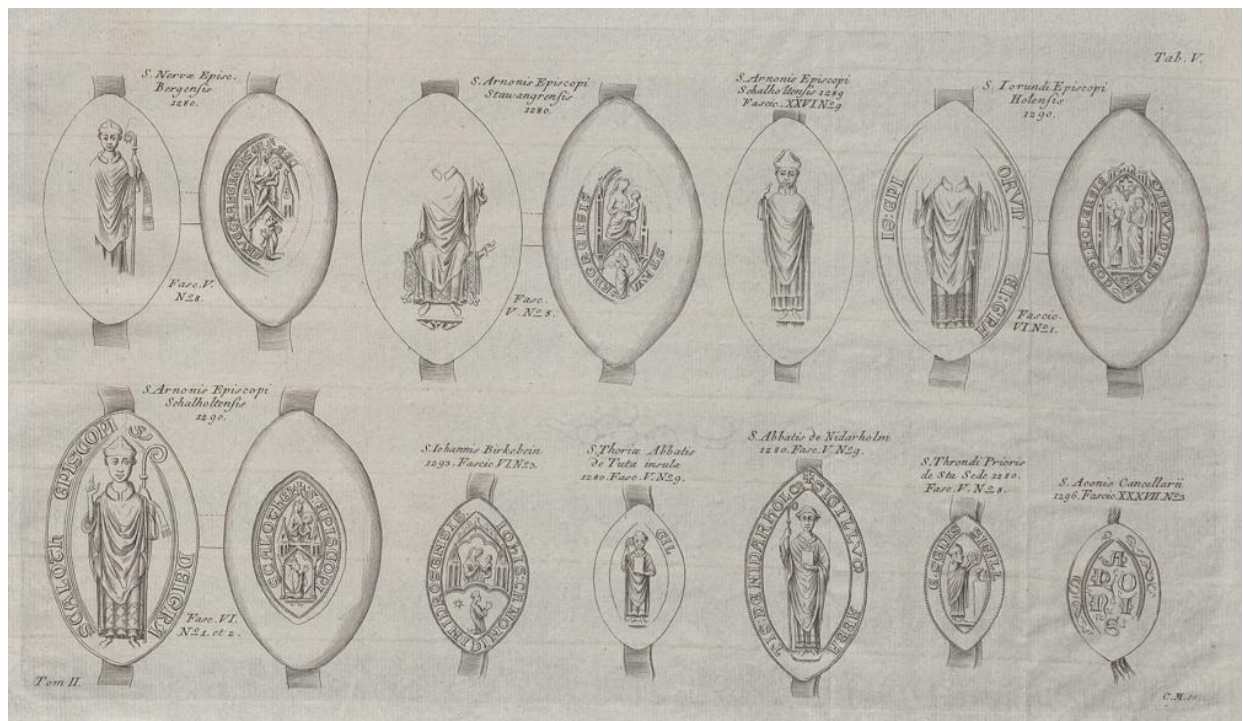


Fig. 63. A page from Grímur Thorkelín's *DIPLOMATARIUM Arna-Magnæanum*, which presents seals of dignity and counter seals in a clear manner: Effigy at the front and hagiographic items at the back.

The seals of these bishops are also presented in an engraving accompanying the Thorkelin edition of *Diplomatarium Arnarnagæana* from 1786.²²⁰ These seals, which date from a rather

²¹⁵ Trættestberg, "Sigill II, Norge (Geistlige segl): Biskopssegl," 198.

²¹⁶ See: The plates in the Petersen and Hildebrand.

²¹⁷ The matrix of Peter of Chester (1072-1085) presents a seated bishop's figure and there are other 11th century examples from seated bishops that area. John Cherry, "The breaking of seals," 90. However, the majority of English bishop's seals present the figures standing. See the overviews by St. John Hope "Seals of the English bishops, 271-306 and Elizabeth New, *Seals and sealing practices*, 58-63.

²¹⁸ Kittel, *Siegel*, 391-394; see also overview in Bautier, "Apparition, diffusion et evolution typologique," 233-235.

²¹⁹ Trættestberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme," 68.

²²⁰ In this edition there is a very clear presentation of the counterseals to these main seals in question. The counterseals are hagiographic with suppliant bishop's figures. Many of them have some versions of the Virgin Mary with the child but other saints also occur. This will be commented on later in the thesis.

narrow time span in the last quarter of the 13th century, are representative of the stylistic development in seals of dignity, and they have been used to date changes in figurative sculpture and painting at the time. This is primarily detected in the types of folds on the vestments of the bishops' figures. In the detailed study "Dating, styles, and groupings" in the collective work *Painted altar frontals of Norway 1250-1350*, Nigel J. Morgan presents evidence on the import of a new French style (gothic) which was introduced in Norway around 1270. The two seals of Narve of Bergen form an important part of the argument for the timing of this new fold style, or as Morgan puts it: "In Bergen, the new style is evident in the seal of Bishop Narve."²²¹

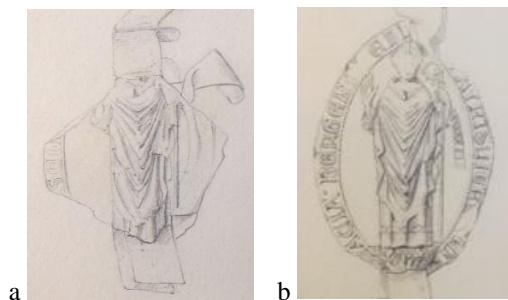


Fig. 64. Bergen, Narve (1278-1304), a. first and b. second seal.

Bishop Narve (1278-1304) had two seals during his office. The earliest one is preserved in wax impression attached to a charter from 1280, (fig. 64a) but the other is attached to charters from 1299-1303. (fig. 64b) The change in fold style occurs between the two, although the difference is only slight.²²²

Many other seals are used by Morgan to discern between this old and new style. The older type of style has rigid folds, with sharp angles as visible in the seal of Håkon of Oslo (fig. 59b) and Archbishop Sørle, (fig. 60a) but the newer ones have broader folds and are less symmetric. The difference between the styles is clear in several examples, listed here by each diocese. This stylistic difference is quite clear between the seals of the archbishops Jon raude and Jørund (1288-1309). (fig. 65a) In all these seals there is a smooth background behind the bishop's figure but there are astonishing details in the fabric of the vestments and the chair in the seal of Jørund.²²³ Fett detects how the folds of the vestments fall more freely and are showing trends of early Gothic style. Kielland agrees on this and considers this as the work of a Nidaros goldsmith as well as the earlier seals.²²⁴ Erla Hohler also comments on the seal of Jørund as a local Nidrosian work.²²⁵

²²¹ Morgan, "Dating, styles and groupings," 26.

²²² Trættemberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme," 70-71, 91-92.

²²³ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 48-49; Morgan, "Dating, styles and groupings," 26.

²²⁴ Kielland, *Norsk guldsmedkunst i middelalderen*, 122.

²²⁵ Hohler, Erla Bergendahl. "The Re-engraved Matrix. Bishop v/s chapter in Nidaros around 1300." *Collegium medievale* 22 (2009), 124.

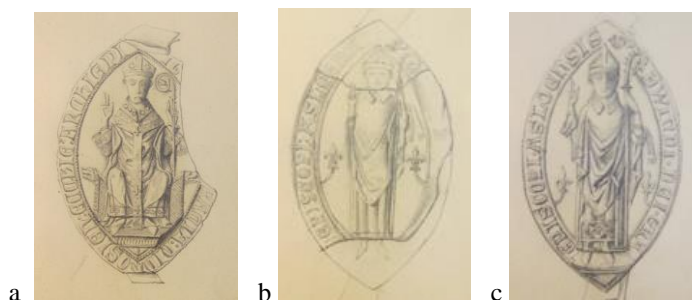


Fig. 65 a. Nidaros, Jørund (1288-1309). – b. Oslo, Eyvind (1288-1303) first seal. – c. Oslo Eyvind, second seal.

Eyvind of Oslo (1288-1303), had two seals of dignity. The older one is preserved in a wax impression from 1289 (fig. 65b) and the younger one is preserved in wax impression from 1297-1302.²²⁶ (fig. 65c) The change in fold style is clearly visible between the two. Morgan considers the second (1297) seal of Eyvind of Oslo as a “mature statement of the new French style.”²²⁷



Fig. 66 a-c. Hólar, Jörundur (1267-1313). - Hólar, Lárentíus (1324-1331) in drawing and wax.

A drawing of the seal of Lárentíus (Jörundur’s successor) of Hólar (1324-1331) (fig. 66b) was used by Morgan as evidence of the new French style taken further along with the seals of Håkon Erlingsson and Arne Sigurdsson of Bergen.²²⁸ The 1296 wax impression of the seal of Bishop Jörundur of Hólar is quite clear. (fig. 66a) There, the folds in the chasuble are broad and angular in line with the new French style.

In this context, it is interesting to cite a contemporary narrative, *Lárentíus saga*, on the perception of a bishop’s seal. This is from a vision in a dream where Þorgríma receives a large bishop’s seal from an impressive man. It was packed in a cloth and with a bishop’s image incised.²²⁹ This narrative presents a clear respect for a seal as an item.

²²⁶ Trætberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 11-12, 102-105.

²²⁷ Morgan, “Dating, styles and groupings,” 26. In Morgan’s text the later seal is called the 1295 seal, but in Trætberg’s edition from 1977 that seal exists from 1297. There seems to be a mix of dates here.

²²⁸ Morgan, “Dating, styles and groupings,” 26.

²²⁹ Biskupa sögur I, 791 (*Lárentíus saga*).

Effigy types with ornamental background

Parallel to the changes in the character of the effigies in the Nidaros seal material there is a development away from a plain background towards filling the space in one way or another. At first there are only simple items, such as small flowers, but later the background becomes a continuous pattern.²³⁰ The introduction of this depends partly on the time each bishop enters his office.



Fig. 67 Hamar, Torstein (1288-1304). - Oslo, Eyvind (1288-1303) first seal. - Oslo Eyvind, second seal. Oslo, Helge (1304-1322). - Hólar, Auðunn (1313-1322).

The earliest example of items in the background proper is in the seal of Torstein of Hamar (1288-1304) where small flowers are placed to each side of the figure.²³¹ (fig. 67a) A different version of items in the background is on both of the seals of Eyvind of Oslo where lilies (*fleur-de-lis*) grow from the rim of the legend into the space on both sides of the bishop's figure.

Eyvind's successor, Helge II of Oslo (1304-1322), has a small cross to the side of the bishop's figure in his seal. (fig. 67d) In the seal of Auðunn of Hólar (1313-1322) there are circular flowers to the sides of the figure (fig. 67e) and in his successor Lárentíus' seal (1324-1331) there are small forms to the side of the figure, probably the sun and moon.²³² This kind of background is not preserved from Skálholt or Nidaros.

Another stage in the development of the background of episcopal seals begins when it becomes a continuous pattern. The seals of and Arne Sigurdsson of Bergen (1305-1314) (fig. 68a) and Ingjald of Hamar (1305-1315) (fig. 68b) are the earliest examples of this in the Norwegian and Icelandic corpus.²³³ The seal of the archbishop is slightly later. In the seal of Eiliv Korte Arnesson (1311-1332) (fig. 68c), the bishop's figure is vested as before, but, in contrast to the seal of Jørund, (fig. 65a) it has a taller mitre and a crucifix instead of a crozier. Then the position of the feet is slightly to the sides. Similar position of the figure's feet is also

²³⁰ In the British material, the development is quite earlier since the first items around effigies are to be found on seals dating from the end of the 12th century. However, the time frame of continuous ornamental background has not been systematically brought forward. See New, 59-62. As comparison, the first hint of this for the archbishops of Lund are from 1310 but a clear diamond pattern only with the seal of Carl (1325-1334).

²³¹ *Geistlige segl fra Hamar bispedømme*, 58-59.

²³² Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 12-13, 106.

²³³ *Geistlige segl fra Hamar bispedømme*, 60-61; Trættemberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme," 93.

found on the seal of the next archbishop, Pål Bårdsson (1333-1346), (fig. 68e) but in no other archbishop's seals. The seal of Pål is very similar to the one of Eiliv, but not exactly the same and therefore not an example of a reused matrix. There is a difference to the form of the mitre and the chair. Moreover, the pallium is lacking in Pål's seal. Concerning the seal of Eiliv, it was used on a document written in Vienna before he arrived back to Norway after the ordination trip to Avignon. It is therefore clear that the matrix must have been made somewhere outside Norway.²³⁴ The seals of Eiliv and Pål both have some gothic qualities to them, most visible in the folds of the vestments. Harry Fett only comments on Pål's seal and points out the flow in the folds and to a certain degree the realism of the figure.²³⁵ Kielland states that in it there is a high gothic quality to the sway of the figure.²³⁶



Fig. 68 Bergen, Arne Sigurdsson (1305-1314). - Hamar, Ingjald (1305-1315). - Nidaros, Eiliv Korte (1311-1332). Oslo, Salomon Toraldsson 1322-1351). - Nidaros, Pål Bårdsson (1333-1346). - Gardar, Jón skalli Eiríksson (1343-1357, titular). - Maybe Gardar, Jacob? - Hamar, Håvard (1351-1363).

After the seal of Eiliv korte (1311), the seal of Salomon Toraldsson (1322-1351) of Oslo stands next in the timeline, but this patterned background is not introduced to the Icelandic dioceses until somewhat later, around 1342 and 1343 with the seal of Ormur Ásláksson (1342-1356) of Hólar (fig. 70a) and Jón Sigurðsson (1343-1348) of Skálholt (fig. 70b). There is an example from Greenland with the hammered background on the seal of bishop Jon of Gardar (1343-1357). (fig. 68f) This is one of very few preserved seals from Gardar bishopric. There is a drawing in the Segltegningsamling in Oslo made after a document from 1346.²³⁷ It is believed that this Jon is the actually Jón Skalli, who became bishop of Hólar in 1358-1390.²³⁸ His seal as bishop of Hólar is different and will be treated here later. (fig. 73c) Another seal maybe from Gardar but with unclear context is of Jacob (fig. 68g).

The latest in this sequence is the seal of Håvard in Hamar (1351-1363). That seal is of exceptional artistic quality in comparison to all the others. (fig. 68h) The bishop's figure stands in an elegant, swayed position where both the long hair and the folds are in a clear Gothic style.²³⁹

²³⁴ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 53-56.

²³⁵ Fett, "Studier over middelalderens norske sigiller," 88.

²³⁶ Kielland, *Norsk guldsmedkunst i middelalderen*, 172.

²³⁷ *Riksarkivet Oslo*, Segltegninger, kirkelige segl A, Grønland (Gardar).

²³⁸ *Grønlands historiske mindesmerker*, 897, tab.I.

²³⁹ *Geistlige segl fra Hamar bispedømme*, 64.



Fig. 69 Painting in Torpo stave church and details from Westminster retablo

This development in seals started already by the end of the twelfth century in the British Isles, where the first example would be in the seal of Richard of Dover, Archbishop of Canterbury (1174-1184); but, the diamond pattern seems to not have become mainstream in seals until after 1300.²⁴⁰ For wider comparison, the earliest example of this type in the seals of the archbishops of Lund is from 1311 and the bishop of Vesterås from 1286.²⁴¹ This feature in bishop's seal has not received much attention in recent literature, although Douet d'Arcq addresses in his publication on French seals already in 1863.²⁴²

As comparison, this type of background pattern is present in several painted Norwegian altar frontals dating from the 13th and 14th centuries, and an impressive example can be seen inside the lectorium ciborium in Torpo stave church dated to latter half of the 13th century. (fig. 69a) The same pattern is present in the Westminster altarpiece (fig. 69b/c).²⁴³

Within the range of the patterned backgrounds, the seal of Håkon Erlingsson (1332-1342) of Bergen marks an addition of a round-arched frame alongside the legend. (fig. 70a) Similar frame is also in the seal of Ormur of Hólar (1342-1356) (fig. 70c) and the one of Jón Sigurðsson of Skálholt (1343-1348) (fig. 70b).



Fig. 70 Bergen, Håkon Erlingsson (1332-1342). - Skálholt, Jón Sigurðsson (1343-1348). - Hólar, Ormur Ásláksson (1342-1356).

²⁴⁰ New, *Seals and sealing practices*, 59, 62; John Hope, *Seals of the English bishops*, 273-275.

²⁴¹ Hildebrand, *Svenska sigiller från medeltiden*, 2nd series, 3 and pl. 4.

²⁴² *Collection de sceaux*, LXI.

²⁴³ Hohler & Wichstrøm, "General description" 81-82; Morgan, "Iconography," 55; Westminster: <https://www.westminster-abbey.org/about-the-abbey/history/retablo>

How do these types with hammered background compare to the wider context? Hammered background is, on the one hand, present as early as in the seal of Richard Wethersed, archbishop of Canterbury (1229-1231) and in the first seal of William Fraser, bishop of St Andrews.²⁴⁴ On the other hand, such a pattern is first visible in the Danish material as late as mid-14th century at Ribe.²⁴⁵ This ornamented background is, for example, not evident in the seals of the bishops of Paris until the one of Étienne II de Bouret (1322-1325).²⁴⁶

It is therefore possible to draw the conclusion that this patterned background is in the Norwegian and Icelandic seals through influence from Britain rather than the closest areas in mainland Europe. It is curious to see how similar to both seals of bishop Eyvind of Oslo (fig. 71b/c) the seal of Reinaud IV d'Homblières, bishop of Paris (1280-1288) is (fig. 71a). In all seals, fleur-de-lis grow out of the lower part of the legend to both sides of the figures.

De Gray Birch presented a symbolical explanation of the diamond patterned background where the diamond shape would refer to a fishing net, thus linking it with St Peter the Apostle. In the case of the first seal of William Fraser, the flower in the lozenges would refer to the emblem of Williams family.²⁴⁷ In this context it is also of interest to point out observations by Bautier on rapid transfer of influences between chancelleries, at least in the 14th century.²⁴⁸



Fig. 71 a-d. Paris, Reinaud IV d'Homblières (1280-1288). - Oslo, Eyvind (1288-1303) first and second seal. - Nidaros, Arne Vade (1346-1349).

The third seal of the archbishops with ornamental background is the one of Arne Vade Einarsson (1346-1349) (fig. 71d). As in all the earlier archbishop's seals, the vested figure sits on a chair with lion heads. The composition of this seal is quite different from the earlier ones in that on top of the bishop's figure there is a three-arched structure with towers above. Between the towers, there is St Mary with the child. The elongated torso of the bishop is typical of the time.²⁴⁹ The seal of Arne Vade is the earliest archbishop's seal to show architectural elements and therefore marks a transitional point between those two types of seals. Harry Fett comments

²⁴⁴ Hope St. John, "Seals of the English bishops", 275; Birch, *History of Scottish seals*, 127.

²⁴⁵ Petersen, *Danske gejstlige sigiller*, Pl. XLVI-XLVII.

²⁴⁶ <http://www.sigilla.org/sigillant/etienne-iii-bouret-71102>

²⁴⁷ Birch, *History of Scottish seals* II, 17.

²⁴⁸ Bautier, *Échange d'influence dans les chancelleries souveraines*, 217.

²⁴⁹ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 57-58.

on the design of this seal that the frontal position of the bishop is more in line with the earlier bishops' seals than the one of his predecessor Pål. The richer decoration and new features such as the canopy is in tune with the time.²⁵⁰ Kielland mainly comments on this seal as being the first with architectural features, but he also mentions some interesting similarities to the chapter seal of St Mary in Oslo.²⁵¹ There he is probably referring to the architectural canopy above the figure's heads.

3.3. Seals of dignity – Hagiographic types

After the introduction of architectural elements in the seals of the archbishops, a major shift in style is introduced by the seal of Olav I (1350-1370).²⁵² (fig. 72a) The elaborate design of this seal was reused for Vinald Henriksson (1387-1402) (fig. 72b) and Aslak Bolt (1428-1450) (fig. 72c) and most likely for the archbishops in between them: Trond (1371-1381), Nikolas (1382-1386) and Eskil (1402-1428), although they have not been preserved. For each bishop, the legend was renewed, and the heraldry adjusted according to each person. The preservation of the seals of Vinald and Aslak is better than that of Olav's, which is missing a large part of the lower scene, so the seal image can be better studied in these later two. From these seals, it is evident that in the niche below kneels a small bishop's figure with mitre and staff. Beside the figure are shields with the cathedral's heraldic signs, a cross with two keys across.²⁵³



Fig. 72. Nidaros, Olav I (1350-1370). - Nidaros, Vinald Henrikson (1387-1402). - Nidaros, Aslak Bolt (1428-1450).

In the sequence of the seals of the archbishops of Nidaros, the seal of Olav was innovative in three ways: 1) It was hagiographic, with a saint's figure in the centre and the bishop's figure

²⁵⁰ Fett, "Studier over middelalderens norske sigiller," 88.

²⁵¹ Kielland, *Norsk guldsmedkunst i middelalderen*, 172.

²⁵² Kielland, *Norsk guldsmedkunst i middelalderen*, 172.

²⁵³ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 22, 57-69. A detailed study of the seal and its wider cultural context is discussed in Guðrún Harðardóttir, "The seal of dignity of archbishop Olav." *Iconographisk Post. Nordic Review of Iconography*, nr. 3/4, 2021, 7-27.

suppliant below. 2) It had a new type of rich architectural framework. 3) Heraldry was now present in the seal imagery.²⁵⁴

It presents a major shift in style as compared to the older seals of the Nidaros archbishops by introducing very rich microarchitectural features. Instead of the simple canopy in the seal of his predecessor, Arne Vade, the upper two-thirds of the seal consist of a great architectural structure, a type of baldachin around the enthroned figure of Nidaros Cathedral's patron saint, St Olav. Beside him on two levels are other saints, but only St Hallvard and St Catherine are recognisable. Below, in a trefoil arch, kneels a small bishop's figure with mitre and staff. Beside him are shields with the cathedral's heraldic signs, a cross with two keys across. The whole upper background is hammered with a floral pattern, but around the bishop's figure there is a diamond pattern similar to the earlier seals.²⁵⁵

Several scholars have commented on different aspects of this seal, and it has often been used as an illustration for historical texts about the relevant archbishops. In his 1903 article, Harry Fett discussed the art of Norwegian seal material in general, but he did not comment directly on the art of this particular seal. From the nationalistic standpoint of the time, Fett interpreted the long use of the seal as a lack of artistic invention in Norway after 1350, or as a lack of or a decline in creativity among Norwegian goldsmiths at the time after the Black Death, commenting that "hvilket tydelig viser den mangel paa nyskabningsevne, som nu udbreder sig i vor norske seglkunst".²⁵⁶ It seems that Fett based that opinion on the repeated reuse of the matrix. Indirectly, he discussed the seal as a Norwegian production. In 1927, Kielland commented on the architectural features in the context of assessing the possible appearance of the lost St Olav's shrine in Nidaros cathedral. Kielland did not comment exactly on this grand seal but referred to this type of seal in northern Europe in general. He also suggested that the Nidaros chapter seal is an older parallel to the architectural forms of the seal. This was all done from the point of view of re-imagining or visually re-constructing the St Olav shrine. Kielland seemed to take for granted that the great seal of 1350–1450 was the work of the Nidaros goldsmiths, although he commented on the internationality of its style.²⁵⁷

Others who have commented on this seal are Hallvard Trætteberg in various articles (1953, 1968, 1970); Audun Dybdahl (1999) in an article on saints in Norwegian seals; the editors of the important catalogue of the archbishops' seals, *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*

²⁵⁴ This is the observation of the author, based on Trætteberg 1970, 197-200; *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 48-60. The hagiographic type with a suppliant bishop's figure was common in counterseals of which the earliest preserved of the Nidaros archbishops is the one of Sørle (1253-1254).

²⁵⁵ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 57-59.

²⁵⁶ Fett "Studier over middelalderens norske sigiller," 98. Engl. transl. "which shows the lack of innovation which is now evident in our Norwegian seal art."

²⁵⁷ Kielland, *Norsk guldsmedkunst i middelalderen*, 170, 172, text to fig. 154.

(2012); and Øystein Ekroll (2016) in an article on St Olav in the Norwegian seal material. Trættemberg refers to it as presenting a façade-like structure embracing the figure of St Olav which “rammes inn av forgrenet arkitekturverk som antakelig betyr Nidaroskatedralen,”²⁵⁸ and Dybdahl also mentions the possibility of the architectural framework surrounding the St Olav figure being representative of the Nidaros cathedral. As he writes, the St Olav’s figure “innrammes av et byggverk som trolig skal forestille Nidaros domkirke med helgener i nisjer.”²⁵⁹ Further interpretations are presented in my article on the seal in 2022 on stylistic relation to top-quality continental work.²⁶⁰

Effigy type with architectural elements



Fig. 73 Oslo, Sigfrid (1352-1358). - Stavanger, Botolv Asbjørnsson (1355-1380). - Hólar, Jón skalli Eiríksson (1358-1390). Oslo, Hallvard Bjørnsson (1359-1370). - Oslo, Eystein Aslaksson (1386-1407).

The seal of Gyrðir Ívarsson, in office at Skálholt 1350-1390, is the earliest example from the suffragan dioceses of elaborate architectural elements surrounding a bishop’s figure. (fig. 74a) This is the same year the hagiographic seal with the elaborate framework of archbishop Olav was made. The year 1350 is also the first year of office for Bishop Gisbrikt of Bergen. His seal of dignity is not preserved, but the style of the counter seal may point to a similar richness in the architectural framework in the lost main seal.²⁶¹ The smaller seal of Håvard of Hamar (1351-1363) is the next one in the timeline of this type. (fig. 74b) The wax impression dates from 1361 and has a bishop’s figure with architectural surroundings. According to the *Geistlige segl fra Hamar bispedømme*, this seal is labelled as the smaller seal of Bishop Håvard, as it is 70 mm in comparison to the 74 mm great seal in use 1353. However, in comparison to the seals of the later Hamar bishops, this could be interpreted as Håvard’s second seal. The fact

²⁵⁸ Trættemberg, “Geistlige segl i Nidaros,” 51 Engl. transl. “framed by complex architectural structure which probably is to mean the Nidaros cathedral.”; 1970, 200; 1968, 66, 71-72.

²⁵⁹ Dybdahl, *Helgener i tiden*, 101. Engl. transl. “is framed by a structure, with saints in niches, which probably is meant to represent Nidaros cathedral.”

²⁶⁰ Guðrún Harðardóttir, “The seal of dignity of archbishop Olav.” *Iconographisk Post. Nordic Review of Iconography*, nr. 3/4, 2021, 7-27.

²⁶¹ Trættemberg, “Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme,” 71-72, 95.

that the design appears identical to main seal of Bishop Magnus I Slangestorp (1364-1380) may be an indication of that.



Fig. 74 Skálholt, Gyrðir Ívarsson (1350-1360). Hamar, Håvard (1351-1363), smaller seal. - Hamar, Magnus I Slangestorp (1364-1380).

The timeline of this type continues with the seal of Sigfrid in Oslo (1352-1358) (fig. 73a) and then Botolf of Stavanger (1355-1380).²⁶² (fig. 73b) What is interesting with this seal is that the bishop's figure seems to be wearing a pallium. The next one in this development is the seal of Jón skalli Eiríksson of Hólar (1358-1390). (fig. 73c) His seal is somewhat similar to the one of Gyrðir, but not identical. In the seal of Jón the bishop's figure is reasonably preserved. Further discussion on these seals is in chapter 7.

The seal of Magnus I Slangestorp in Hamar (1364-1380) (fig. 74c) seems to be a clear reuse of the second seal of Håvard known from 1361 and in use down to Peter II, Bosson (1433-1440). However, the editors of *Geistlige segl fra Hamar bispedømme* only state the reuse of the seal of Magnus I by Peter II.²⁶³

The seal of Eystein of Oslo (1386-1407) (fig. 73e) may be a reuse of the one of Hallvard (fig. 73d) or very similar.²⁶⁴ As comparison, the bishop of St Andrews had an architectural frame in his seal in addition to a hammered background already during his office in 1279-1297.²⁶⁵

Hagiographic type (pointed oval) with architectural elements

Other than the long-lasting prestigious archbishop's seal, which was in use between 1350 and 1450, it is only the seal of Jakob Jensson (1372-1401) of Bergen which falls into this category at that point in time. (fig. 75a) Its design is actually very similar to the archbishop's seal and even has St Olav as a central figure, although a St Sunniva would have been more

²⁶² Riksarkivet Oslo, Segltegninger, kirkelige segl A, Stavanger.

²⁶³ *Geistlige segl fra Hamar bispedømme*, 65-73.

²⁶⁴ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 15-16, 109, 111. There can be different interpretation of details of the seals on behalf of different seal draughtsmen.

²⁶⁵ Glenn, Glasgow, Italy, French: 13th and early 14th century seals from the Cathedral, 46.

relevant in that case because of the rich Sunniva cult at the cathedral in Bergen and the presence of her relics.²⁶⁶

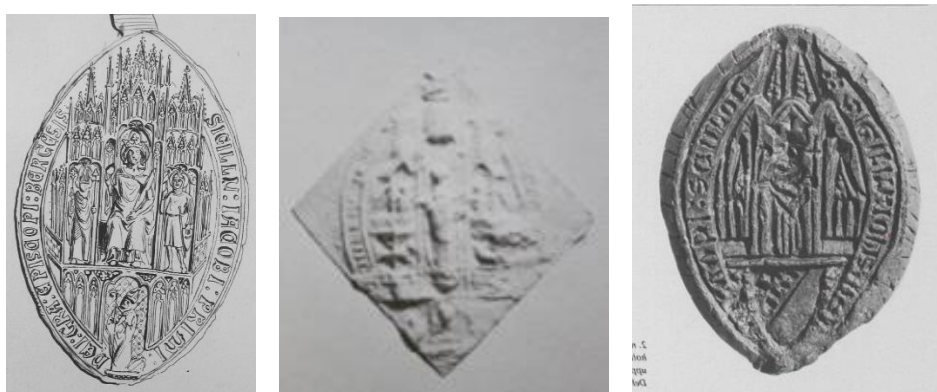


Fig. 75 Hólar, Jón Tófason/Henrikson (1411-1423). - Skálholt, Jón IV (1408-1413 mirrored lead matrix).

The other possible candidate of this type is the seal of Jón Tófason/Henrikson, bishop of Hólar (1411-1423). (fig. 75b) It is poorly preserved in a paper impression. The proportions within the pointed oval space point to the hagiographic type. Below the central figure, which could be a St Mary, there seems to be a miniature figure rather than heraldry. However, it is clear that there are elaborate architectural elements around the main figure, a single standing saint with unreadable attributes. To the sides there seems to be a two-storey structure with figures, also unidentifiable.²⁶⁷

A curious lead matrix was found in excavation in Aarhus in Denmark. (fig. 75c) According to the legend, which some have attributed to Bishop Jón of Skálholt, reads: “sigillu: IOHIS: DEI:GRA EPIS COI: SCALOT”.²⁶⁸ Although the name is legible, the problem is that several bishops of Skálholt had the name Jón during this period. Archaeologist Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson has written about the seal and concludes that of the many Jóns that were bishops at Skálholt, the one called Jón IV (1408-1413) is the most likely candidate. I agree because the heraldry below the figures dates it to the 15th century, although there are earlier examples in the British Isles.²⁶⁹ However, the pointed oval form excludes a very late date.

The material of the matrix is unusual for a bishop. Recent examinations of similar finds in Denmark brings forward some possibilities: a special funerary matrix, some kind of a temporary matrix used on travels, or an exchange gift between officials.²⁷⁰ Although scholars

²⁶⁶ The relics of St. Sunniva were moved from Selja abbey to the cathedral of Bergen in 1170 and remained there until the Reformation. Daae, *Norges helgener*, 158-161.

²⁶⁷ *Sigilla Islandica* I, 73.

²⁶⁸ Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson, “Innsigli Jóns Skálholtsbiskups,” 105.

²⁶⁹ Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson, “Innsigli Jóns Skálholtsbiskups,” 109-112; Harvey, McGuinness, *A guide to British medieval seals*, 68.

²⁷⁰ Michael Andersen, “Archaeology and sigillography in Northern Europe” 193-211. *Seals – Making and marking connections across the medieval world*. Ed. by Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak. Leeds: ARC humanities press, 193-211.

do not present the same nationality for Jón IV, it is clear that he was the abbot of Munkeliv in Bergen before he was appointed bishop of Skálholt.²⁷¹ In this context, it would have been useful to compare this seal to the one he had as an abbot, but that one seems not to have been preserved.²⁷² Despite all these observations, a falsification cannot be excluded in this case because of the matrix being made in lead and its odd finding place.²⁷³

3.4. Seals of dignity – Round seals

In the 15th century, there were substantial changes in style of the main seals of bishops. One of the most striking change was that instead of the large pointed oval types smaller and round ones developed over time.²⁷⁴ This development is rather complex and not fully researched. It forms a part of increased episcopal bureaucracy over the course of the Middle Ages and involves different types of seals in addition to the seals of dignity. It is not always clear what exact type of seals were in use as main seal at each stage. These round and smaller seals seem in some cases to be the secret seals (*secretum*) of particular officials, and in other cases their private seals.²⁷⁵

One category of these changes was the introduction of *sigillum rotundum* which, as far as can be observed, seem to have been in use beside seals of dignity of the bishops of Scotland and had this name in their legends. These smaller rotundum seals are thought to have been used in place of the “ad causas” seal type which had appeared in Britain in early 14th century. Seals of dignity of bishops of Glasgow were for example round after 1427.²⁷⁶



Fig. 76 Oslo, Jakob Knutsson (1407-1420). a. Main seal and b. secret.

²⁷¹ Frost, *A Prosopographical Study of Bishops' Careers*, 79; Gunnar F. Guðmundsson, *Íslenskt samfélag og Rómakirkja*, 121, 141-142; Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, “Ísland og Níðaros,” 133.

²⁷² Trætterberg “Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme,” 79-80, 103.

²⁷³ Andersen, “Archaeology and sigillography in Northern Europe” 193-211.

²⁷⁴ Grandjean, *Dansk Sigillografi*, 46; Ewald, *Siegelkunde*, 87; Trætterberg, “Sigill II, Norge (Geistlige segl): Biskopssegl,” 198.

²⁷⁵ Harvey and McGuinness, *A guide to British medieval seals*, 70-75; New, *Seals and sealing practices*, 58-65.

²⁷⁶ Harvey and McGuinness, *A guide to British medieval seals*, 72-73; New, *Seals and sealing practices*, 63-64. In Britain, this development seems mainly to apply to a certain type of subsidiary seals, that is, the “ad causas” ones. The whole aspect is not fully researched and these examples from Norway may contribute to the general knowledge of the matter. These Nidrosian seals are edited as seals of dignity, but it can be difficult to determine what type they belong to.

The earliest example in this context of the use of a smaller round seal, or instead of a seal of dignity, is the seal of Jakob Knutsson, bishop of Oslo (1407-1420). There are two seals involved; one appears to be the main seal and the other the secret, according to what is written in the legend.²⁷⁷ Both seals are 41 mm in diameter and due to the incomplete preservation, there is some confusion as to which is what type. The one which was drawn in a fuller state of preservation with the legend, in minuscule, “sigillvm iacobi ... epi asloensis” is hagiographic and has a virgin Mary with the child seated in a square throne with small turrets. (fig. 76a) To the right side of the Virgin and child is a kneeling bishop's figure, but below there is the heraldry of Bishop Jakob, a shell which is the attribute to St James (namsake) and the emblem of Jakob's family of origin, the wealthy Danish Jernskæg, which had the shell in their heraldry. Jakob had been bishop in Bergen (1401-1407), but his seal as such is not preserved. Earlier he had been a canon in Roskilde and came into office in Norway through the influence of Queen Margaret I.²⁷⁸ The other seal (fig. 76b) is supposedly the secret due to its legend: “secretum iacobi ... asloensis”. Trættemberg suggests that it may not have been used parallel to the other seal. The earliest copy of that one is from 1412, but this has only one, incomplete from 1409 which is heraldic with some kind of secular pattern, but two heraldic shields at the lower end, one shield with the shell and the other with a simple cross.²⁷⁹ According to the text in the letters with these seals attached, there is an indication of sealing with a secret in one of them while the other only mentions seal.²⁸⁰



Fig.77 Bergen, Aslak Bolt (1408-1428).

The seal of Aslak Bolt of Bergen (1408-1428) is next in this timeline of the use of round seals as main seals. (fig. 77) It is rather small, 34 mm in diameter with an image of a standing Virgin Mary with the child under a canopy. On her right is an unidentified female figure, and on her left is a male figure with chalice, most likely St John the evangelist. Both saints are

²⁷⁷ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 18-19, 114.

²⁷⁸ Here is a direct influence by queen Margaret who appointed many Danish bishops within the archdiocese at the time. See Haug, *Eldbjørg: Jakob Knutsson i Norsk biografisk leksikon på snl.no*. Hentet 31. august 2021 fra https://nbl.snl.no/Jakob_Knutsson

²⁷⁹ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 18-19, 114. There also seems to be a confusion in Trættemberg edition. What he describes as seal 13A is 13B St. Mary and is labelled sigillum. The picture of 13A presents a secular shield and a helmet, and the legend starts with secretum. DN V, nr. 479:

²⁸⁰ “...settom wer wart secretum firir þetta bref,” DN V, nr. 479; “...sættom wj wart jncigle,” DN III, nr. 618.

under canopies. The legend, in minuscule, reads *s aslaci bolt epi bergens* where the *s* would generally be interpreted as “sigillum”.²⁸¹ However, in the document the seal impression is preserved on, dating from 1429, it is referred to as secret seal.²⁸²

An early example from Skálholt diocese, is the seal of Árni Ólafsson (1413-1425) and its unusual qualities deserves detailed observation. (fig. 78a/b) His seal is unique among the Icelandic bishops’ seals because its imagery is in the style of secular rulers rather than bishops. It is larger than the seal of Jakob of Oslo or close to 50 mm in diameter, and the image consists of a hexafoil outline with three round lobes and three pointed ones. Inside this field, which is marked by a double line, is tilted heraldic shield (*couché*) with *fleur-de-lys* like ornament.²⁸³ Above the shield is a helmet with a griffin on top, with the wings spread. To both sides is a floral pattern.

The legend reads: “S ARNE... EPISCOPI SCALOLDENSIS,”. which makes it very clear that it is a proper bishop’s seal despite the design.



Fig 78 . Skálholt, Árni Ólafsson (1413-1425). Canterbury, Arundel (1396-1414).

This unusual design for a bishop’s seal can be explained by the fact that Árni Ólafsson was not only a bishop but also a governor (*hirðstjóri*) over Iceland. The legend, however, confirms that this was his bishop’s seal.

There are three existing copies of the seal, two from 1418 and one from 1420, the latter of which is quite complete. In two of the letters the seal is attached to, Árni refers to himself only as bishop but in one as bishop and governor.²⁸⁴ It is therefore evident that this was his main seal as bishop, and he seems to have used this same seal both for secular matters and ecclesiastic ones.

²⁸¹ Trætterberg, “Geistlige segl i Bergens bispedømme,” 72, 97; *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 66.

²⁸² DN, V nr. 586.

²⁸³ Björn Þorsteinsson, Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, “Enska öldin”, 25. There, the signs in the shield are interpreted as a sword and a crozier.

²⁸⁴ “Wer arnæ med guðz nadh biskup j skalholli” and “Wy arne med gudz nadh Biskup j skalholtæ j islande” DI IV, 267, 279 (biskup); “Wær arne med gudz nadh biskup j skalholti vmbozmann hæilagrar holakirkju visitorator oc hyrðstiori yfer alt islandh”, 263 (hirðstjóri) .

There are other examples where a bishop held an office as a secular ruler alongside his position as bishop. Example of this would be the bishops of Durham and their seals as such were also round in contrast to pointed oval form of their ecclesiastic seals. On the other hand, there is an example of the personal seal of archbishop Arundel of Canterbury (45 mm in diam.), dating to 1403, which has a very similar design to the one of bishop Árni.²⁸⁵ (fig. 78c) This type of seal was in use by Norwegian as well as British noblemen in the 14th century.²⁸⁶

The first rotundum seal used as a main seal of a suffragan bishop in Norway and Iceland is the first seal of Jens of Oslo, (1420-1452), a Danish man and former dean in Roskilde. (fig. 79a) The seal of Jens is of a similar type as the one of Bolt/Trondsson, showing a St Mary with the child within elaborate architectural framework.²⁸⁷ The second seal of Jens of Oslo is preserved in an impression from 1445 and presents a very similar iconography to the first one.²⁸⁸



Fig. 79 Oslo, Jens (1420-1452). Hólar (also Skálholt 1435-1436), Jón Vilhjálmsen Craxton (1425-1435).

Another curious early example of a bishop's heraldic round main seal also comes from Iceland. This is the seal of Jón Vilhjálmsen/John Craxton (1425-1435), bishop of Hólar. (fig. 79b) In addition to his time in office there, he was appointed bishop of Skálholt in 1435-1436. Jón Vilhjálmsen Craxton was from England and is thought to have been appointed due to the strong influence of English merchants in Iceland at the time.²⁸⁹ In design, his seal is unique among the Norwegian and Icelandic seals. It is 35 mm in diameter and the image consists of a heraldic rose with a round centre and five petals. The letters in the legend almost form a decorative pattern around.

The inner ring of the legend is formed as kind of a cincture with thicker parts at even intervals, pulled together at the lower end by a tassel. All letters in the seal are in miniscule and on each petal of the rose there is a letter which together form: "m-a-r-i-a". In the centre of the

²⁸⁵ Ellis, *Catalogue of seals... Personal seals* I, 2, plate I.

²⁸⁶ For example, Henrik Sinclair count of Orkney and Håkon Sigurdsson, both shortly before 1400. *Verdslige sigiller*, nr. 1128 and 1311; Harvey McGuiness, 57-58.

²⁸⁷ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 19-20, 115.

²⁸⁸ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 20-21, 116.

²⁸⁹ Frost, *A Prosopographical Study of Bishops' Careers*, 88-89.

rose there seems to be “ihs”. The legend itself is very hard to read, yet it may be a verse rather than the identification of the seal owner. If read from the tassel it reads: s:o:(x)ios: nmum (lacuna).

The use of a rose for a bishop of Hólar is evident because of the dedication of Hólar Cathedral to St Mary.²⁹⁰ This seal makes a clear break with the design of the pointed oval earlier seals of the bishops of Hólar. It is clearly stated that the bishop was sealing with his “sigillum rotundum,” and the term was used both in Latin and Icelandic.

In more than one letter from Jón Craxton, it is specifically stated that it is sealed with a *sigillum rotundum*.²⁹¹ However, it so happens that the preserved letters which state the seal as rotundum are from a register (*bréfabók*), and none of the preserved charters.



Fig. 80 Skálholt, Gozewijn Comhaer (1437-1446). - Durham, Hatfield (1345-1381).

From Skálholt, the seal of the Dutchman Gozewijn Comhaer (1437-1446) is another early example of this type. (fig. 80a) The seal is 38 mm in diameter, and the image consists of half a figure in the upper part, leaning onto a heraldic shield which occupies the lower part. To the sides, there is some pattern which is difficult to discern. Both items have reference to the dedication of Skálholt Cathedral to St Peter. In the heraldic shield there are his attributes, the keys and the figure above must be St Peter himself with a key in one hand and a book in the other. A halo surrounds his head. The legend is hard to read: “s-o-?ios-?omnium?” and more is left of its latter half than the first, making it impossible to detect whether it starts with *sigillum* or *secretum*.

It is quite curious that Bishop Gozewijn was the son of a rich goldsmith in the Hanseatic city Deventer in Holland and also a monk of the Carthusian order.²⁹² Both these facts may have

²⁹⁰ NKS 328 8vo. The rose design is not common in the Nidaros seals but in a preserved matrix ad causas for Nidaos it has an 8 petal rose.

²⁹¹ DI IV, 416-417. “jnsigli Rotundum” The seal on this particular letter is not preserved.

²⁹² Frost, *A Prosopographical Study of Bishops' Careers*, 95-98.

had an influence on the making of his seal matrix. Its design shares some similarities with the much earlier seal of Thomas Hatfield, bishop of Durham (1345-1381).²⁹³ (fig. 80b)

Succeeding Aslak Bolt in Bergen and reusing his seal was Olav Hartvikson (1440-1448). As always in reuse, there was a new legend and heraldry, although now hardly detectable.²⁹⁴

Although Marcellus never came to his see in Iceland, he had a proper seal as the bishop of Skálholt. (fig. 81a) It is an effigy with added heraldic shields. The vested bishop's figure rests on top of a shield with a lion but to either side of the figure there are shields with the keys of St Peter. It is not clear from the wax impression how the figure holds the hands. The legend reads: "sigillu marce episcopi scalotecis".

The image here is a detached seal,²⁹⁵ but in a letter with an attached seal, it is referred to as *sigillum rotundum*.²⁹⁶



Fig. 81 a-d Skálholt, Marcellus 1448-1460 (absent). - Bergen, Aslak Bolt (1408-1428). - Bergen, Thorleif Olafsson (1450-1455). - Viborg, Thorleif Olafsson as bishop there (1438-1455).

The seal of Thorleif Olafsson of Bergen (1450-1455) (fig. 81c) is next in line in the development in Norway after Aslak Bolt and Jens in Oslo. In the seal of Thorleif, there is a different version of St Mary than in the one originated in Aslak Bolt's seal. Here, the Virgin with the child is within an architectural structure with a tabernacle-like form with flanking saints to each side. The saint to her left is a St Paul with a sword and to her right St Peter with a key. Below there is a kneeling bishop's figure holding a crozier. This has been analysed as a reuse of his seal as a bishop of Viborg in Denmark (1438-1455).²⁹⁷ (fig. 81d)

Thorleif's successor, Finnboge (1461-1474), did not follow the style introduced by Thorleif but reused the imagery in Aslak Bolt's round seal with a new legend and heraldry.²⁹⁸

The seal of Gunnar Thostulfsson Holk, bishop of Oslo (1453-1483), has a St Mary and the child within a church-like architectural structure. (fig. 82a) Below the image are two heraldic shields, but their content is somewhat unclear because of preservation conditions. The legend

²⁹³ *Catalogue of the medieval seals in the Durham Cathedral Muniments*, nr. 3139.

²⁹⁴ Trættemberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens bispedømme," 72. Trættemberg does not provide image of the seal of Olav since it is the same as Aslak Bolt's.

²⁹⁵ *Riksarkivet Oslo*, Segltegninger, kirkelige segl A, Skálholt.

²⁹⁶ DI V, 57-59.

²⁹⁷ Trættemberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens bispedømme," 72-73, 97.

²⁹⁸ Trættemberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens bispedømme," 73.

reads:” ... *gunnari holki epi asloen*.” This image seems to be a reuse of the one in his second seal as a dean at St Mary in Oslo.²⁹⁹



Fig. 82 Oslo, Gunnar Thostulfsson Holk (1453-1483). - Nidaros, Olav Trondson (1459-1474).

The seal which Archbishop Olav Trondson (1459-1474) in Nidaros seems to have used as a main seal, (fig. 82b) is a reuse of the seal image Aslak Bolt had used as a bishop of Bergen, archbishop elect in Nidaros and later as counter seal to the great pointed oval seal after he became an archbishop.³⁰⁰ Olav Trondson also used this seal image as an archbishop elect of Nidaros, with the appropriate legend and in the heraldic shield at the base is an axe, the attribute of his name saint, St Olav.³⁰¹ In the archbishop’s version of the seal, the shield design at the base is a bit unclear, but it has either crossed croziers or keys. The legend reads: “S. Olavi dei gracia arch”.³⁰²

The editors of *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme* did not comment directly on this being Aslak’s secret seal as an archbishop. It is labelled as “mindre segl” since Aslak also had a pointed oval secret seal.³⁰³ At the base, there is a heraldic shield with the appropriate heraldry according to each seal owner. For Aslak Bolt, it is his private seal, half a lily and two drums.³⁰⁴

The seal of dignity of Ólafur Rögnvaldsson (fig. 83a) is very well preserved and consists of a scene of the crucifixion: Christ on the cross and St Mary and St John to either side. The whole scene is staged within a church-like structure with clear windows in the side aisles. A crown-like canopy is above the central scene with colonettes above. The legend reads: “sigillum olavi ...” It is a clear indication of a main seal, and, to confirm that, his subsidiary seal is also preserved featuring an enthroned St Olav.

The seal image in the seal of Gottskálf Nikulásson (1496-1520) (fig. 83b) is also a crucifixion scene with St John and St Mary to the sides and set within an architectural structure.

²⁹⁹ Trætteberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 23-25, 118-119.

³⁰⁰ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 66, 71-72, 75-76.

³⁰¹ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 73-76.

³⁰² *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 75-76.

³⁰³ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 69-72.

³⁰⁴ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 66-67.

A floral pattern is outside the structure on both sides. Below there is a suppliant bishop's figure. The whole design is similar to the one of Ólafur Rögnvaldsson but not identical. This one is 49 mm in diameter and seems like an imitation and of a lesser quality. The suppliant bishop's figure below the crucifixion scene turns in different directions in the two seals, and its compartment around it has a slightly different shape. The legend is very fragmentary, with only three legible letters at the lower end of the seal.



Fig. 83 Hólar, Ólafur Rögnvaldsson (1460-1495). - Hólar, Gottskálk Nikulásson (1496-1520).



Fig. 84 Skálholt, Sveinn Pétursson, (1466/67-1475) - Skálholt, Stefán Jónsson (1491-1518).

The seal of Sveinn of Skálholt (1466-1475) (fig. 84a/b) presents a similar iconography, a saint and architectural features, but in a somewhat different style than in the seals of the bishops of Hólar. The figure is St Peter with the keys, but Skálholt cathedral was dedicated to him. The seal of Stefán (1491-1518) (fig. 84c/d) is almost identical but differs significantly in the appearance of the figure. The older of the two related seals, appears to be an electus' seal according to the 18th century interpretation of the legend: "S: SVEINONIS. DEI GRA. ELTI SCALHOLLTEN. ECCLEL." It is now difficult to tell from the wax impression whether this is epi or elti.

In his description of the seal in *Sigilla Islandica*, Árni Magnússon describes the figure as wearing a scholar's cap, "forte pileum magisterii". The figure holds a book in the left arm and keys in the right. The size of the original seal is the same as in the drawing, according to the

accurate observation of Árni Magnússon.³⁰⁵ The diameter of the seal in the drawing is 38 mm, and, compared to measurements of a preserved wax impression, that is the correct size.³⁰⁶ Because of the cathedral dedication the figure within the structure must be St Peter himself holding his most common attribute, the keys in his right hand. I may have to disagree with Árni Magnússon's interpretation of the head.. In the wax impression, the head seems simply to be bold or tonsured which would be in accordance with a very common representation of St Peter as bearded old man. On a shield below the figure is a runic sign, most probably referring to Sveinn. Although this is the seal of an *electus*, it was used on documents dating from 1469-1475, or through his whole episcopate.³⁰⁷ Árni Magnússon had another drawing made of the seal of Sveinn made by artist Hjalti Þorsteinsson in Vatnsfjörður. Here the drawing appears as a negative and there are some variations between the two. The legend reads *epi* instead of *elti*, the cap on the figure's head is smaller and the heraldic runes at the shield below is different or more detailed.³⁰⁸ The placement of the words on the legend is quite peculiar. Instead of starting at the top of the seal with S or SIGILLUM the text of the legend starts to the side, over the side isle of the structure.

On the other seal, the one of Stefán, the figure wears a mitre and carries a bishop's staff in the right hand and a book in the left. On a shield below his feet are the keys, referring to the St Peters dedication of the cathedral. The legend reads: "S: STHEPHANI: DI: GRA: EPI: SCHAL".³⁰⁹ Here the legend is in accordance with the general norms. The drawing measures 40 mm in diameter and the wax impression very similar.

The frame of the building around these different figures is identical and worth comparing to what is known about the lost Skálholt cathedral. The architectural elements and the local style of these seals are discussed in detail in chapter 7 of this thesis.

³⁰⁵ *Sigilla Islandica* I, 3-11.

³⁰⁶ I made my own measurement on the wax seal, and it gives the same number if measured at the outer edges of the legend rim. The total size of the wax lump is 48 mm, but the seal image itself is 37 mm in diameter.

³⁰⁷ *Sigilla Islandica* I, 3-11.

³⁰⁸ *Sigilla Islandica*, I, 320.

³⁰⁹ *Sigilla Islandica* I, 21. Comparison to St. Andrews: "Rogerus dei gracia electi sancti Andrei" Birch, *History of Scottish seals*, 14.



Fig.85 Skálholt, Magnús Eyjólfsson (1477-1490). Both seals.

The two seals of Magnús Eyjólfsson (1477- 1490), (fig. 85) former abbot of the abbey of Helgafellsklaustur, are different in character from the seals of his predecessor Sveinn and his successor Stefán. Both the seals of Magnús have a St Mary and the child as central figure and different architectural setting, which is discussed in chapter 7. In the larger seal, she is crowned and standing with the child in a decorated structure, which looks like a choir screen, and in the other, in the central compartment of the image, a crowned Virgin is sitting in a throne with the child. In the adjacent compartments there is a bishop's figure on one hand and an unknown figure on the other. Above their heads is a late medieval version of canopies, the central one with tripartite arch and the ones to the sides with simple ones. Above is further decoration. Given the dedication of Skálholt cathedral to St Peter it is interesting that bishop Magnús had a St Mary in both of the seals. However, the keys of St Peter are in the heraldic shields below.

The legends, although differently placed and in different letter types, are almost identical. The larger one reads “sigillvm fratu magni dei gracia epi schalholten” and the smaller reads “SIGILLV FRATER MAGNI DEI GRA EPI SCHALHOLT.”³¹⁰

While the seals of Sveinn and Stefán present the elevation of a church building, the seals of Magnús present ornamentation that can be associated with the interior of a church. Both contain decoration in the gothic style, and it has reference to certain parts of the church. That is discussed in chapter 7.



Fig 86 a-e Gardar, Henrik (impr 1388) -Jacob Teppe (impr 1417). Main seal and secret. - Gregorius (impr. 1450).

³¹⁰ *Sigilla Islandica* I, 13,17.

Concerning the seals of some titular bishops of Gardar in Greenland, it is curious to observe what kind of imagery is presented, given that all these bishops were titular and never came to their seat in Gardar.³¹¹ (fig. 86)



Fig. 87 Bergen, Hans Teiste (1474-1506). Nidaros, Gaute Ivarsson (1475-1510).

With the seal of Hans Teiste (1474-1506), (fig. 87a) a new iconography is introduced in the sequence of the seals of the bishops of Bergen, although in similar architectural framework as before with the pointed oval St Olav's seals. The seal of Hans Teiste presents St Sunniva as a central figure instead of a St Mary and architectural elements to the sides without saints. Below the central figure there is heraldry only, as in the seal of Aslak Bolt, instead of a suppliant bishop's figure as in the seal of his predecessor Thorleif Olafsson. The same or very similar iconography is in the seals of his two successors, Andor Ketilsson (1507-1522) and Olav Thorkelsson (1524-1535), with the variation of the heraldry beneath the saint.³¹²

The round seal of Archbishop Gaute (1475-1510) (fig. 87b) is slightly larger than the one of Olaf Trondsson, or 38 mm in diameter, and has a new design with a different saint. It consists of St Olav sitting under a baldachin flanked with vertical patterned wings. The throne is supported by a console, and in front of that is a shield with the heraldic signs of the archbishop, that is an upright crozier with two axes crossed over it. The legend reads "S GAVTOIS ARCHIEPI SCOPI NIDROSIENS" and the letters in it are the first hint of the renaissance style in the Norwegian seal material.³¹³ Øystein Ekroll has introduced the possibility of this kind of frame being representative of certain types of tabernacles dating from this period.³¹⁴

Concerning what type of seal this is, the editors in *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, do not put a label on it, but, according to the many documents it was attached to, its use appears to have been as a main seal. However, it is clear from these same documents that it was referred

³¹¹ *Grønlands historiske mindesmærker*, 895-899, tab 1.

³¹² Trætteberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens bispedømme," 73.

³¹³ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 77-79.

³¹⁴ Ekroll, "St. Olav og olavssymbolikken i mellomalderske segl og heraldikk", 159-160.

to as secret, although in circumstances when seals of dignity were used, such as nomination of the next king in line as in impression j), which was an extremely important document with the seals of many dignitaries attached to it. There, the phrase “ladhet hængæ wore secreter och indsegle” reveals that secrets were used on such documents at that time. For example, impressions c) and g) in the letters these seals were attached to it says: “sub secreto nostro” and “ware secreto”.³¹⁵ It appears that from this evidence it is possible to draw the conclusion that Gaute did indeed use his secret seal as a main seal.



Fig. 88 Hamar, Karl I Sigurdsson (1476-1487). - Hamar, Herman Trulsson (1488-1503). Hamar, Gunnar Torgardsson (1442-1471) Hamar, Mogens Lauritsson (1513-1537).

In Hamar diocese, the first round main seal is the one of Karl I Sigurdsson (1476-1487). (fig. 88a) It contains a presentation of the Throne of Mercy in an architectural framework. According to the drawing in NRA the legend reads “sigillum karoli episcopi hamaren”.³¹⁶ The seal of his successor, Herman Trulsson (1488-1503), (fig. 88b) also has the image of the Throne of Mercy, but without the architectural framework. The legend is in banderoles reading: “sigillum hermanni episcopi hamaren” and below the figures is a tilted shield, couché, with heraldry.³¹⁷ In the context of this iconography, the subsidiary seal of Gunnar Torgardsson (1442-1471) is round and 30 mm in diameter. (fig. 88c) Although the image is not all that clear and the editor of *Geistlige segl fra Hamar bispedømme* has interpreted it as perhaps St Andrew,³¹⁸ the Throne of Mercy seems to be more plausible interpretation. This same iconographic theme is also present in the subsidiary seal of Mogens Lauritsson (1513-1537).³¹⁹ (fig. 88d)

³¹⁵ DI VI, 402-404; AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. XXVI, 28; DN I, nr 950.

³¹⁶ *Geistlige segl fra Hamar bispedømme*, 78-79. In one of the documents the seal is attached to there is a reference to it as secret. See DN I, nr. 940: “henge wii wort secretum”.

³¹⁷ *Geistlige segl fra Hamar bispedømme*, 79-80.

³¹⁸ *Geistlige segl fra Hamar bispedømme*, 77.

³¹⁹ *Geistlige segl fra Hamar bispedømme*, 86.



Fig. 89 Oslo, Herlog Vigleiksson (1489-1505).

The seal of Herlog Vigleiksson (1489-1505) (fig. 89) has a St Hallvard with his millstone and an arrow placed inside church-like architectural framework. It is 40 mm in diameter and the legend reads: “s d herlaui epc asloensi”.³²⁰ This shift from a St Mary to St Hallvard occurs at a similar point in time as the change from St Mary to St Sunniva in Bergen with the seal of Hans Teiste.

From Bergen, there do not seem to be any examples of the heraldic type of bishop's round seals, only the figurative ones.³²¹



Fig. 90 Oslo, Anders Mus (1506-1521, 1524). - Oslo, Hans Mule (1521-1524). - Oslo, Johannes/Hans Rev (1525-1537).

From Oslo and Hamar dioceses, there are a number of examples of the heraldic type of bishop's seal, but it is not all that clear whether they were used as main seals or as subsidiary seals. What is preserved from Oslo diocese are those of Anders Mus (1506-1521), (fig. 90a) Hans Mule (1521-1524) (fig. 90b) and the last medieval bishop of Oslo, Hans Rev, (1525-1537). (fig. 90c) They are all in secular style, similar to the one of Árne Ólafsson from some decades earlier. A shield is central to all designs, but in various forms.³²²

³²⁰ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 25, 120.

³²¹ Trættemberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme," 98-99.

³²² Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 28, 122.



Fig. 91 a-c. Hamar, Mogens Lauritsson (1513-1537). - Hamar, Karl Jensson (1504-1512). Nidaros, Erik Valkendorf (1510-1522).

From Hamar, the earliest example of heraldic main seal is the one of Mogens Lauritsson (1513-1537). (fig. 91a) That one is 32 mm in diameter, but an earlier seal, which could be considered subsidiary is of his predecessor, Karl Jensson (1504-1512), (fig. 91b) is 27 mm in diameter.³²³ Bishop Mogens had another seal with his heraldry only. That one was slightly smaller, around 26 mm in diameter.³²⁴

The seal of Erik Valkendorf (1510-1522) is the only archbishop's seal of this purely heraldic type. (fig. 91c) It is 48 mm in diameter with a heraldic shield as the main image. The legend reads: "S R P D ERICI W E NIDROSIEN ARCHIEPI ET AS LEGAT". The shield is divided into four parts, two with the heraldry of the archbishop: The cross with two axes, the attributes of St Olav; and the heraldry of the Valkendoff family: three wings around a rose. Over the shield is a mitre with *infulæ* and behind are two types of staff crossed, one bishop's staff and one with a cross.³²⁵

Ögmundur Pálsson, the last bishop at Skálholt (1521-1540), had a round effigy seal (fig. 92a/b) where the bishop's figure stands with a crozier in the left hand and the right one lifted up in a blessing position. Below there is a heraldic shield, which has a diagonal division with one flower in each part. To both sides of the bishop's figure is a floral pattern where the same types of flowers as in the shield are incorporated. It measures 42 mm in diameter and the legend, which is in minuscule, reads: "s ogmvndi dei gracia epi scalot"³²⁶

Jón Arason, the last catholic bishop at Hólar (1524-1550), had a very elaborated round seal. (fig. 92c) It is hagiographic with a substantial suppliant bishop's figure in the manner of donor portraits at the time.

³²³ *Geistlige segl fra Hamar bispedømme*, 82-85; 81-82.

³²⁴ *Geistlige segl fra Hamar bispedømme*, 87.

³²⁵ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 80-81.

³²⁶ *Sigilla Islandica I*, 28-29.



Fig.92 Skálholt, Ögmundur Pálsson (1521-1540). - Hólar, Jón Arason (1524-1550). Larger seal.

This seal of Jón is 53 mm in diameter (rim of matrix) but the total diameter of the seal impression with the outer wax lump is 72 mm. The design is a crucifix where the bishop's figure is on Christ's right side and to the left there is a heraldic shield with fleur-de-lis. The legend surrounds the seal, but there is also some inscription in banderoles to both sides of the Christ figure, intertwined with decorative elements, partly floral. In *Sigilla Islandica*, there is a brief observation of the seal, which Árni Magnússon named "the larger," on documents from 1540, 1541, 1543 and 1548. However, he did not make detailed analysis of or interpret the legend.³²⁷ In the 10th volume of *Diplomatarium Islandicum*, edited by Jón Þorkelsson, there is a complete interpretation of the text in the legend: "SECRE(TUM) P(AT)RIS AC D(OMI)NI JOHANNIS HOLENSIS EP(ISCOP)I". In addition to that, there is a valuable comment where it is pointed out that all the S letters on the seal are mirrored.³²⁸ According to how the banderoles fold, this is the flow of the letters in the legend: "PRIS AC DNI IOANNIS HOLENSIS EPI SECRE." The part in the banderoles is very obscure, possibly a verse. The letters Árni Magnússon detected seem to be: "WM REVER NDI IN HPO". (fig.93a/b)

The size and design of this seal indicates a seal of dignity, but, according to the legend, it is a secret seal. In contrast to the classification of the main seal of Archbishop Gaute, which is referred to in letters as *secretum*, this seal of Jón Arason, which has the word secret in the legend is referred to as *innsigli/sigillum* in the documents it is attached to. Judging from the importance of some of the documents, is quite clear that it was used as a main seal.³²⁹ It is curious how similar the composition of the seal is to the painting of Cardinal Albrecht von Brandenburg by Lucas Cranach the elder.³³⁰ (fig. 94b) How would Jón Arason, a bishop from Iceland, have come in contact with Cranach's works? Judging from what is known about this

³²⁷ *Sigilla Islandica* I, 90-91.

³²⁸ DI X, 540.

³²⁹ For example, DI XI, 437-438. The word used in the document is seal (innsigli).

³³⁰ See: <https://www.sammlung.pinakothek.de/en/artwork/Znxw0D7LXg/lucas-cranach-d-ae/kardinal-albrecht-von-brandenburg-vor-dem-gekreuzigten>

last catholic bishop of Hólar, he seems to have been up to date in many fields. He, for example, imported the first Icelandic printing press to Hólar during his reign, approximately around 1530. He must therefore have been familiar with woodcuts and other artwork in the areas he travelled to. Instead of being ordained in Nidaros, as was the usual procedure, he had to obtain a permission from the king of Denmark and because of a vacant situation in Nidaros, he was ordained in Copenhagen in 1524. Both rides were probably with German (Hanseatic) merchants.³³¹



Fig. 93 Hólar, Jón Arason (1524-1550). Details from larger seal. – Sigurður Jónsson, priest.

In his monograph on Jón Arason, Guðbrandur Jónsson makes a plausible suggestion of the place of production of this elaborate seal. He proposes that Jón Arason had the matrix made in Hamburg on the way back to Iceland after his consecration.³³² The likeness of the painting of Archbishop Albrecht, and the seal image could support that hypothesis. However, there do not seem to be copies of the seal until after 1540, which may suggest that he had the seal made for him around that time. By then, there were strong trade relations with the Hanseatic league and rather straight forward to acquire a matrix through that connection. This seal can be interpreted as his second, produced around 1540, because the other one was in use before that time. Bishop Jón could possibly have had his son, Sigurður, order it when he sent him to Hamburg in 1534-1535.³³³ In fact, the seal of Sigurður (fig. 93c) has somewhat similar qualities as the one of his father, in the draperies of the vestments. Both seals have renaissance qualities to them.

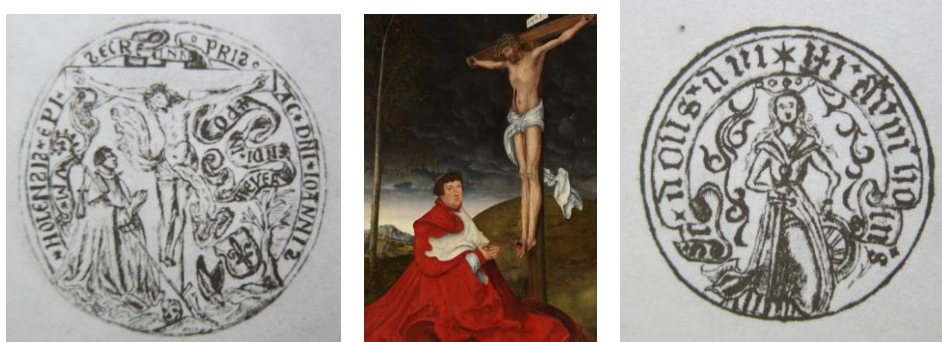


Fig. 94 Hólar, Jón Arason (1524-1550). Larger seal. - Lucas Cranach the elder, Cardinal Albecht Von Brandenburg. Hólar, Jón Arason (1524-1550). Smaller seal.

³³¹ Páll Eggert Ólafsson, *Menn og menntir siðskiptaaldarinnar I*, 53-55, on the print 394-414.

³³² Guðbrandur, Jónsson. *Herra Jón Arason*, 298-299.

³³³ *Íslenskar æviskrár IV*, 230.

Another and labelled “the smaller” seal of Jón Arason (fig. 94c) is observed by Árni Magnússon in 5 copies from 1529-1545, some in documents earlier than the one with this Crucifixion. He interprets the legend as: “si jons dei gra epi holns.”³³⁴ The legend itself does not indicate what type of seal this is but Árni Magnússon notes that it is attached to various types of documents, that is selling and buying of estate as well as a letter on the election of lawman (*lögmannskjör*).³³⁵ Legal actions of that sort were of such importance that they would require a main seal. It seems that the examples of the St Catherine seal are earlier than the one of the crucifixion seal, where the oldest examples are around 1540. This can be an indication that there was not a parallel use of these seals, and the St Catherine seal may have been the main seal until the production of the larger one. Given the fact that great disputes were taking place in Iceland in relation to the Reformation at that time and Skálholt diocese was becoming Lutheran around 1540, it may possibly have provoked a need for a new impressive seal for Jón, the only catholic bishop left in Iceland.

The seal of the last archbishop, Olav III Engelbriktsson (1525-1537), (fig. 95) turns to figurative iconography again and has a clear renaissance touch to its style, although it contains very similar elements as the seal of Gaute: a saint and a simple surrounding structure. The seal of Olav III is 50 mm in diameter and contains an image of a bearded St Olaf enthroned in a renaissance style baldachin with decorated consoles. He has his attribute, the axe, in one hand and the globe in the other. Below is a heraldic shield, almost identical in composition to the one of Valkendorf, although smaller, except that the private heraldry of Olav is lilies around a rose. According to Thor Kjølland, it is possible that the author of the matrix was the “myntmester” of the archbishop, Jacob Schult. The editors of *Geistlige sigiller I Nidaros bispedømme* do not oppose that hypothesis³³⁶ and in his comprehensive coverage of the seal Øystein Ekroll, agrees with that as well.³³⁷

Olav III Engelbriktsson was the last archbishop of Nidaros and his seal marks the end of the 300 years sequence of the Nidaros archbishops’ seals.

³³⁴ *Sigilla Islandica* I, 93-99. Guðbrandur Jónsson was not aware of this seal, only Jón’s priest’s seal.

³³⁵ *Sigilla Islandica* I, 93-99.

³³⁶ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 82-84.

³³⁷ Ekroll, “St. Olav og olavssymbolikken i mellomalderske segl og heraldikk”, 165-166.

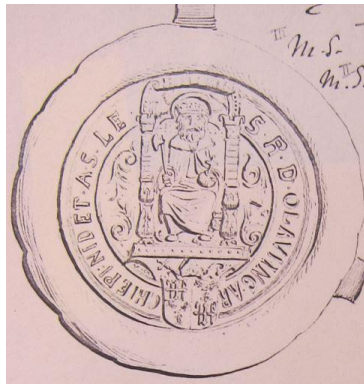


Fig. 95 Nidaros, Olav III Engelbriksson (1525-1537).

3.5. Subsidiary seals

The use of subsidiary seals is parallel to the preservation of seals of dignity in the Norwegian and Icelandic dioceses in question. While the standard form of the earliest seals of dignity was quite standardized, as discussed above, the iconography of the earliest counterseals is more varied. Their iconographic concept was entirely different from that of the seals of dignity, most often some representation of a saint, with or without architecture and a small suppliant bishop's figure in a niche below the hagiographic scene.³³⁸ The counter seals of the bishops who had their main seals attached to the above-mentioned charter of 1280 are quite representative in this matter. (fig. 96)

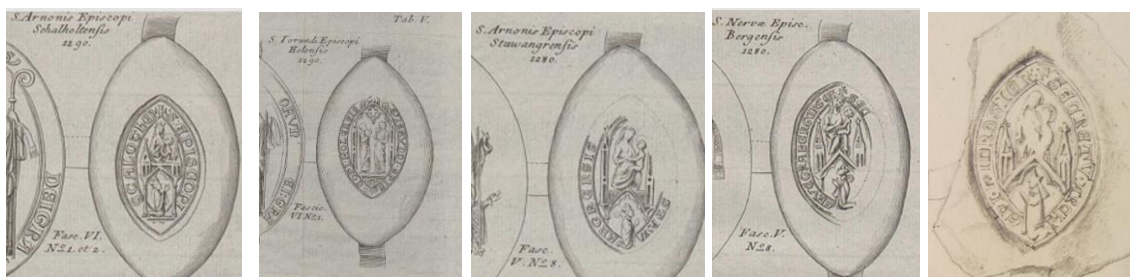


Fig. 96 a-e The counterseals on the testimonial charter from 1280 listed in the same order: Árne Þorláksson (1269-1298). - Hólar, Jörundur (1267-1313). - Stavanger, Arne (1277-1303). - Bergen, Narve (1278-1304). - Nidaros Jon raude (1268-1282).

Most of these counterseals have an image of St Mary with the child, and this ratio of St Mary is representative of these types of seals from this time. Some of them are so similar that they almost seem made from the same template. Most of the seals have an image of the bishop suppliant below the hagiographic scene, but there are a few exceptions, for example in the counterseal of Jörundur at Hólar where the Annunciation scene fills the whole space. (fig. 96b) In addition to the Marian scenes, there is a scene of the martyrdom of St Hallvard in the counterseal of Andreas of Oslo. Most of the seals have some kind of architectural features

³³⁸ Trættestberg, "Sigill II, Norge (Geistlige segl): Biskopssegl," 198-200.

around the saint's figures, and that type of iconography was later to be imported into the iconography of the large seals of dignity, a process that took place in the 14th century.³³⁹ In addition to these seals, there are few more without the architectural elements. Their motifs are St Mary and St Swithun.³⁴⁰

Early on, counterseals tended to be the private seals of the bishops, but at in the 13th century counterseals were subsidiary official seals. The labelling of these subsidiary seals is not clear cut, and, at the time, the word *secret* was sometimes used for them. Research on these types is lacking, but there seems to be some variation between dioceses. In some cases, it could be unclear which seal was the seal of dignity and which one the subsidiary.³⁴¹

The period which saw the largest seals of dignity within the Norwegian and Icelandic dioceses also saw the largest subsidiary seals. This is the time frame after 1350 and the height of the secrets of the archbishops during the long use of the close to 100 mm high. St Olav's seal was more than 60 mm while the secrets in the older style were much smaller. For example, the counter seal of John raude is 40 mm in height.³⁴²

The preservation of the counter seals and subsidiary seals is rather incomplete in the Nidaros archdiocese, but nevertheless is it interesting to present their development to the extent of present knowledge, especially because research is lacking in this field. There is a stability of appearance of counter seals in the second half of the 13th century but it starts to change already in the early 14th century. The earliest example of a round subsidiary seal is the secret seal of bishop Hallvard II of Hamar (1320-1349). Another early round example, also from Hamar, is that of Magnus Slangestorp (1364-1380). The secret of the bishop who served between them, Håvard (1351-1363), (fig. 97d) as well as the secrets belonging to several bishops after Magnus, are all pointed oval in form.³⁴³ In the context of the other dioceses presented here, these seals from Hamar are exceptionally early for such round subsidiary seals. After this, the subsidiary seals of the Hamar bishops turn back to the pointed oval form, and the next round ones appear in the early 15th century. Again, it is a seal of Jakob Knutsson at Oslo (1407-1420) (fig. 99a) that leads the development and shortly after is John Craxton at Hólar (1425-1435). (fig. 99c)

³³⁹ Trætteberg, "Kontrasegl" 89; Trætteberg, "Sigill II, Norge (Geistlige segl): Biskopssegl," 198; New, *Seals and sealing practices*, 63-64.

³⁴⁰ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 42-43, 50-51; *Riksarkivet Oslo*, Segltegninger, kirkelige segl A, Stavanger. This image of St. Swithun might be the oldest one in the Norwegian seal material, attached to a document from 1273.

³⁴¹ Harvey and McGuinness, *A guide to British medieval seals*, 70-72.

³⁴² *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 50, 64, 69.

³⁴³ *Geistlige segl fra Hamar bispedømme*, 63-76.

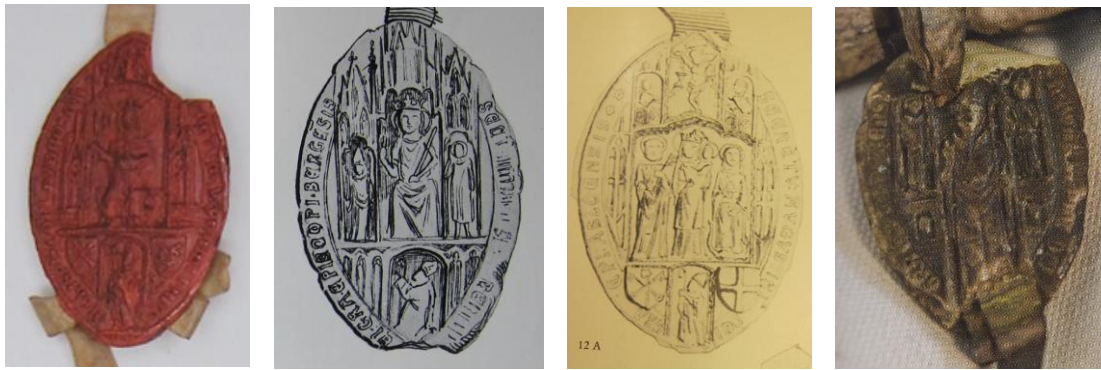


Fig. 97 Nidaros, Vinald Henrikson (1387-1402). - Bergen, Gisbrikt Erlendsson (1350-1369). - Oslo, Eystein Aslaksson (1386-1407). - Hamar, Håvard (1351-1363).



Fig. 98 The subsidiary seals of: Hólar, Jón skalli Eiríksson (1358-1390). - Hamar, Sigurd (1383-1418). - Hamar, Arinbjørn Sunnulvsson (1420-1430).

The style of the subsidiary seals in the middle of the 14th century before they change to the round form, seems to be inspired by the large secrets of the archbishops. They all have hagiographic scenes set in a very elaborate architectural frame. As with the large archepiscopal seal of Olav, which was reused for a century, there is also reuse of the large secret seals with new legends and heraldry. The secrets of Vinald (fig. 97a) and Aslak are preserved, but they must originate from the one of Olav's just as the image in the seal of dignity. In these secret seals of the archbishops there is also a presentation of St Olav in an architectural setting, but slightly simpler than in the seal of dignity, and with the bishop's figure suppliant below.³⁴⁴ The secret of Bishop Gisbrikt in Bergen (1350-1369) (fig. 97c) has an image of St Olav with two flanking saints set in rich architectural frame, even more elaborated than in the secrets of the archbishops. The secrets of the bishops of Oslo have different types of scenes within their architectural framework.³⁴⁵ The secret of Hallvard Bjørnsson in Oslo (1359-1370) has a type of Marian scene connected with the crucifixion. St Mary with the child is placed in the centre flanked with saint's figures, and above their heads is the crucifixion scene. Below is the

³⁴⁴ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 64-65, 69-71.

³⁴⁵ Trætteberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme," 71-72, 95.

suppliant bishop's figure.³⁴⁶ The version from Hamar has still another motif. The secret of Håvard (1351-1363) has a standing bishop's figure, fully vested flanked with a St Lawrence and a St Margaret placed in the rich architectural setting.³⁴⁷ There is only one example of a parallel type from the Icelandic dioceses. It is the secret of Jón Eiríksson skalli, bishop of Hólar (1358-1390). (fig. 98a) This seal has an image of an enthroned St Mary with the child set within architectural frame, which is far more modest than the framing of the seals from the Norwegian dioceses.³⁴⁸

The preservation of round subsidiary seals from Hamar seems to be better than in the other dioceses. The later pointed oval types are a St Peter in a rich architectural framework in the secret of Bishop Sigurd (1383-1418) (fig. 98b) and a Marian scene in the seal of Bishop Arnbjörn Sunnulvsson (1420-1430), (fig. 98c) which is very similar to the one in the seal of Hallvard in Oslo but with slight variation. This secret of Arnbjörn was reused by the two following bishops so that its last use was by Gunnar Torgardsson (1442-1471).³⁴⁹



Fig. 99 Oslo, Jakob Knutsson (1407-1420). - Oslo, Jens (1420-1452). - Jón Vilhjálmsón Craxton (1425-1435). - Hamar, Gunnar Torgardsson (1442-1471).

Considering the transition from pointed oval secrets to round ones, there is a permanent change in form that occurs over the course of the 15th century, which is not part of the early exceptions at Hamar. As discussed in the chapter above on the seals of dignity, this transition takes place in the archepiscopal seals through Aslak Bolt close to the middle of the 15th century. This change starts earlier than that or with Jakob Knutsson in Oslo, (fig. 99a) as well as with his main seal. His successor, Jens (1420-1471), (fig. 99b) had a round subsidiary seal as well. The seals that follow in this development are from Jón Craxton, bishop of Hólar (1425-1435), (fig. 99c) and Gunnar Torgardsson in Hamar (1442-1471).³⁵⁰ (fig. 99d) These four earliest examples in this later and permanent wave of round subsidiary seals all have different iconographies, the themes in the seals of Jens of Oslo and Gunnar of Hamar are the most

³⁴⁶ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 15-16, 110.

³⁴⁷ *Geistlige segl fra Hamar bispedømme*, 65.

³⁴⁸ AM. Dipl. Isl. Fasc. III, 15.

³⁴⁹ *Geistlige segl fra Hamar bispedømme*, 75-76.

³⁵⁰ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 114-116; *Sigilla Islandica* I, 75; *Geistlige segl fra Hamar bispedømme*, 77.

similar. In several of the later Norwegian ones the iconography could be regarded as private, which is a secular heraldic type. The preservation is not equal among the dioceses. For example, there is a large gap between Bishop Árni in Skálholt in the 13th century and Bishop Stefán at the turn of the 16th century, and there is only one after that. The preservation in Bergen is also very limited for these late medieval versions. The situation in Nidaros has partly been described in connection to Aslak Bolt, but after the main archepiscopal seals became smaller and round, there is only one example of a smaller seal, that of Olav Engelbriktsson (1523-1537). (fig. 100a) The best preservation of this type of seals is from Hamar and Hólar dioceses. The seals from Hamar have either private heraldry or some version of the Throne of Mercy, but there is more variety in the seals from Hólar. The oldest seal has heraldry, but the later are all hagiographic in various forms, one seal has image of the Virgin Mary, (fig. 100c) one St Olav and at least one with St Catherine of Alexandria. (fig. 100d) That is, depending on how the smaller seal of Jón Arason (1524-1550) (fig. 100e) is interpreted. The seal with St Olav enthroned with an axe and a globe is the only image of St Olav in the Icelandic episcopal material. (fig. 100b) It is the seal of his namesake Bishop Ólafur Rögnvaldsson at Hólar (1460-1495). The late medieval subsidiary seals from Skálholt are the ones of Stefán (fig. 100h) and Ögmundur.



Fig 100 a.-h. a. Nidaros, Olav III Engelbriktsson (1525-1537). -b. Hólar, Ólafur Rögnvaldsson (1460-1495). - c. Hólar, Gottskálf Keniksson (1442-1457). -d. Hólar, Gottskálf Nikulásson (1496-1520). - e. Hólar, Jón Arason (1524-1550). - f. Hamar, Herman Trulsson (1488-1503) as electus. - g. Hamar, Mogens Lauritsson (1513-1537). - h. Skálholt, Stefán Jónsson (1491-1518).

Signet rings

There are very few preserved ring signets from the Norwegian and Icelandic dioceses. There are two from Nidaros (Aslak Bolt and Olav Engelbriktsson), two from Oslo (Hans Mule and Hans Rev), one from Hamar (Mogens Loritsen), and none from Bergen, Skálholt or Hólar.

All the ring signets are very small, elliptical in form and no larger than 20mm. They are all late medieval and without legends. Some have the initials of the bishops, but some only their private heraldry.³⁵¹

3.6. Conclusion on episcopal seals

After this presentation of the episcopal seals in the Nidaros archdiocese, mainly from Norway and Iceland, it is evident that the material unfolds into certain patterns that vary in different time frames.

The earliest seals appear as rather uniform, both the seals of dignity and the subsidiary counter seals. The seals of dignity are all pointed oval effigy types with plain background and the bishop's figure vested according to each ecclesiastic status. The bishops are wearing chasuble and mitre, usually with the crozier in their left hand and their right one raised up in a blessing gesture. In addition to this, the archbishop's figures are wearing the pallium. There is some variation to whether the figures are sitting on a throne or standing. In the archbishop's seals the effigy figures are in all cases sitting, but in the seals of the suffragans, they are standing. There is the exception of the bishops of Stavanger who are in sitting position apart from the figure in the archaeological matrix. The explanation of this is not clear. An enthroned archbishop is more in line with monarchic types of seals, which was the form adopted by the archbishops of Lund which were the Metropolitans of the Northern countries before the establishment of the Nidaros archdiocese in 1152/3. Such enthroned position may have a stronger reference to authority but that does not explain the enthroned position of the Stavanger bishops which did not play any special authoritative part in the archdiocese. This variation may simply be explained by traditions, to keep stability in the visual recognition of seals from particular officials.

The earliest preserved seals of dignity before and around 1300 have a clear background, but during the 14th century, decorative elements start to appear around the effigy figures, and the final stage is a background with continuous ornamental pattern, most often some versions of diamond forms. Partly parallel to this development in the background is the change in style, away from frontal Romanesque character towards elements of French gothic style. This

³⁵¹*Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 72-73, 87-92; Trætteberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 27-28, 121-122; *Geistlige segl fra Hamar bispedømme*, 88-89.

transition takes place in a slightly earlier time frame, from the last decades of the 13th century to well into the 14th century.

During these decades, before and shortly after 1300, the subsidiary seals were quite uniform. Usually pointed oval with some hagiographic scene with the image of the bishop only present as a suppliant figure below the saint. Scenes including the Virgin Mary and the child are a dominant iconographic theme, but other saints and Biblical scenes also occur. There is also usually some form of architectural structure enveloping the saints' scenes. This type of iconographic setup with hagiographic scene with the church official suppliant below foreshadowed later changes in the seals of dignity. These types were adopted to the iconographic presentation in the seals of dignity and in due course with more richness of architectural features than had been present in the earlier counterseals or subsidiary seals.

Concerning the research question whether the seals of the archbishops were authoritative regarding their visual program towards the suffragan bishops, the answer would be negative in this early period. Judging from the presented material, the archbishop's seals simply follow the mainstream of general stylistic influences. In this respect, it needs to be considered that usually there is only one seal in use for each bishop, dating from the year of his ordination. In very few cases there are some second seals, but those are exceptions. Because of this, changes in seal images occur primarily between bishops and between archbishops, and sometimes that falls on a period of stability and sometimes of great changes. Reuse of imagery with new legends was also a rather common element.

By the middle of the 14th century, more definite changes become evident in the imagery of the seals of dignity. This is the introduction of rich architectural (or microarchitectural) framing of the effigy figures as well in some dioceses moving away from the effigy types to hagiographic types. This merge is very clear in the Nidaros material, and in fact they are introduced in the seal of Archbishop Olav I (1350-1370). Regarding the question whether the imagery of the archbishop's seals had an impact on the seals of the suffragan bishops, the answer would be positive at this point in time concerning this one seal. However, its full direct impact can only be seen on the seals of the bishops of Bergen, both in the architectural richness and the hagiographic scene. They present somewhat miniature versions of the archepiscopal seal at that time: an enthroned St Olav in a rich microarchitectural framework. The other dioceses mainly adopted the rich architectural features but kept the effigies, most of them with standing figures except for Stavanger. The influence is stronger in the seals from the Norwegian mainland, where the architectural framework has a microarchitectural richness to it, while the examples from the Icelandic dioceses seem to be simpler versions, but here the factor of incomplete preservation does play a part.

The subsidiary seals of this period were mainly miniature forms of the seals of dignity with exactly the same iconography only in smaller dimensions and with different legends.

The adoption of rich architectural framework into bishops' seals was a rather sudden change in the whole cultural area around the North Sea. It is evident that many stylistic trends were adopted from the British Isles into the Norwegian and wider Nidrosian material. That can be explained by several levels of cultural contact: trade and political relations, ecclesiastic bureaucracy and correspondence, as well as travels of the clergy, partly through appointments from one office to another between areas.

After the long use and reuse of the elaborate large seal image of the archbishop, introduced in 1350, substantive changes can be observed in all the Nidrosian material. This is the shift from large pointed oval seals of dignity to much smaller round ones. The first examples are in Oslo diocese in early 15th century, but this change is not manifested in the archbishop's seals until mid-15th century. The answer to the research question for this period would be clearly negative. This whole development is somewhat multi-layered and complex with impulses from many different directions. As in the 14th century, there is again a clear impact or, more accurately, a takeover of the subsidiary seals. Earlier on, or before the middle of the 15th century, it is rather clear what was the seal of dignity of a particular bishop and what was the subsidiary seals. After that, it becomes a bit confusing as to which seal is what type. As the Norwegian and Icelandic material presents itself, it seems that instead of transformation of the form of the seals of dignity from larger, pointed oval format into something round and smaller, their use seems simply to have been discontinued and the smaller types used instead as main seals. That applies to counter seals, secrets, *ad causas* and personal seals.

Although not in the lead, the development observed in the archbishop's seals can be used to better understand this whole process. Such case studies can prove useful because this field of seal material lacks research in general.

The last use of a large pointed oval seal of the Nidaros archbishops was by Aslak Bolt (1428-1450), and his counter seal or secret was to become the main seal of the next archbishop with a changed legend. That clearly brings forward how a subsidiary seal did indeed replace a large seal of dignity. Another interesting factor in the development in the 15th century is how certain seal images are visual witnesses to movement of the clergy between offices in different areas. Aslak Bolt is also part of that pattern because it was his seal image as bishop of Bergen that he used as a counter seal when he had become archbishop of Nidaros. Such transfer of seal image is also evident through Thorleif Olafsson, who reused his seal as bishop of Viborg when he was appointed bishop of Bergen (1450-1455). In addition to this, Bishop Ögmundur at Skálholt reused the image in his seal as an abbot in Viðey as his subsidiary seal after he became bishop.

The papal appointment of bishops in the Nidros archdiocese, introduced around 1380, may have played a part in this scene, as well as royal intervention to appointments.

With the increasing use of the smaller round main seals, there is also more variety in the iconography of these seals. In some examples there is a presentation of the dedication saint of the cathedrals, but secular themes are also introduced, for example in the seal of Árni Ólafsson of Skálholt. It is not always clear what is a private seal and what is the official seal of certain bishops. However, if looked at the whole period, it is interesting to observe how both of the major changes in appearance and essence of the seals of dignity derive from elements in the subsidiary seals.

Images of saints play an important role in the whole period in question. There is some stability in what saints these are and how they are related to individual bishops and cathedrals. In the early subsidiary seals, the Virgin Mary with the child is quite dominant, and the most common presentation of her is an enthroned version with some tower-like structures to the sides. There are fewer examples of Biblical or hagiographic scenes, which are the Annunciation and the martyrdom of St Hallvard. He and St Swithun seem to be the only other saints than St Mary in these oldest subsidiary seals.

When it comes to the shift of style when the saints start to appear on the seals of dignity, St Olav is dominant, represented enthroned with an axe and a globe. In several seals there are images of additional saints placed within the rich architectural decoration around the main figure. Here is some variation and the recognisable additional saints are St Catherine of Alexandria and St Hallvard in the archbishop's seal, and an unidentified bishop in the Bergen seal.

The subsidiary seals have some more variety of saints. In addition to St Olav and St Mary there are St Peter, St Margaret, St Laurence and some more unidentifiable saints' figures. In addition to this, there are Crucifixion scenes and the Throne of Mercy motif.

Concerning the round main seals, the extensive use of the seal of Aslak Bolt which introduced a St Mary into the main seals of Bergen and Nidaros, the one of Jakob Knutsson in Oslo and Magnús Eyjólfsson in Skálholt. Later, the patron saints of those cathedrals were again part of the iconography. This takes place with the seal of Gaute in Nidaros (St Olav), Hans Teiste in Bergen (St Sunniva), Herlog Vigleiksson in Oslo (St. Hallvard) but only in heraldic form in Skálholt (St Peter). In Hamar, the Trinity/Throne of Mercy scene is a dominant theme both in the later main seals and the subsidiary ones.

The subsidiary seals in this period became more heraldic in the mainland dioceses, but in the Icelandic material, images with single saints are dominant: St Mary, St Olav and St Catherine.

The context of the movement of the clergy, or how officials climbed hierarchical ladders in terms of offices, plays a part in the appearance of seals. One aspect of that is the legends. In some of them, a monastic origin of a particular bishop presents itself in the word *frater* before the name of the individual. However, this does not seem to be consequent because in legends of many bishops, which are known to have been monks or canons, this status is not mentioned. In fact, these examples with *frater* in the legend are: Narve in Bergen, Magnus Slangetorp in Hamar, the titular Tidman in Oslo, Jón skalli Eiríksson in Hólar and Magnús Eyjólfsson in Skálholt. What is surprising is that they did not belong to the same monastic order. Narve and Magnus were O.P., but Magnus Eyjólfsson was an Augustinian and the rule of Jón is not known.

This overview of the bishop's seals of substantial parts of the Nidaros archdiocese have revealed both uniformity and diversity. The uniformity mainly applies to types within certain periods of time, both regarding shape and iconography. The diversity mainly applies to the choice of saints and the variety in heraldry. When innovations in form and essence occur, they spread rapidly, but that interestingly seems rarely to be from the same spot. Bergen and Nidaros are important in the earliest phase but later via Oslo or even Hólar. Bishops in all dioceses were in contact with the outer world and the papal residences in Rome and Avignon. Also, there is a strong connection to the areas that were in trading relations to the Norwegian kingdom, especially the British Isles and later, after political and church-political changes, Denmark. Continental impulses have generally found their way into the Nidrosian seals, especially French via England.

4. Architectural copies – Church images in models and seals.

4.1. On copies in the Middle Ages (the transfer of the visual) and the dialogue with the term “Microarchitecture.”

When an inexperienced eye meets a simple church image in a round seal attached to a charter from an abbot and his confraternity of an unspecified abbey in the remote North of Iceland, it may come as a surprise how much such relatively small image can unlock a large context of reciprocal network of ideas, belief systems and tradition within the history of the medieval church. This is because such an abbey would not have been an isolated institution but would have formed part of interrelated institutions, which had quite strong international contacts, varying at each point in time.

To unlock the meaning or the interpretation of such a seal image to the medieval viewer, meaning the receivers of the charter with the seal attached, it is useful for the modern observer to embark into medieval mindset. A seal would be used to verify a document, and the image in the seal would be the first presentation of recognition of the seal owner. The legend would further confirm that identity. The seal image would therefore have to have some form of visual quotations as to the identity of the seal owner. This has a strong parallel to theory of the perception of architectural copies in the Middle Ages presented by Richard Krautheimer in a renowned article from 1942. The most solid and unchallenged part of his theories on iconography of architecture are indeed the ones on how architectural copies were perceived in the Middle Ages.³⁵²

In the modern world of multimedia and constant information, we have a quite different conception of the value of the visual than in the Middle Ages. Hierarchy and distinction in society was presented through visual means of different material, such as the dressing and setting of the image of a king. The visual message of a church building is the result of combined elements: the will of the patron, the craftsmen involved and the general trends of each time, which could be theological, stylistic and even political. The art historian Paul Crossley presents this in his survey on studies of meaning in medieval architecture: “In its narrowest sense 'architectural iconography', as a study of the symbolism of churches and their fittings, counts as one of the oldest art historical disciplines.”³⁵³ In his article “Introduction to an 'Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture'” Richard Krautheimer explains how a building could be considered

³⁵² See Krautheimer, Richard. "Introduction to an 'Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture'." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 5 (1942): 1-33; Crossley, Paul. "Medieval Architecture and Meaning: The Limits of Iconography." *The Burlington Magazine* 130, no. 1019 (1988): 116-121; Krautheimer, "Postscript", 149-150; Späth, "Architectural representation," 256.

³⁵³ Crossley, "Medieval Architecture and Meaning: The Limits of Iconography," 116.

a copy of another venerated building without the copy or the imitation bearing a complete formal resemblance to the original as the modern eye would expect. He explains this idea by using the example of the church of Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem which has been copied from the 5th century to the 17th. For example, there seems not to have been considered much difference between circular and polygonal form of a church.³⁵⁴ This points to the dominance of the perception in the medieval mind that a reproduction of architecture *in toto* was not expected but mainly a *pars pro toto*. Krautheimer explains this further in the way medieval architecture is transferred for example into sculpture or painting: “Like the 'copies' they show the disintegration of the prototype into its single elements, the selective transfer of these parts, and their reshuffling”.³⁵⁵ However, towards the end of the article, Krautheimer points out that this perception of a copy gradually starts to change after the beginning of the 13th century towards a more accurate realization of the forms of the prototype. This development reaches a peak around 1900 where elements from religious buildings could be very accurately copied according to the forms but placed onto secular buildings. Something unthinkable in the Middle Ages: to transfer a form without its meaning.³⁵⁶

As this is a method or a theory from 1942, it is useful to ask whether it is still relevant in the early 21st century. The answer is positive. There has actually been more criticism on theories developed by scholars other than Krautheimer, such as by Günther Bandmann and Erwin Panofsky. In a reprint of "Introduction to an "Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture"", which was published in 1969, there is a postscript where Krautheimer himself commented on various aspects of his article but not concerning the part on the copies in general.³⁵⁷ In his 1988 article, “Medieval Architecture and meaning: The limits of iconography”, Paul Crossley examines the works of many important scholars within the field of iconography of architecture, such as Krautheimer, Bandmann, Von Simson and Panofsky, which had taken architectural iconography to certain extremes. His conclusion is that by then (1980s), with a new generation of scholars, interpretation of medieval architecture had travelled in a circle and had in a way come back to Krautheimer’s and Warburg’s basic ideas.³⁵⁸ In her book, *The Sainte-Chapelle and the construction of sacral monarchy* (2015), Meredith Cohen refers to Crossley’s critical survey and concludes that Krautheimer’s theory on the copies is still in full use and that it was more cautious towards over-interpretations than the works of many of his subsequent scholars.³⁵⁹ There is therefore quite an accordance between the writings of Crossley in the

³⁵⁴ Krautheimer, "Introduction to an "Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture", " 5.

³⁵⁵ Krautheimer, "Introduction to an "Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture", " 13-14.

³⁵⁶ Krautheimer, "Introduction to an "Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture", " 20.

³⁵⁷ Krautheimer, “Postscript,” 149-150.

³⁵⁸ Crossley, "Medieval Architecture and Meaning: The Limits of Iconography," 121.

³⁵⁹ Cohen, *The Sainte-Chapelle and the construction of sacral monarchy*, 113-114, 247.

1980s and the more recent one of Cohen.³⁶⁰ In addition, this theory is also applied by Markus Späth in his articles from 2008-2015 on architecture in common seals.³⁶¹

4.2. Architectural elements or micro-architecture?

In an article on the three-dimensionality of seals, Ruth Wolff comments in her conclusion that a “fundamental question of further studies should be: Do seals respect the formal characteristics of other media and how do they translate paintings and sculptures in seal images?”³⁶² This is in line with the main research question of my thesis, and I would like to rephrase this and ask this central question: How are church buildings translated into seal images? This leads to another more detailed question: How are the main formal characteristics of buildings translated into seal images? These questions do not have simple answers and they may also be different in various periods of time.

The term micro-architecture has been in increasing use within the field of sigillography in the past decades, but much has been written about architectural elements in seals without using that particular term. To shortly explain the term itself, it has been in use within the field of Art History since Francois Bucher presented it in 1976 as being the essence of gothic architecture.³⁶³ This concept of micro-architecture has become more prominent in art historical research in recent decades and reached the sphere of seal research. Examples of this development are two conference publications, *Mikroarchitektur im Mittelalter* (2008) and *Microarchitectures médiévales* (2018).

An important contribution to the study of architecture in corporative seals are some articles by Markus Späth from the period 2008-2015.³⁶⁴ Throughout these articles, he treats architectural imagery in these types of seals in a comprehensive way, especially in the chapter seals of Canterbury Cathedral where he interprets the use of buildings in these seals as a uniting

³⁶⁰ McCurrach, Catherine Carver. "'Renovatio' Reconsidered: Richard Krautheimer and the Iconography of Architecture." *Gesta* 50, no. 1 (2011): 41-69.

³⁶¹ Späth "Architectural representation," 256

³⁶² Wolff, "Aspects of the three-dimensionality of seals," paragraphs 17. Accessed at <https://books.openedition.org/irhis/2912>

³⁶³ Bucher, "Micro-Architecture as the 'Idea' of Gothic Theory and Style," 71-89.

³⁶⁴ See: Späth, Markus. "Mikroarchitektur zwischen repräsentation und identitätsstiftung : Die siegelbilder englischer klöster und kathedralkapitel im 13. Jahrhundert." In *Mikroarchitektur im mittelalter : Ein gattungsübergreifendes phänomen zwischen realität und imagination : Beiträge der gleichnamigen tagung im germanischen nationalmuseum nürnberg vom 26. Bis 29. Oktober 2005 / herausgegeben von christine kratzke und uwe albrecht*, edited by Christine Kratzke, Uwe Albrecht and Nürnberg Germanisches Nationalmuseum, 253-277. Leipzig: Kratzke, 2008; "Die Bildlichkeit Korporativer Siegel Im Mittelalter. Perspektiven Eines Interdisziplinären Austauschs." In *Die Bildlichkeit Korporativer Siegel Im Mittelalter : Kunstgeschichte Und Geschichte Im Gespräch*, 9-29. Cologne: Böhlau, 2009; Späth, Markus. "Architectural Representation and Monastic Identity. The Medieval Seal Images of Christchurch, Canterbury ". In *Image, Memory and Devotion. Liber Amicorum Paul Crossley*, edited by Zoë Opačić and Achim Timmermann. Studies in Gothic Art, 255 - 263. Turnhout: Brepols, 2011; Späth, Markus. "Memorialising the Glorious Past. Thirteenth-Century Seals from English Cathedral Priors and Their Artistic Context." In *Seals and Their Context in the Middle Ages*, edited by Phillipp R. Schofield, 161-171. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2015.

image for the cathedral community thus connecting with their past.³⁶⁵ There is a cumulation of use of different terms and theories that are useful in the context of this thesis. In some of his articles, Späth makes use of the term “micro-architecture”, without defining it specifically.³⁶⁶ Although the term has its origin in the discussion on elements in gothic art, micro-architecture can be considered very useful in treating architecture and architectural elements in seal images (or miniature images of any kind) simply because this is what these seal images really are: miniature architecture, which can truly be called micro-architecture. I will therefore use these terms as synonyms throughout this section: architectural elements, micro-architecture, architectural features and miniature architecture in search for an answer to the question of whether these images (from the two medieval dioceses in Iceland) are some truly minimised versions or parts of real church buildings.

Before going into depth of individual relationships between real buildings and seal buildings, it is useful to consider related material and present the rich discussion which is already available on church models in donor portraits, either in paintings or sculpture where the likeness of the model to the building is addressed.

4.3. Church models in donor portraits – reflections of real buildings?

In medieval art, the type “Donor portraits” consists of certain items, and one of them is “Model bearers,” where the person who founded a church is painted or sculpted holding a model of a church. In Western Europe, this type dates all the way back to the sixth century.³⁶⁷ There are numerous depictions of donors of architecture made in different types of media. Some models can be exemplary, but there seems to be a tendency towards a rather fair accuracy of the representation of buildings.³⁶⁸ The likeness of church model with the actual churches has been much discussed in the earlier literature, especially among architectural historians and can be labelled micro-architecture.³⁶⁹ Two of these works, *Compressed meanings* by Emanuel Klinkenberg from 2009 and the article “Édifices miniaturisés” by Sabine Berger from 2018, present some convenient examples for presenting church models and actual buildings. Although Klinkenberg and Berger made important contribution to the role and status of the church bearer in the donor portraits, the use of their work serves here to study how the models represent the churches. The main emphasis here is on the visual comparison of the models

³⁶⁵ Späth, "Memorialising the Glorious Past, 161-171.

³⁶⁶ Späth, "Architectural Representation and Monastic Identity," 256; "Memorialising the glorious past," 165.

³⁶⁷ Klinkenberg, *Compressed meanings*, 11.

³⁶⁸ Coldstream, *Medieval architecture*, 193; Klinkenberg, *Compressed meanings*, 254.

³⁶⁹ Berger, "Édifices miniaturisés et figures de bienfaiteurs à la période médiévale," 81.

themselves, to the church building they present and how identifiable they are, independent of the status of the donor. That is therefore more in line with the earlier literature.

The likeness of church models and real churches can be examined by comparing the two, but, in many instances, things are not that simple. In several cases, the actual buildings are either lost or they are very different in appearance from what they were at the time when the model was produced. In other instances, the model presents biased emphasis on certain parts of the church building, such as is the case with St Lazare in Autun, Burgundy where the east end is in focus and out of proportion with the rest of the building.³⁷⁰

In the many instances where likeness of church model and real church are obvious, Klinkenberg observed that “portrait” like models had somewhat legal function in their “identicalness”; that is “they documented the rightfulness and legality of a foundation” of a church by that person.³⁷¹

Klinkenberg presents both the Western tradition as it appears in modern day France, and then the eastern imperial tradition as presented in many German examples.³⁷² The difference between the two iconographic types concerns how the donor presents the church but not the presentation of the model itself. The German imperial tradition, with secular donor, takes after a Byzantine type, while the western clerical one takes after Roman examples, where the donor belongs to the clergy and has its origins back to the sixth century.³⁷³ However, what matters in this present context is the state of preservation of models and churches.

There are many examples of models in donor portraits in which a church is preserved intact and a model based on its form are alike. This has been discussed in different publications,³⁷⁴ although visual comparison is rarely provided. In the context of this thesis, it will suffice to choose only a few pairs, to present the nature of these models, and to what degree the likeness between church and model presents itself.

The oldest comparison example presented here is Byzantine and very clear. (fig.101) It dates to the 10th century, and, in it, Emperor Justinian holds a model of Hagia Sofia, presenting it to Christ and to the other side, Emperor Constantine holds a model of the city itself with the city walls around.³⁷⁵ It is from mosaic at the south entrance of Hagia Sofia in present Istanbul and

³⁷⁰ Klinkenberg, *Compressed meanings*, 248.

³⁷¹ Klinkenberg, *Compressed meanings*, 248.

³⁷² Klinkenberg, *Compressed meanings*, 117-133.

³⁷³ Klinkenberg, *Compressed meanings*, 19, 135.

³⁷⁴ The well-illustrated monograph, *Compressed meanings*, by Emanuel S. Klinkenberg in 2009, provides many visual examples of church models which I have used for comparison of model and existing or well documented church building.

³⁷⁵ Klinkenberg, *Compressed meanings*, 74.

rediscovered in the 1849 restorations. For comparison, there is an 18th century drawing to present the look of the church before the restorations.

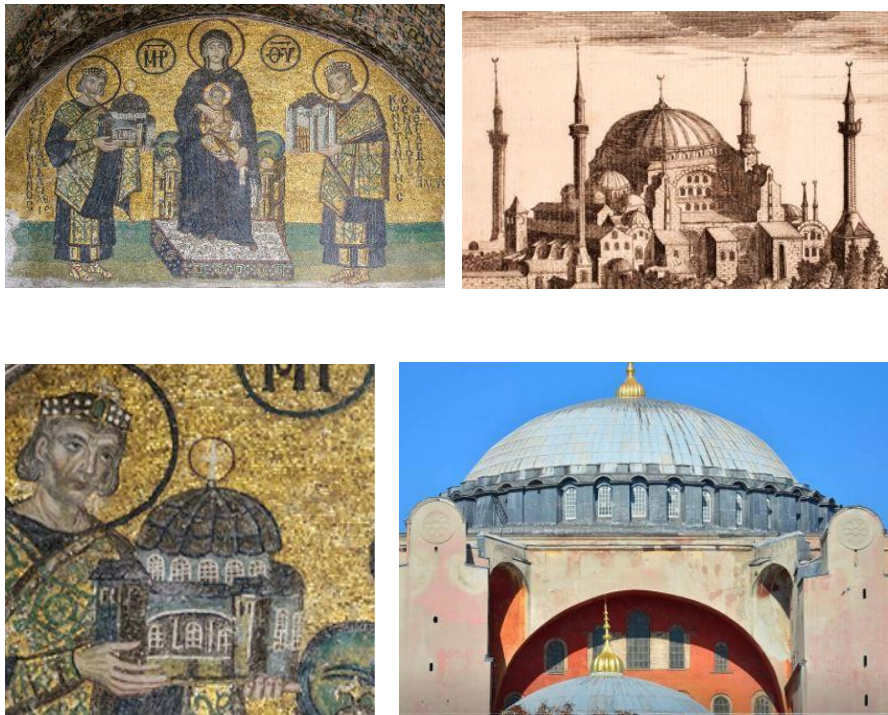


Fig. 101 Hagia Sofia in Constantinople/Istanbul. a. Mosaics at southwestern entrance; b. Drawing from 1719; c. Detail from mosaics at southwestern entrance; d. The cupola of Hagia Sofia in present state of preservation.

As the pictures reveal, the accuracy in the model seems quite evident, showing the magnificent dome, the lateral arches and the types of windows still intact in the church.

The next example is from the West, (fig. 102a/b) a detail on the shrine of Charlemagne from the around 1200 commissioned by Emperor Henry II. There, Charlemagne presents the model of his palatine chapel at Aachen to Christ enthroned. As far as can be observed with comparison to the much-changed church, the model presents high level of likeness to what the church has been estimated to have looked like at the time of the making of this metalwork.³⁷⁶



Fig. 102 Detail from the shrine of Charlemagne. - The palatine chapel at Aachen. Drawing by Albrecht Dürer 1520.

³⁷⁶ Klinkenberg, *Compressed meanings*, 143.

There are instances where there do exist some two different models within the same church, but each portrayed in different manner. Sometimes because of a rivalry between political or church-political entities. An example of this would be two groups of monastic communities at Hildesheim, where one of the models was located in a modest area in the choir but the other was placed on the tympanum itself.³⁷⁷

The last European example is from Avenas in France. (fig. 103 a/b) On a sculpted altar inside the church is a donor portrait which provides a very accurate representation of the church itself.³⁷⁸ Even the number of the window openings in the nave are correct. The church is intact and therefore comparable to the model.³⁷⁹



Fig. 103 a. Detail from donor portrait. b. Notre Dame, Avenas.

Although there is not clear comparison, I would like to draw attention to two Norwegian examples of church models in stone. One is from a clear donor portrait, the other has different circumstances but it is a piece which is important to mention. There are also other kinds of wooden models, which belong to a certain church furnishing but they will not be discussed here.³⁸⁰

The first of the Norwegian examples is from a tombstone, (fig. 104a/b) which has been identified as the one of Earl Skule Bårdsson who died in 1240, brother of king Ingi Bárðarson and one of the regents for King Håkon Håkonsson (1217-1263) while he was still a child. According to written reliable sources, Skule was a great benefactor of the church, and, among other accomplishments, he founded the nunnery Reinskloster in Trøndelag in Western Norway. On this gravestone, from the Nidaros cathedral, he is depicted as a donor with a church model in his right hand, most likely a representation of the abbey church at Rein³⁸¹. The church itself

³⁷⁷ Klinkenberg, *Compressed meanings*, 104, 249.

³⁷⁸ Klinkenberg, *Compressed meanings*, 123.

³⁷⁹ https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:C3%89glise_Notre-Dame_Avenas_14.jpg

³⁸⁰ On these models see: Stein, Mille. "Madonnaskapene i Hedalen og Reinli stavkirker. Forslag til rekonstruksjon av skapenes opprinnelige utseende." *Collegium medievale* 23 (2010): 58-91.

³⁸¹ Ekroll, *Her Hvilir*, 38-39.

is only preserved in ruins, but the model on the gravestone may hint of its appearance, given the accuracy of previously mentioned models.



Fig. 104 Church model on gravestone attributed to earl Skule. - Rein kloster, ruin.

The other Norwegian example is three dimensional. (fig. 106a/b) On the west front of the cathedral of Nidaros, there is a restored screen facade with numerous statues of saints, set each within its niche. Much of this is a modern restoration, but a few sculptures were in situ at the start of the 19th- and 20th-century restoration work. (fig. 105a) However, much stone from the west front had been used in various buildings in the neighbourhood. This fragment that is on display at the exhibition in the archbishops' court in Trondheim must have been a part of a church model. It was found in gravel in one of these re-use sites in the neighbourhood of the cathedral and has not been written about other than in the text in the exhibition catalogue.³⁸²

There are a few possibilities for the origin of the fragment. If it was part of church model in a donor sculpture, it must have been part of a statue of Archbishop Øystein, the patron of Nidaros cathedral. If so, the church model would most likely have had some elements or some obvious likeness to the Nidaros cathedral, as it appeared at that time the sculpture was made. However, if the model is interpreted as an attribute to some saint at the west front, a likeness to the cathedral would have been less likely. Due to the roof part, this could hardly have belonged to church-like version of the tower of St Barbara. Although the temple of Solomon is central in theological thought in the Middle Ages and an important item in medieval art, he is rarely presented with the temple as attribute. King Solomon is more often presented as rex with regalia and law text. If this fragment is interpreted as an attribute, the most likely candidate would be St Peter. Although he is most often presented by the keys, he is sometimes presented either with a church model instead of the keys or in addition to them.³⁸³ (fig. 105b) My conclusion is that it is most likely some remains from a donor sculpture which must have reflected some of the appearance of Nidaros cathedral at the time, given the other examples of church models in donor sculptures. Even if it is considered an attribute of St Peter, the

³⁸² Ekroll et. al. *Museet i Erkebispesgården*, 44.

³⁸³ See for example, Diedrich, "Prolegomena zu einer neuen Siegel-Typologie," tafel XIV, 27.

possibilities are still high that the physical appearance of the theological ecclesia Christ institutes in the New Testament text (Matthew 16:17) would have taken the form of local building, therefore presenting visual elements in the Nidaros cathedral.

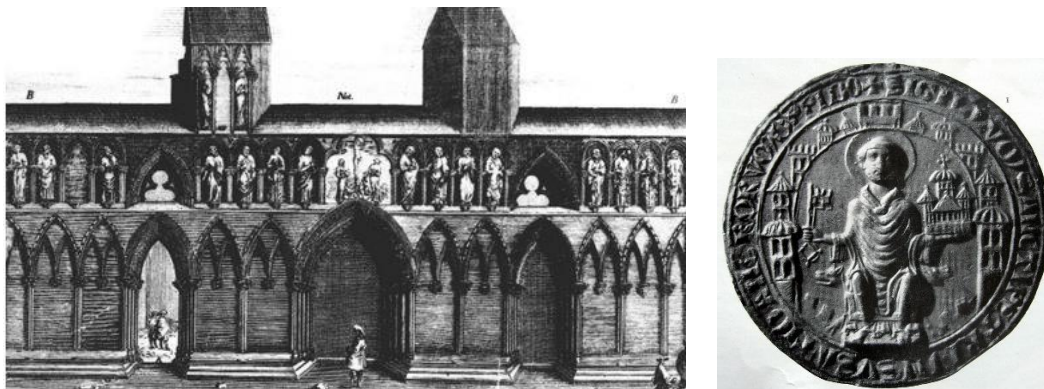


Fig.105 The west front of Nidaros cathedral in 1661. - St Peter presented with a church model as an attribute.

In the stone fragment, there are some versions of window openings and the pattern of the roof cover. These elements are placed on the corner of the stone block. On one side, there are two storeys of openings, it is not quite clear whether the lower is a doorway or a window but the upper one is a two-bay gothic window. On the other side there is a different type of two-bay gothic window and above there is a part of roof with regular horizontal pattern, indicating the cladding. In fact, the exact architectural elements, which can be detected on one part of the Nidaros fragment resonate strongly with the lowest arcade visible in the image from 1661.



Fig. 106 a. Fragment of a church model, originally located at the west front of Nidaros Cathedral. – b. Detail from the etching from 1661.

To sum up the relationship between church models in donor portraits/sculpture in general, there is a very clear tendency that the church models provide at least some schematic presentation of the real church in question up to surprisingly clear “portraits” of churches, presenting several identifiable elements, such as at Avenas.

4.4. Church images in chapter seals – general discussion

Now back into the discussion of church images in chapter seals, which is central in this thesis. As briefly mentioned earlier, there are many elements which the chapter seals from the North-Atlantic area have in common. These seals could perhaps be called the 'North Sea' type or even Old Norse type, which would comprise of Norway, Iceland and the British Isles. The reason for that is that in the Middle Ages, these regions were a connected cultural area due to both politics and trade.³⁸⁴ One of these common items are the types of church images in chapter seals in these areas. Already in 1968 Hallvard Trætteberg in his publication on ecclesiastic seals from the diocese of Bergen, Norway and again in 1977 in his publication on Oslo seals had pointed out the likeness of Norwegian seals to many of the seals from England and Scotland. His work must have been unknown to the authors on the material from the British Isles published in the 1980s and 1990s and will be discussed here.³⁸⁵

Much more has been written on seal material from the British Isles than Norway or Iceland, therefore the following observations on British material are relevant as an introduction and important reference for the whole discussion here.

As mentioned earlier, Markus Späth has rather recently made important contributions to interpretations of architecture in corporate seals, particularly those of Canterbury cathedral, with emphasis on the third seal. In those articles, he builds on previous research of which the writings of Heslop have special importance in the context of this present thesis. This applies especially to Heslop's articles on early English seals, as well as the corporate seals of Canterbury and Norwich cathedrals. These texts have value for many of the seals from the Nidaros archdiocese, as they share similar elements. This has to do with how buildings are presented in pre-conquest British seals and how that tradition develops. In articles from 1980 and 1984, Heslop points out that before 1100, the use of simple church images in chapter seals was common in the British Isles, but later, probably inspired from trends at the continent, images of the patron saints became more in use.³⁸⁶ All this research rests on the editions on various types of British seals by Birch, Laing and Pedrick from around 1900. This is re-enhanced in further writings of Heslop and presented in the overview of British seals by Harvey and McGuiness in 1996. There they also point out that there is a great variety in the imagery of British chapter seals, ranging from church buildings only to a depiction of a patron saint, with many variations in between of these two approaches. Also, by then (1996) there was still

³⁸⁴ See for example Gunnar Karlsson, *Iceland's 1100 years*, 89-127; *Íslenskur söguatlas* I 69, 117. For English influence on Norwegian culture see for example: Blindheim, "Engelsk stilinnflutelse" 638-656 and Taranger, *Den angelsaksiske kirkes indflydelse paa den norske*.

³⁸⁵ Trætteberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens bispedømme ca. 1250-1530," 65-67, 74-77; Trætteberg, *Geistlige segl i Oslo bispedømme ca. 1200-1537*, 32-33.

³⁸⁶ Heslop, "English seals from the mid ninth century to 1100," 7-9; Heslop, "Seals," 299-300.

a lack of research in many aspects of the corporate seals.³⁸⁷ Their work in this respect is based on Heslop's research. He continued with work on the presentation of church buildings in chapter seals in a 1996 article, which was an overview of the seals of Norwich cathedral. There he draws attention to the very emergence of this mixed type of church building and figures. He points out that before that time, a chapter community that wanted to order a matrix in late 11th and early 12th centuries Britain could choose from either having the matrix made within the pre-conquest Anglo-Saxon tradition with an image of church building or use a depiction of the patron saint as evident in many continental examples.³⁸⁸ Pedrick had previously pointed out what categories of imagery were in use in monastic chapter seals at that early point in time: 1) entire portraits of patron saint 2) saint in imitation of regal style enthroned 3) religious building from various points of view 4) part of buildings with half-length figure of patron saint above roof.³⁸⁹ In addition to this, there are also continental examples of church building only, such as the chapter seal of Speyer (13th century) and St Gertrude in Nivelles.³⁹⁰

In the article on the Norwich seals, Heslop explains the circumstances of the emergence of the mixed type which became so common in chapter seals from the British Isles.³⁹¹ The earliest example of this combination of building and figure is the first chapter seal from Norwich cathedral priory (c.1125-1140). Heslop explains the type as a fusion between one which had its origins in the Holy Roman Empire and shows the emperor within the walls of Rome on one hand, and on the other, a church image, a motif derived from the earlier Anglo-Saxon tradition.³⁹² This combination of church building and figures came to be very common among the chapter seals in the British Isles for a long time and the same applies to the imagery in cathedral chapter seals from the Nidaros archdiocese.

This development can be conveniently explained by presenting the seals from Canterbury cathedral. They are well preserved and include three stages in this development, which has importance in the context of this thesis. Again, it was Heslop who discussed them and their context thoroughly in an article from 1982. The three generations of the Canterbury seals are the following: the oldest is dated to the early 12th century (appr. 1107-1155) (CI); (fig. 107a) the second is attached to charters from just before 1160 and until 1220 (CII); (fig. 107b) And the

³⁸⁷ Harvey and McGuinness, *A guide to British medieval seals*, 99-100.

³⁸⁸ Heslop, "The medieval conventual seals," 443.

³⁸⁹ Pedrick, *Monastic seals of the XIIIth century*, 18.

³⁹⁰ Späth, <https://de.slideshare.net/StadtASpeyer/stadtsiegel-und-dom>; Diedrich, "Prolegomena zu einer neuen Siegel-Typologie," tafel VIII.

³⁹¹ Heslop, "The medieval conventual seals," 443-450.

³⁹² Heslop, "The medieval conventual seals," 444-446.

third (fig. 107c-d) is more accurately dated because there are existing documents on when the matrix was ordered, which was in 1232. That seal remained in use until the 16th century.³⁹³



Fig. 107 a. Canterbury cathedral, first seal (early 12th century, b. second seal (c.1160-1220); Canterbury cathedral, third seal (1232-16th century), c. obverse and d. reverse.

In reference to the two earlier Canterbury seals, I would like to bring in a topographic factor which has relevance at this point in the thesis. As briefly discussed in the introduction where the taxonomy of seals was explained the category of topographic images tend to have relevance to real constructions in the location connected to the seal owner, for examples, city gates or even bridges.³⁹⁴ This can be very clear in city seals, which in many cases represent real and still existing buildings, such as the city seal of Boppard (see fig. 111a).

Heslop argues that the first Canterbury seal truly reveals important elements of the cathedral, Lanfranc's church, as it looked like at that time.³⁹⁵ It should be noted that this first seal is the only one with building alone. There is also evidence that the second seal has a topographical accuracy, although it represents an early stage of combination of building and figure. That is based on a trustworthy drawing from the Eadwine psalter, Trinity College, Cambridge, MS R

³⁹³ Heslop, "The Conventual Seals of Canterbury Cathedral 1066-1232," 94.

³⁹⁴ Grandjean, *Dansk Sigillografi*, 182-185; Diederich, "Prolegomena zu einer neuen Siegel-Typologie," 272.

³⁹⁵ Heslop, "English seals from the mid ninth century to 1100," 7-8.

17, 1, fol 284v and 285r, documenting building activities at the site.³⁹⁶ (fig. 108) Heslop only refers to it but does not publish the drawing for comparison, and Späth later comments on this.³⁹⁷

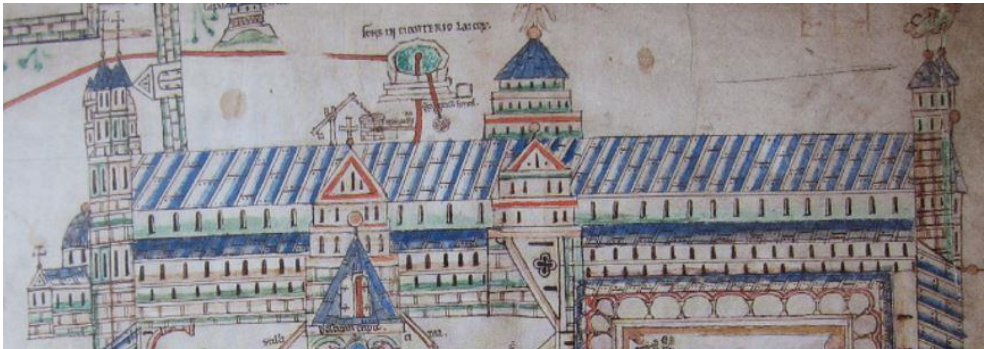


Fig. 108 Canterbury, Lanfranc's church. Drawing from the Eadwine psalter, Trinity College, Cambridge, MS R 17, 1, fol 284v and 285r.

This fusion type which the second seal represents— church building with saint figures-- became widespread in South-East England from the mid-12th century to the middle to the 13th.³⁹⁸ The distribution of the type was, however, over a much larger area, reaching all the way up to Oslo, Bergen and Nidaros.³⁹⁹

In this context it is informative to bring a rather unusual chapter seal of Chichester cathedral into the discussion. It dates from early 13th century but contains a church image of the archaic type without figures placed in horizontal pointed oval shape, and under the building there is an inscription with the phrase: "TE(M)PLV(M) IVSITICIE". Lloyd de Beer has argued that this was a direct exegetical sign inspired by the second seal of Canterbury from the mid-12th century. He argued that the exegetic concept of the *Temple of Justice* was a product of the scholarly scene in Canterbury in the mid-12th century and that concept inspired a reuse of an archaic image type in the 13th century chapter seal of Chichester.⁴⁰⁰ In that context, he pointed out that some of these archaic seals with church images have open doorways, but in the Canterbury one there is an inscription over it referring to the building as a metropolitan Christ church. Lloyd deBeer cites many Biblical verses which can be applicable to symbolic images of buildings, but one interpretation does not have rule out the other.⁴⁰¹ These church images are part of the multi-layered reality of learned ecclesiastics at the time, coexisting with their reflection of the built reality.

³⁹⁶ Fergusson, *Canterbury Cathedral Priory in the age of Becket*, 3-5.

³⁹⁷ Heslop, "The Conventual Seals of Canterbury Cathedral 1066-1232," 97-98; Späth, "Architectural Representation and Monastic Identity," 255.

³⁹⁸ Späth, "Architectural Representation and Monastic Identity," 258.

³⁹⁹ Glenn, *Romanesque & Gothic decorative metalwork*, 122.

⁴⁰⁰ De Beer, "The temple of justice," <https://doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-06/ldbeer/p21-p22>.

⁴⁰¹ De Beer, "The temple of justice," <https://doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-06/ldbeer/p>

The third seal of Canterbury represents a sophisticated type of double matrix which is not relevant in the context of the thesis but will be briefly explained. The prerequisite for such a type of seal was a new technology in the sealing practice, that made it possible to seal both sides of the wax lump at the same time and with matrices of equal size. The obverse of the third Canterbury seal presents a church building, which is more idealized than in the former two seals and represents a complex basilica building with figures inside. The reverse presents the novelty of an iconographic scene instead of mere figures. That is the martyrdom of Thomas Becket, and it has a new three-dimensional quality within the micro-space of the seal.⁴⁰²

It is evident that the chapter seals from within the Nidaros archdiocese fall into the categories represented by the first and the second seals of Canterbury. Several examples of each type are preserved so their imagery both follows the late Anglo-Saxon tradition of a building only, and there is a development towards the type represented in the second one or even with a hint of the richness of figures as visible in the third one, although none of them were double seals.

Concerning the church building as representative of a community it has great value here to present the evidence of a 12th century sermon for the feast of Church dedication (*Icelandic*: kirkjudagur, kirkjudagsprédikun), preserved in the *Icelandic homily book*. In that sermon, the multi-layered essence of the belief system of the medieval church and its connection to the material world presents itself very clearly. Church buildings were some kind of materialisation of the main theories at each time as well as technological development in architecture. All this is very vivid in the dedication sermon:⁴⁰³

Just as a church is made of much of stone or wood, so is people assembled to faith from many nations and tongues. Some Christian people are now in Heaven with God and some in the world. That is why some things which are in the church are the glory of Heaven and some mean the Christianity on earth. A choir means holy men in Heaven but the church itself Christian people on earth. The altar means Christ... A doorway means the righteous faith. etc.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰² Späth, "Memorialising the Glorious Past," 163.

⁴⁰³ *Íslensk hómilíubók. Fornar stólræður*, 147-153.

⁴⁰⁴ "Svo sem kirkja er gjör úr mörgum steinum eða trjám, svo safnast lýður til trúu af mörgum þjóðum og tungum. Sumur kristinn lýður er nú á himni með Guði, en sumur er í heimi hér. Af því merkir sumt það, er í kirkjunni er, himninríkis dýrð, en sumt merkir jarðlega kristni. Sönghús merkir helga menn á himni, en kirkjan kristna menn á jörðu. Altari merkir Krist... Dyr kirkju merkja trúu rétta" etc. *Íslensk hómilíubók. Fornar stólræður*, 148-149. (Transl. GH).

Interpretation of the Bible was central in medieval thought and presented itself in the general way of thinking of society. As a result, this layered symbolism as in this Homily book makes a church image in corporate seals even more comprehensible or natural.

In line with the research question of this part of the thesis, it is now relevant to discuss how individual topographic seals and chapter seals can compare with their relevant churches. To give a broader perspective, the following examples are from outside the Nidaros archdiocese.

4.5. Church images in chapter seals – Individual comparative examples from outside the Nidaros archdiocese

In order to estimate how a chapter seal with church image compares to an existing church building, both items must be properly intact. This comparison is somewhat parallel to the examples provided on the likeness between actual churches and models based on their appearance, and the same precaution must be made regarding the state of preservation of the church buildings. Due to the nature of churches being rebuilt according to new demands at each period of time, it can be difficult to find properly matching churches and chapter seals. Only churches which have preserved enough of original outer items are usable in such comparison. That is evident in the comparison here earlier on church models and actual churches. Part of the problem is the wave of very harsh restoration many important churches suffered in the 19th and 20th century when they were rebuilt in the way architectural scholars at that time thought they ought to be.⁴⁰⁵ In some cases, there are earlier reliable documentation of these churches, either drawings or photographs from before the restoration work. Although those churches had some alterations from later centuries, that state of the building is more trustworthy when it comes to comparison to a seal image rather than the restored look.

There are two types of seals that will be compared to the relevant churches *a) Town seals* with church image *b) Chapter seals* with church image. The reason for bringing town seals into this discussion is the fact that they even more often than chapter seals contain an image of a church. Toni Diedrich has treated the matter in his categorisation of these aspects of seals with church buildings in “Prolegomena zu einer neuer Siegeltypologie” in 1983⁴⁰⁶, but here some comparative samples are provided.

a) The first example (fig. 109a-c) presented here of a church building in a town seal, provides an interesting bridge to the comparison of the church models in donor portraits: the *ad causas* seal of the city of Aachen from 1328. In the seal image there is roughly similar

⁴⁰⁵ Guðrún Harðardóttir, "Skáldað Í Byggingararfinn, " 139-140.

⁴⁰⁶ Diederich, "Prolegomena zu einer neuen Siegel-Typologie," 272, 278.

version of the palatine chapel in Aachen as presented in the donor image on the shrine of Charlemagne.⁴⁰⁷ Here it is interesting to look at the two microarchitectural representations of the chapel. What both images have in common reveals the essence of the concept of the medieval copy as presented by Krautheimer. That is, the representation of the most basic elements in the structure: the central plan church with a narrower elevation at the centre and a tower at one end and choir at the other. The image on the shrine is more detailed than the one in the seal. In both images there are enough elements presented to indicate or facilitate the reception of the image as a proper representant of the palatine chapel itself. This would have been clear to the medieval viewers, although exact details were not provided.

This type of seal would fall into the category of seal of a church founder (*Germ.: "Kirchengrundersiegel"*) according to the useful new taxonomy by Diedrich.⁴⁰⁸



Fig. 109 a. City seal of Aachen (as causas); b. The palatine chapel at Aachen, drawing by Albrecht Dürer 1520; c. Detail from the shrine of Charlemagne.

The second example (fig. 110a-b) is the city seal of Speyer dating from just before 1300.⁴⁰⁹ It has a very recognizable image of the church and has a clear relevance to what it appears today, but because of former restoration work, a drawing from the 17th century is more trustworthy for comparison with the seal image. This drawing shows most of the basic original features in the church, undisturbed by later restoration. Comparing the seal image to this drawing shows that the accent on both east and west end of the church enhanced by the lanterns and the side towers is clearly an emphasis in the seal image. Transepts are not presented in the seal image, nor is the number of window openings accurate but more representative.

⁴⁰⁷ Diederich, "Mittelalterliche Siegelstempel des Rheinlandes," 114, 118; Klinkenberg 2009, 143.

⁴⁰⁸ Diedrich, "Prolegomena zu einer neuen Siegel-Typologie," 272-273, pl. VIII.

⁴⁰⁹ Markus Späth has made a comparison of the Speyer seal both to the church and other seals of the area. See <https://www.slideshare.net/StadtASpeyer/stadtsiegel-und-dom>



Fig. 110 Speyer, city seal. - Speyer. Copper stitch from 1637.

The third example (fig. 111a-b) is the city seal of Boppard in the Rhein area which shows the still existing St Severus cathedral. The seal dates from around 1230, and the image is unusually detailed and accurate about a number of things: the general appearance of the church and its proportions, the form of the eastern towers, and even the number of windows on the side walls and the bell openings in the towers seem to be accurate. In addition, there is a clear reference to stone as building material and the roof is presented with shingles. However, the seal image does not display the basilica form of the nave.⁴¹⁰ It should be noted that it is quite exceptional that this church has not undergone heavy restauration as so many others in modern day Europe; there has only been slight change of the appearance of the roof of the nave and towers. Older drawings confirm this consistency of appearance.



Fig. 111 a.Boppard, city seal. – b. St Severin, Boppard. Copper stitch from 17th century.

The fourth example (fig. 112a-b) comes from Languedoc in modern day France. This version of the city seal of Toulouse is from around 1300 and presents both a castle and a church.

⁴¹⁰ Diederich, "Mittelalterliche Siegelstempel des Rheinlandes, "120-121.

The church presented in the seal image is recognisable by a distinctive feature: the central tower. This is clearly Saint Sernin with its central tower with the many bell openings.⁴¹¹

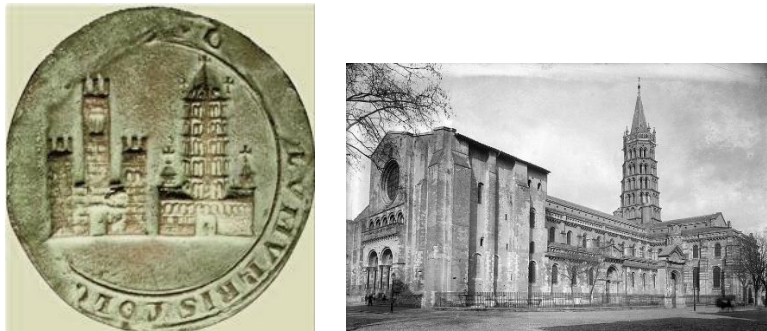


Fig. 112 Toulouse, city seal. - St Sernin, Toulouse around 1900.

The last example is from Kalundborg in Denmark. (fig. 113) There are several generations, from 15th to 16th century, of the city seal, all of them with similar image. This image presents a detached seal dated to ca.1350.⁴¹² Here it is very evident how the real church is translated into the seal image: the five distinctive towers are used as representative of the church building, an excellent example of a *pars pro toto* translation of a real building into a seal image. This would belong to the type, *Stadtsabbreviatursigel* in the typology presented by Diederich.⁴¹³

The 13th century St Mary church at Kalundborg with its distinctive towers has not undergone severe restauration and is also well documented in older visual reliable sources, such as a view of the city from the mid-18th century.

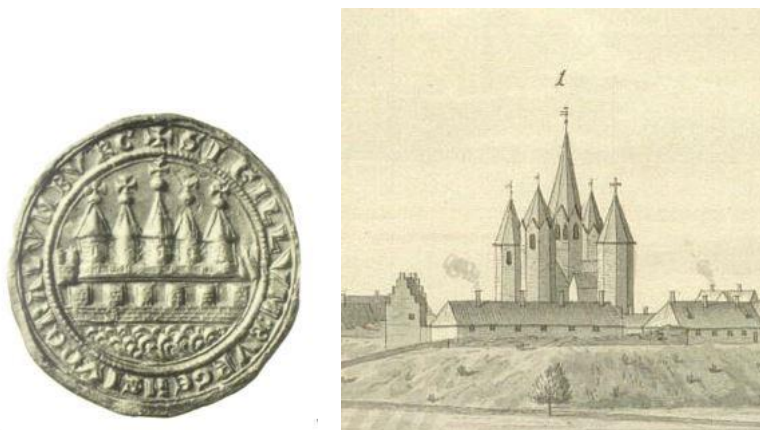


Fig. 113 Kalundborg, city seal. - Kalundborg. Copper stitch from 1753.

⁴¹¹ Bedos, *Sceaux des villes. Corpus des sceaux Francaise de moyen age*, 505. There are a number of examples of city seals in this volume where actual buildings can be recognised.

⁴¹² Grandjean, *Danske Købstæders Segl*, 25-26, tavle 6; *Dansk Sigillografi*, 183, 227, 299, 367.

⁴¹³ Diederich, "Prolegomena zu einer neuen Siegel-Typologie," 277, pl. XIII.

Now the comparison continues into church buildings in the seals of the chapters which operated in and in the vicinity of these church buildings proper.

b) The first example of a church image in a chapter seal in this section is from St Gertrude in Nivelles. (fig. 114a-b) The form of the chapter seal is pointed oval, and it has a very clear image of a church building. The date is unclear, but it is interesting to see a continental example of church building without figures in a seal. But unlike the Anglo-Saxon types, the form is pointed oval.⁴¹⁴ It is evident that the image in the seal is designed to be a recognisable copy of the appearance of the actual church. When it comes to comparison of the seal image and the preserved church, it is necessary to compare the seal image to a 19th/early20th-century photograph rather than the church building as it stands today. This is because of restoration work after a severe damage in World War II, when the appearance may have been taken back to an “original” where the seal image might have played a part. When the seal image is compared to the photograph from before restoration it is evident that both images have some basic elements in common: the central westwork and the cylindrical flanking towers to each side; even the rhythmic texture of the side towers. The seal image indicates a western apse which is not visible in the photograph.



Fig. 114 Nivelles, chapter seal. - St Gertrude Nivelles before restoration.

The second example (fig. 115a-b) provides a bridge or a link to the discussion in part a) concerning Speyer. While in the other example there was the image of the church in the city seal, here there is the church image in its own chapter seal (c. 1212). It is of great value to have examples of these two kinds for comparison. It is interesting how the chapter seal is much less detailed than the city seal about the appearance of the church. Nevertheless, the main forms are

⁴¹⁴ Diederich, "Prolegomena zu einer neuen Siegel-Typologie," 272, pl. VIII.

clear in the chapter seal, that is the distinctive towers and lanterns and the emphasis on both end of the building. It is, however, surprisingly different from the representation in the town seal. To add to the documentation background, I present here a different and younger drawing of the cathedral for the comparison. Despite the later changes of the building, it still reveals these main features presented in both seals.



Fig. 115 Speyer, chapter seal. - Speyer. Copper stitch from 1637.

The third example (fig. 116a-b) is the second seal of the Collegiate church of Holy Trinity in Edinburgh from 1574.⁴¹⁵ It is a somewhat late example, given the time frame of this thesis, but due to how details are presented in the seal image, this example is useful.



Fig 116 a. Second seal of the Collegiate church of Holy Trinity, Edinburgh (impr. 1574). b. Drawing from 1840's, of the now demolished collegiate church, Edinburgh.

The fourth example (fig. 117a-b) is the chapter seal of Old St Paul in London.⁴¹⁶ Although now lost, there are sufficient visual source material for comparison with the seal. For example, a drawing in a map of London from mid-16th century. It is quite evident that the seal image represents the main features of the church and is particularly accurate in the design of the tower.

⁴¹⁵ Birch, *History of Scottish seals*, 89, 223.

⁴¹⁶ McEwan, *Seals in medieval London*, 17.



Fig. 117 The chapter seal of Old St Pauls, London (reverse). - Drawing of Old St Pauls on a map from the 1550's.



Fig. 118 a. St. Andrews, chapter seal. – b. St Andrews, secret seal. c. St. Andrews, ruins.

The last example (fig. 118a-c) is the chapter seal and the *ad causas* seals of St Andrews cathedral, both from the early 13th century. The chapter seal is 76x22 mm in size and the *ad causas* seal 73x51 mm. Both seals show images that are clearly the same building. It is a side view of a church, with tower at the west end to the left, a taller central tower, and a choir to the right with a lower roof. There is a doorway in the south side between the towers, and there the roof of the nave and choir is clad with shingles. The central tower on the *ad causas* seal has some horizontal cladding while the other seems to have shingles. To the left of the tower is the cross of St Andrew and to the right a Latin cross.⁴¹⁷ The pointed oval form is less common among the seals with buildings. Another example is the seal of St Gertrude in Nivelles. There is a strong resonance between the church buildings in the seals and what is left of St Andrews cathedral. The ruins still witness of the towers, especially the tall central tower. The general

⁴¹⁷ *Catalogue of the seals in the Treasury of the Dean and Chapter of Durham*, pl. 68; An online revised edition is more detailed: http://reed.dur.ac.uk/xtf/view?docId=ark/32150_s1vh53wv76d.xml#SMNKS.

proportions in the ruins seem also similar to the seal images. There is a clear resonance between the ruins.⁴¹⁸

Interpreted through the lens of Krautheimer's theory of the essence of the medieval copy, these examples of comparison of seal image and actual buildings reveal that all these chapter seals can be considered as reliable visual sources for the appearance of these buildings or at least their essential parts in the eye of the medieval viewer. They can therefore be (and have indeed been) used as documentary sources, within some range of variation of accuracy.

4.6. Reliquary shrines as church images?

In addition to the comparison of chapter seals and existing churches, there is one aspect that needs to be addressed: whether a church building in a seal image could in some cases rather be a representation of a house shaped reliquary shrine from within a church rather than a representation of the church building itself.

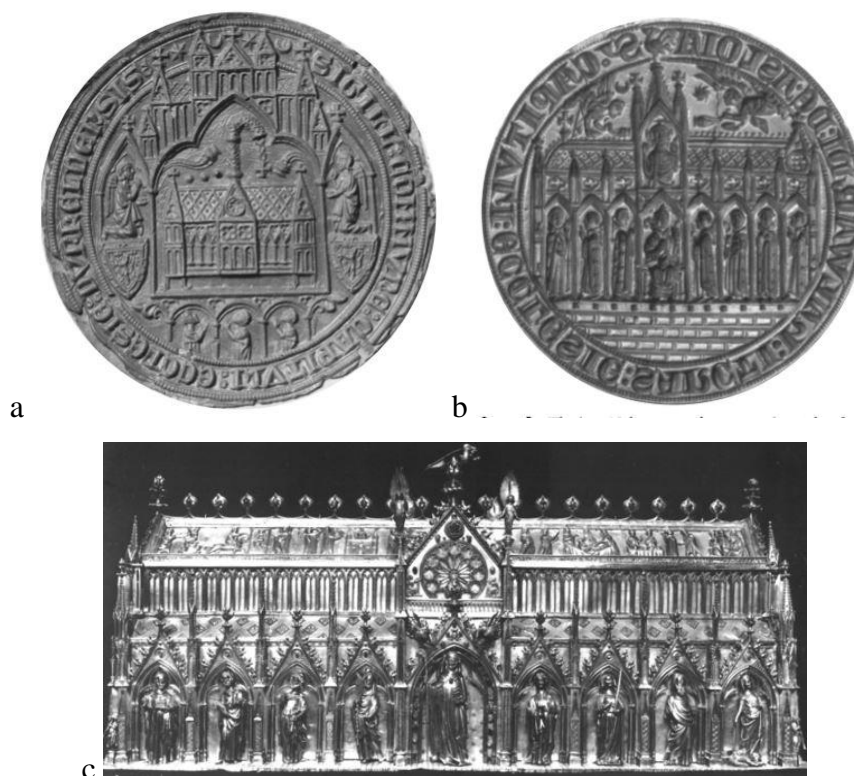


Fig. 119 a. Dunkeld, chapter seal, (obverse); b. Oslo, St Hallvard chapter seal; c. St. Gertrude shrine, Nivelles.

Virginia Glenn has pointed out that there is strong evidence that the image on the obverse of the 13th century chapter seal of Dunkeld (fig. 119a) is indeed a depiction of a crozier reliquary shrine. The church formed structure in the seal rests on support, as to be placed on a

⁴¹⁸ Birch, *History of Scottish seals*, 28; on St. Andrews cathedral, see Cruden, *Scottish Medieval Churches*, 92-100.

surface as a free-standing object, rendering the interpretation of the structure as reliquary shrine very convincing.⁴¹⁹ She also suggests that the same could apply to the chapter seal of Oslo (fig. 119b) and discusses the similarities between the Oslo seal and the 13th century shrine of St Gertude in Nivelles, (fig. 119c) just as Hallvard Trættemberg also pointed out in 1977. Despite the similarities, of the seal image and the reliquary shrine, Trættemberg states that the chapter seal must present a church and not a shrine, but Glenn argues for the opposite.⁴²⁰ Glenn, however, made the interesting observation that both matrices must have been made by the same engraver, probably in France, and makes some suggestions concerning that.⁴²¹ Trættemberg, in his work, had also brought up the question of whether the Oslo matrix was made in Norway or France but left it open.⁴²² Here, Glenn also brings in an interesting thought, which is quite relevant to this thesis: did the patrons, who ordered the seals provide some kind of sketches? In the case of the specific look of the local crozier, Glenn is inclined to believe so.⁴²³ If so, one can reflect on other seals and the role of the patrons when seal matrices were ordered at the workshops of various seal engravers in general. Judging from the vast amount of preserved seal images from various areas, which is so closely linked to the visual reality of the patrons, their will must have been conclusive in the appearance of each seal. The artistic liberty of the seal engravers must have been only in rather small details in the imagery of the matrix.

This discussion on the relation of Dunkeld and Oslo seals will be taken in depth in the part on individual chapter seals, but it is interesting to discuss here the question of whether a reliquary shrine would in some cases have the same appearance as the church they are located in. This also touches on the continental trend on how images of saints seem to be more common in chapter seals, while the combination of saints and church images were popular in the British Isles and further north. The Dunkeld version of presenting a house-form reliquary shrine in a seal image is therefore a very interesting fusion of these elements.

Concerning the question of whether a depiction of a church in a seal image could in some cases be the image of a shrine instead of an actual church, there are hints that this is rarely the case, and the Dunkeld seal may be a rare exception. To explore this, it is necessary to look at other possible examples, but it requires the preservation of a chapter seal, a centrally important reliquary shrine for that particular church and the church building itself. When it comes to such comparison material, there are two main categories: 1) large house-form reliquaries of local saints and 2) small house-form reliquaries in general. The state of preservation of reliquaries

⁴¹⁹ Glenn, "The Late 13th-Century Chapter Seals of Dunkeld and Oslo Cathedrals," 440.

⁴²⁰ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 32-33; Glenn, "The Late 13th-Century Chapter Seals of Dunkeld and Oslo Cathedrals," 440-443.

⁴²¹ Glenn, "The Late 13th-Century Chapter Seals of Dunkeld and Oslo Cathedrals," 441.

⁴²² Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 33.

⁴²³ Glenn, "The Late 13th-Century Chapter Seals of Dunkeld and Oslo Cathedrals," 446.

leaves us with rather few large house-shaped reliquary shrines still existing. Such large shrines only date back to around 1000.⁴²⁴

We are provided with the preservation of both church and shrine at Aachen, and it is obvious that the shrine is no reflection of the appearance of the church or the miniature version in the chapter seal. At St Gertrude in Nivelles, there is also preservation of both shrine (a photographic documentation of the damaged original), church and the chapter seal, presented here above. It is very clear that the shrine does not bear any resemblance of the church building that houses it, while the chapter seal is clearly modelled on the church. This can be used as the most convincing argument that the chapter seal of St Hallvard in Oslo hardly presents a shrine, although the seal image looks very similar to the St Gertrude shrine, which, again, looks similar to many church buildings in similar gothic style. Given the style of the preserved medieval cathedrals in Norway, they have enough gothic elements to it for the Oslo seal to be a representation of a real church in such a style. The discussion on that is continued in the chapter of the Oslo seal.

4.7. Summary

This introductory chapter on various aspects of interpretation of architectural imagery in chapter seals is an exploration of the agency these kinds of seals had for the medieval public. Various aspects of what can be labelled as compacting a macro item into a micro one have been discussed. The aim was to provide an insight of what can be categorized as translations of buildings to miniatures, especially seal images.

When it comes to church images in chapter seals, it seems that on the continent chapter seals most often have a saint's figure but in early Anglo-Saxon examples from the British Isles rather plain church buildings. Despite these general trends there are also continental examples of church buildings in chapter seals.

There was a focus on certain types of seals from the British Isles, where a specific fusion of image of a church building and saints' figures were evident in the local material. This phenomenon can be called a fusion of an older Anglo-Saxon tradition, where corporate seals had plain church buildings, with more continental trends of presenting patron saints in chapter seals. The most common form is, as Heslop first identified, a church building with figures inside or figures linked to the building. Markus Späth further developed the hypothesis that the almost theatrical scenes within church buildings, provided a collective memory as evident in

⁴²⁴ Ekroll, "The shrine of St. Olav in Nidaros cathedral," 167-169.

the third seal of Canterbury. These types of seals were emphasised here because seals from the Nidaros archdiocese show similar elements.

The main aim of this chapter was to explore the medieval way of compacting the macro into the micro, not just comparing the church images in chapter seals to actual churches. In order to give a further understanding of this, the parallel of church models in donor portraits was explored. Systematic comparison of models to preserved churches reveals that these models can be surprisingly reliable sources of the appearances of actual churches. Some are even very detailed and were clearly made to be recognizable to medieval viewers. At least they present the key elements of the structure, which is in line with the theory of the architectural copy, presented by Richard Krautheimer based on his observations on early medieval material. This is very much in line with what can be observed in seal images in similar comparative processes. The likeness between seal church and actual church is more striking in city seals, but chapter seals also show a clear likeness of church images, although they are more often portrayed in the manner of the medieval copy, that is, with identifiable main features, a sort of, *pars pro toto*. This is essential in the interpretation of individual seals. The town seal and the chapter seals of Speyer are interesting examples in this respect. Even though the chapter seal is less detailed, it does contain all the major building elements in the preserved cathedral and the older documentations of it.

In context of this thesis, it was also necessary to discuss how Virginia Glenn identified an image of an actual reliquary and not a church building in the chapter seal of Dunkeld. The question then became relevant of whether a church image in a chapter seal would perhaps rather be a church-shaped reliquary than an image of the church itself. With very few exceptions, such as Dunkeld, images in chapter seals are more than likely to take the form of the church proper rather than the main reliquary shrine where possible to compare. This is very clear in the case of St Gertrude in Nivelles, where both church and shrine are reliable source material and the chapter seal clearly presents the church and not the shrine.

With that observed, I suggest that it is possible to say that presenting a house-shaped reliquary in a chapter seal can be interpreted as another appearance of the fusion type of the chapter seals from the British Isles. That is, a seal image of a church and saint figures combined was first seen in the chapter seal of Norwich and became very clear in the second seal of Canterbury. The reliquary image in the Dunkeld seal could be labelled as the same kind of thought: A portraiture of enclosed saints, whether a structure enveloping saint or saint figures in a structure. In all those cases this represents some kind of portraiture or a copy of a communal identity, either monastic or secular, an enshrined saint or a building.

As has been discussed, in the medieval mindset it was very relevant to use a church building to represent a religious community in a seal image. The testimony of the Icelandic homily sermon is quite strong in that direction since it uses the church building as a metaphor for Christian community. But did it matter what kind of building the image consisted of? One step towards an answer to this important question comes from the study of the donor portraits where “portrait”-like models had somewhat legal function in their “identicalness”; that is “they documented the rightfulness and legality of a foundation” of a church by that person.⁴²⁵ Sources on close supervision by patrons during the seal making process can be considered further support in favour of seal image representing actual buildings.⁴²⁶

This survey clearly points in the direction that church images in chapter seals are more likely than not to present at least some basic elements of the actual churches they belong to, but sometimes in quite some details. Such a church image in chapter seals can be interpreted as a copy of the communal identity at each place, which means including the most important elements, a true representation of a *pars pro toto*.

These reflections are essential before examining the individual examples of the Nidrosian chapter seals with include architectural elements, from the cathedral and royal chapters as well as the monastic ones.

⁴²⁵ Klinkenberg, *Compressed meanings*, 248.

⁴²⁶ Gardner, "Who were the microarchitects?" 40.

5. Architectural elements in cathedral chapter seals

5.1. Nidaros cathedral

Research history

The style and architectural features of the great seal of the Nidaros chapter (fig 4/120d) has been discussed in several instances. It was first published in *Diplomatarium Arnemagnæana* in 1786, but the first art historical evaluation was made by Harry Fett in 1903. He does not discuss the architectural features themselves, but he considers it a characteristic architectonic seal and comments on it being less beautiful than the Stavanger chapter seal. However, he points out that the Nidaros chapter seal is one of the most important Norwegian seals in the gothic cosmopolitan style.⁴²⁷ Thor Kielland in 1927 also made a comparison to the Stavanger seal where he referred to the architectural scheme being similar in both of them. He refers to the Nidaros chapter seal as similar to the Stavanger seal, which he treated before, but of an older and stricter type.⁴²⁸

Hallvard Trætteberg, in a catalogue published in 1953, on the 800 years anniversary of the archdiocese, interpreted the building in the seal image as the octagon of the Nidaros cathedral, and the figures in the seal as the archbishop with his canons. He also states the problem with the dating of chapter seals in general.⁴²⁹ Trætteberg also touches upon this Nidaros chapter seal in various instances in his overview articles in *Kulturhistorisk leksikon*, and the treatment of the seals in Bergen diocese in 1968 and Oslo diocese in 1977.⁴³⁰ His discussion in the article on Cathedral chapter seals in the *Kulturhistorisk leksikon* is the most detailed. There, he elaborates on the interpretation of the seal image as representing the octagon. As the structure enveloping the grave of St Olav, the patron saint of Nidaros cathedral, he considers that the octagon is the most relevant part of the building to be represented in the cathedral main seal.⁴³¹

In her survey of Scottish metalwork, Virginia Glenn in 2003 commented on the general likeness of the Nidaros chapter seal to the St Magnus one. She points to the fact that both the structures lack a base, and they seem to be floating within the dimensions of the seal where the figures seem to stand on individual corbels. She also points to certain similarities in the roof pattern in both seals.⁴³²

In 2008, and again in 2009 Erla Hohler published a study on the re-engravings of the Nidaros chapter seals in the historic context of the disputes between the archbishop and the canons

⁴²⁷ Fett, "Studier over middelalderens norske sigiller," 93.

⁴²⁸ Kielland, *Norsk guldsmedkunst i middelalderen*, 170.

⁴²⁹ Trætteberg, "Geistlige segl i Nidaros," 44, 53-54.

⁴³⁰ Trætteberg, "Norge: Domkapitelsegl," 204.

⁴³¹ Trætteberg, "Norge: Domkapitelsegl," 204.

⁴³² Glenn, *Romanesque & Gothic decorative metalwork*, 122.

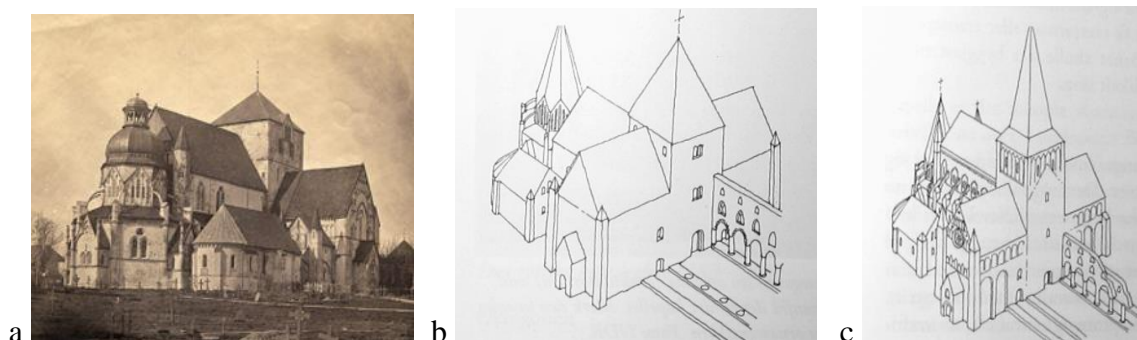
around 1300. She does not interpret the building in the seal in detail, as the focus of the article is on the added roses linked to the disputes. However, she does state that details in the architecture indicate the latter half of the 13th century as dating for the making of the matrix.⁴³³

The edition of the seals in the Nidaros bishopric published in 2012 provides a detailed and neutral description of both versions of the seal. In the sections on the image and its meaning, the editors refer to Trættemberg's interpretation of the church building as possibly the octagon but concludes that most likely the church image is meant to be symbolic.⁴³⁴

In an article on St Olav in the seal material published in 2016, Øystein Ekroll comments on the architecture in this seal as representing a gothic cathedral or perhaps a reliquary in the form of a cathedral. The image could therefore both represent the Nidaros cathedral, and the church formed shrine of St Olav.⁴³⁵

Discussion

The authors that have treated this seal have touched on many of its aspects. It is interesting that interpretations are not fixed in time. For example, Kielland (1927) and Ekroll (2016) share the thought that the architecture in the Nidaros seal could represent reliquary in the form of church building; that is, the St Olav shrine itself.⁴³⁶ Only few of the commenting authors go into real details of the seal. Both Fett and Kielland draw individual seals into their more general discussion of certain periods of style. Trættemberg and Ekroll are most clear in the interpretation of the architecture of the seal, but Kielland, Glenn and the editors of *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme* are the authors that go furthest into reflecting on certain details in the seal image.



⁴³³ Hohler, "The re-engraved matrix," (2008) 78; Hohler, "The Re-engraved Matrix (2009), 117-118.

⁴³⁴ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 94.

⁴³⁵ Ekroll, "St. Olav og olavssymbolikk," 154.

⁴³⁶ Kielland, *Norsk gultmedkunst i middelalderen*, 170-171; Ekroll, "St. Olav og olavssymbolikk", 154.



Fig. 120 Nidaros. a. The octagon before restoration. b-c. Reconstruction drawings of the building phase of Nidaros cathedral in 1180-1220 and 1220-1250 in comparison with the chapter seal (d).

One element of the seal has not been mentioned in the previous literature: the slightly curved shape of the roof that connects the end-gables. The types of pinnacles have likewise not been treated. Details in the seals can only be studied to the extent of the clarity of the preserved wax impressions. The editors of *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme* have confirmed that the wax impression of the architecture itself is the same in the older and younger versions of the seal, with the only change of the added rose outside the building.⁴³⁷ This means that the architecture can be studied in all the preserved examples of wax impressions. The fact that the oldest impression is attached to a document from 1281 means it is no younger than that. The general long use of chapter seals raises the question of whether this seal dates from the erection of the archdiocese in 1152/3 very relevant. Hallvard Trætteberg suggests dating to the second part of the 12th century, c. 1190, based on stylistic elements, and Erla Hohler also wondered about the same idea in her 2009 article on the re-engraved matrices.⁴³⁸ If that is correct, it is interesting to consider in what building phase the cathedral at Nidaros was at that time. The visual comparison of the seal image and different building phases of the cathedral around 1200 according to what is known about the building history of the church, reveals some resemblance between the seal and the real building. (fig. 120a-d)

In the context of medieval visual culture, the interpretation of the image in the seal can possibly involve both inside and external views of the church or a simultaneous frontal and side view as common in manuscript illuminations.⁴³⁹ As Virginia Glenn pointed out, the church building in the seal image does not have a specific base as seen in many other chapter seals with church buildings but rather floats within the sphere of the borders of the seal.⁴⁴⁰ The slight sway of the roof line and the way the pinnacles are presented could be interpreted that the

⁴³⁷ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 96.

⁴³⁸ Trætteberg, "Norge: Domkapitelsegl," 204; Hohler, "The Re-engraved Matrix (2009), 123-124.

⁴³⁹ Krautheimer, "Introduction to an "Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture,"" 5, 13-14, 20.

⁴⁴⁰ Glenn, *Romanesque & Gothic decorative metalwork*, 122.

image is some kind of a fusion of a church and a reliquary. Through the eye of the medieval receiver of the image, it may not have been essential to make the distinction between a church or a reliquary. It may have been considered symbolically same: the church/octagon and the shrine, both considered the envelope of St Olav/Christ. The reliquary of St Olav no longer exists and therefore a comparison in that respect is not possible. The church building in the chapter seal of Nidaros cathedral can perhaps be interpreted on at least these two levels, as building and a shrine, which both incorporate the emphasis on St Olav.

5.2. Bergen cathedral

Research history

Harry Fett does not treat the Bergen cathedral chapter seal (fig. 6/121a) in his essay in 1903, neither does Kielland in 1927. However, Hallvard Trættemberg has treated this seal thoroughly in his 1968 article, "Geistlige segl i Bergen bispedømme", published on the occasion of 900 year anniversary of Bergen bishopric. There, he presented his keen discovery of the close similarity of the Bergen cathedral chapter seal to the one of Inchaffray abbey in Scotland. (fig. 121a-b) In addition to that, he presented in the article he some two possibilities in the interpretation of the church image in the chapter seal: 1) as a west front and 2) as a side view but considers the west front interpretation more plausible. He emphasises that the church image is meant to represent Bergen cathedral, but at the same time it can hardly be interpreted as a realistic representation of the actual church. One of the reasons for that is that the appearance of old Bergen cathedral is completely unknown, only where and when it was built, which was in the years 1070-1160.⁴⁴¹ The present Bergen cathedral was not classified as such until the Reformation; the building was earlier part of a Franciscan friary and before that St Olaf in Vågsbotn.⁴⁴² This state of non-preservation of the original cathedral building places the Bergen seal in a group with the Icelandic monastic seals where information about the actual churches are often scarce and no physical remains are left of the buildings.

Trættemberg has presented stylistic dating of the seal to ca.1250 or around 1300, judging from the way the image was cut as well as the type of the letters in the legend. It is also known that Trættemberg pointed out the evidence that the Bergen chapter did use a seal on a document in 1276, but it is difficult to tell if it was this one or a possible earlier type.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴¹ Trættemberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme," 74-77.

⁴⁴² Bugge, *Bergens domkirke*, 26.

⁴⁴³ Trættemberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme," 74.

Part of Trættemberg's analysis of the architecture is to discuss whether those seal images present a side view or a front view of the seal churches, and he is more inclined for the latter.⁴⁴⁴

Trættemberg compares the church architecture and the type of tower combination to a number of actual churches with two tower westfronts, such as the abbeys of St Étienne and St Trinité in Caen, Durham cathedral, Lund cathedral, Limburg cathedral, the parish church St Mary assumption Andernach, the parish church of St Ják in Hungary, Goslar, the abbey church of Murbach in Alsace, Braunschweig and Hildesheim cathedrals in Germany. He touches on more of early westfronts, such as Tveje Merløse in Denmark, and tries to explain the west tower development as elements from city gates as seen in imperial coinage.⁴⁴⁵ He then draws the west front of Salisbury Cathedral into the discussion as a source of inspiration for the seal engraver of these two seals which contain some Romanesque elements.⁴⁴⁶ But Salisbury cathedral (1220-1270), however, was fully gothic except the roof element which is visible in both the other seal images. Trættemberg then elaborates on what kind of view is presented in seals with church building only or combined with figures. In some, such as Oslo and Uppsala, there is a clear side view of the churches, but other seal churches, such as Faversham abbey in Kent, Norwich cathedral, Ely cathedral, Middleton abbey in Dorset and Peterborough cathedral, present a west front view, which is comparable to the Bergen/Inchaffray seals. Trættemberg concludes his discussion by pointing to the seal of Roskilde cathedral from around 1130, which has a portrait of St Lucius and the towers of a church in the background. That image has been interpreted as presenting an older phase of Roskilde cathedral.⁴⁴⁷

Concerning the striking similarity of the Bergen and Inchaffray seal, Virginia Glenn, as Trættemberg earlier, examines the architectural details in both seals and notes the most obvious difference between the two seals: the Inchaffray seal has a quatrefoil in the gable while the Bergen one has an oculus. She attempts to pair the Bergen seal with surviving architecture in Norway and points to the Nidaros cathedral as a most obvious possibility; however, she reminds us that at this time the west facade was in construction phase.⁴⁴⁸

Discussion

It is difficult to add to the comprehensive study Trættemberg made on the Bergen chapter seal and the observations and wider cultural context presented by Virginia Glenn. I agree with Trættemberg about the visual likeness of the seal image to the churches of St Étienne in Caen

⁴⁴⁴ Trættemberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme," 74-77.

⁴⁴⁵ Trættemberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme," 76-77.

⁴⁴⁶ Trættemberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme," 77.

⁴⁴⁷ Trættemberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme," 76-77.

⁴⁴⁸ Glenn, "Thirteenth-century seals - Tayside, Fife and the wider world," 157-158.

and Salisbury cathedral. In addition to that, it can be pointed out that the architecture in these seals is similar to the style of the third Canterbury seal from 1232, (fig. 107) which Trættemberg does not mention, and a number of British chapter seals with similar architectural frames. However, the Canterbury group is much more sophisticated. At least it can be stated that the Bergen/Inchaffray seals belong to this type or genre of architectural representations in British chapter seals in the 13th century.

Trættemberg brings up the question whether the cathedral of Bergen would have had a two-tower facade like Mariakirken (St. Mary), or a more dominating central tower like the cathedral in Nidaros, but he does not find the seal image likely to be able to answer that question.⁴⁴⁹ I tend to agree with that, all the other Norwegian cathedrals have two towers, either at the west end, as Nidaros, Hamar, and Oslo, or the east end, as Stavanger. This makes it highly unlikely that the Bergen cathedral would not have had a set of towers.

The still existing Mariakirken has its west front reasonably intact despite many fires.⁴⁵⁰ The possibility of that church being a reflection of the appearance of Bergen cathedral in the 13th century cannot be ruled out.



Fig. 121 Bergen, cathedral chapter seal. – Inchaffray abbey, chapter seal. - The ruins of Inchaffray abbey in 18th century.

Neither Trættemberg nor Glenn truly examine the size of these two seals, although Glenn does mention that there is a 4 mm difference in diameter. In this matter, it needs to be taken into account that the state of preservation varies between the two seals; the matrix itself of the Inchaffray seal is preserved, but the Bergen seal exists only in wax impressions that are not complete. This fact does influence the measurements of the seals. Furthermore, the given measurements seem to differ a bit in different publications and in the British museum catalogue.⁴⁵¹ However, the Bergen seal from 1303 is complete enough to enable an accurate

⁴⁴⁹ Trættemberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme," 75

⁴⁵⁰ Guðrún Harðardóttir, Stöpull Páls biskups Jónssonar, 10-12.

⁴⁵¹ For some reason the size given in the online catalogue of the British Museum is 77 mm but Glenn gives 70 mm and Harvey & McGuinness have it 69 mm.

measurement of the diameter. The diameter of the Inchaffray matrix is 69/70 mm⁴⁵², but the Bergen seal measures 65 mm according to Trættemberg's edition.⁴⁵³ Here it should be taken into account that the diameter of the matrix is slightly larger than what is impressed in a wax lump. It would be plausible to subtract 2-3 mm leaving it with 67mm. That brings the size of Inchaffray very close to the size of the Bergen seal.

However, the measurement most needed for this discussion is in fact the diameter of the image itself inside the legend. The size of the image area in the Inchaffray seal measures 54 or 55 mm.⁴⁵⁴ The same kind of diameter in the Bergen seal is 52 mm at the largest, even 49 mm if measured by the inner ring.⁴⁵⁵ This clear difference in size rules out the possibility that the matrices were made from a common template.

One could also ask the question: why would a cathedral chapter accept an image in its seal that differed much from the actual church? Why have the church in the seal image imaginary and not an echo or a symbolical representation of the actual building that has strong ties to the identity of the church? How was the reception? How far from reality could an idealized version of a person or an institute become in a seal image at the cost of identifiability?

In this context of seal image as a representation of identity of an institution; both kings and chapters were partly presenting some idealized versions of themselves, their image, public image, or power image. But at the same time the seal image had to be identifiable as their own.

The architecture in the chapter seal of Bergen cathedral is most evidently related to the stylistic reality of the 13th century, concerning both the saint's figure and the architectural style. However, how similar the image is to the built reality will have to remain a question in this case. There is not even an assistance from the Inchaffray site. (fig. 121c) It appears that there are only documented remains of monastic buildings, but no traces of the church itself.

5.3. Stavanger cathedral

Stavanger I, first seal

Research history

⁴⁵² Harvey & McGuiness, 13 give the measurement of 69 mm and Glenn in 1999 gives 70mm. I used a photograph of a wax impression of the Inchaffray matrix taken with a scale to find out that the diameter from outer borders of the legend is 66 mm. The 69 or 70 number clearly applies for the most extreme outlines of the matrix itself.

⁴⁵³ Trættemberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme," 74.

⁴⁵⁴ Measurement made by the author using a photograph with a scale from the British Museum, online catalogue.

⁴⁵⁵ Measurement by the author on a photograph specially provided by the Riksarkivet, Oslo. Thanks to Tor Weidling and Simon Troan.

The comprehensive discussion by Kolsrud in his 1933 article is the only published research on the older Stavanger seal. (fig. 9) Fett and Kielland only treat the younger Stavanger chapter seal in their works.⁴⁵⁶ Trætteberg just mentions this older Stavanger seal as a type in the coverage on cathedral chapter seals in *Kulturhistorisk leksikon*.⁴⁵⁷ On the other hand, Trætteberg was involved in the Kolsrud article as he made the reconstruction drawing which accompanied the article.⁴⁵⁸ (fig. 122)



Fig. 122 Stavanger I, reconstruction by Trætteberg.

The interpretation and reconstruction drawing by Hallvard Trætteberg in the 1933 article supports the interpretation of the walls of the church as stone blocks. Both Thorsen and Trætteberg had a trained eye in this respect and their interpretation can be taken as quite reliable, although not indubitable. Kolsrud dates the seal to the first part of the 13th century and is quite confident about that the seal engraver must not have meant to interpret a “takryttare” on the seal but rather a tower.⁴⁵⁹ A big theme in the article is the search for evidence for the original appearance of the west end of Stavanger cathedral in its earliest state. The seal image is compared to a text in Fornmannasögur, where it is described how someone ran into the church and up to the tower.⁴⁶⁰ Kolsrud also comments on how buildings or parts of buildings are presented in seals according to some examples from other sites can, in some cases, at least be reflections of real buildings. Kolsrud comes to the conclusion that the earlier Stavanger chapter seal fits into that category and is a reflection of the real building.⁴⁶¹

Discussion

The limited access to the appearance of the older Stavanger seal has resulted in it not being visible in overviews of the Norwegian seal material. Very recent digital publications of a wide

⁴⁵⁶ Fett, "Studier over middelalderens norske sigiller," 93; Kielland, *Norsk guldsmidekunst i middelalderen*, 170.

⁴⁵⁷ Trætteberg, "Norge: Domkapitelsegl," 205.

⁴⁵⁸ Kolsrud, "Tillegg," 30.

⁴⁵⁹ Kolsrud, "Tillegg," 31.

⁴⁶⁰ Kolsrud, "Tillegg," 29.

⁴⁶¹ Kolsrud, "Tillegg," 38.

range of manuscript material, such as Digetalesamlinger of the Arnamagnæan Institute, has changed this for the better just recently.⁴⁶²

As mentioned above, the main aim of Kolsrud's 1933 article is to align the tower-like structure in the older seal image with other sources (written) on the appearance of the church at the time. One of these is a description in *Konungasögur*.⁴⁶³ In this study, Kolsrud reviews many aspects of medieval Norwegian tower structures, and I agree with his interpretation on the seal image being kind of a "quote" of the building as it probably was at that time. However, the written sources are not clear as to what type of tower is mentioned, but at least it can be ruled out that it was a roof tower because the phrasing of the narrative would have been different.⁴⁶⁴

What is difficult in all this is how unclear the image really is on the wax fragments in its present state of preservation, and the examination relies on the drawings in *Segltegningsamlingen*, which are much clearer than the wax impressions.

The first Stavanger seal belongs to the early Anglo-Saxon tradition, as the building does not contain any figures.

To offer a comparison to what is known about Stavanger cathedral at the time when the seal was in use, I will refer to the observation of the editors of *Stavanger domkirke* from 1933. Construction work on the cathedral was probably begun shortly after the foundation of the diocese in 1125, which was split off from the vast old diocese of Bergen. It is of interest in this context that the first bishop of Stavanger, Reinald, was English according to *Heimskringla* and the style of the church is considered to be in the Anglo-Norman style.⁴⁶⁵ This starting point of Stavanger diocese is made under the rule of King Sigurd the Crusader (*Sigurður Jórsalafari*). The cathedral is thought to have been fully built around 1150. The other thing which is known from the written sources about the church is that it burnt down in 1272.⁴⁶⁶ In addition to this scant information from the written sources, an important addition was made during research on the stone walls of the cathedral itself in preparation for restoration work in mid-20th century. Part of the original western wall was revealed, which contained some remains of a western tower.⁴⁶⁷ This fact renders the seal image in Stavanger's first seal in harmony with facts of the building itself.

⁴⁶² <https://sprogsamlinger.ku.dk/q.php?p=ds/hjem/mapper/21472>

⁴⁶³ Kolsrud, "Tillegg," 29.

⁴⁶⁴ Guðrún Harðardóttir, *Stöpull Páls biskups Jónssonar*, 70-71; *Soga om Birkebeinar og Baglar*, II, 37-38.

⁴⁶⁵ *Heimskringla* II, 753; Ekroll, *Med kleber og kalk*, 175-178.

⁴⁶⁶ *Stavanger domkirke*, 1-2; Fischer, *Domkirken i Stavanger*, 9-12; *Íslandske annaler indtil 1578*, 139.

⁴⁶⁷ Fischer, *Domkirken i Stavanger*, 21.

Stavanger II, second seal

Research history

Harry Fett in 1903 comments on the younger Stavanger seal (fig. 10/124b) in his overview of the Norwegian seals. He considers it of a good style and the architecture in it harmonic, and he points to other seals in this part of the country as refined and artistic.⁴⁶⁸

Thor Kielland in 1927 points out the likeness of this Stavanger seal to the one of St Hallvard in Oslo.⁴⁶⁹ Kielland (in the notes) discusses how these seals belong stylistically to what he calls the Oslo school and groups together, the Oslo, Stavanger II and St Mary in Oslo seals.⁴⁷⁰

Oluf Kolsrud in 1933 has discussed the Stavanger chapter seals in the most details, but, as with the older one, primarily in relation to a discussion of earlier appearances of the tower of Stavanger cathedral. He labels the seal building as strongly stylized high gothic in a similar style as other chapter seals in the Norwegian dioceses except Hamar. He places the Stavanger II seal in a wider context and comments on how many of the chapter seals from the British Isles have parallel appearance to the Norwegian or the Nidrosian ones.⁴⁷¹

In addition to direct observations on the image itself, Kolsrud discusses some of the general concepts on seals in general (as discussed in the introduction of this thesis).

In analysing the building in the seal, Kolsrud points to the bell and to top of the tower as realistic feature. The placement of the tower, however, should be considered an artistic move as he had reasoned that the tower was most likely a west tower.⁴⁷²

Kolsrud pointed out that the merlons on the tower had the 'Ghibeline' form while merlons on church towers in Britain had the simple shape called Guelf in the Italian 12th-century context.⁴⁷³

In his general article on cathedral chapter seals in *Kulturhistorisk leksikon* 1958, Sheffer briefly mentions the Stavanger seal and that it contains architecture, and he speculates about the possibility of the city seal and the chapter seal being the same. He draws that conclusion because of what the seal is called in the charters they were attached to: the seal of the place “*Staðarins innsigli*.”⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁶⁸ Fett, "Studier over middelalderens norske sigiller," 93.

⁴⁶⁹ Kielland, *Norsk guldsmedkunst i middelalderen*, 170.

⁴⁷⁰ Kielland, *Norsk guldsmedkunst i middelalderen*, 273 and notes. (He actually adds Jämtlands landskapsegel from 1305 to this group)

⁴⁷¹ Kolsrud, "Tillegg," 40.

⁴⁷² Kolsrud, "Tillegg," 40-42.

⁴⁷³ Kolsrud, "Tillegg," 43.

⁴⁷⁴ Scheffer, "Domkapitelssigill," 202. Here it should be noted that the word “*staður*” has reference to church property in old Icelandic. This factor should be investigated in another occasion.

Hallvard Trætteberg, in the same volume of *Kulturhistorisk leksikon*, “Norge: Domkapitelsegl,” does not comment much on the Stavanger seals other than the fact they have a church image. The first seal he assumes that the building is realistic, but in relation to the second seal, he comments on the similarity the Norwegian chapter seals have with the ones from the British Isles.⁴⁷⁵

Virginia Glenn, in her article from 2002 draws the second seal of Stavanger into the discussion on the relation between the Oslo seal and the Dunkeld ones. She describes the images in more details than the former authors who treated the seal. She interprets the Stavanger II seal in general as local work inspired by the chapter seal of St Hallvard. Her opinion of the bell and crown on top of the tower-like structure is that it may either have been a matter of personal taste of the clerics or craftsmen involved.⁴⁷⁶

Øystein Ekroll comments briefly on the seal in an article on the town of Stavanger. He accurately points out that the dedication of the church according to the legend is to the Trinity and not St Swithun, thus placing it among the Christ churches in the English tradition. However, the chapter also had a secret seal with an image of St Swithun.⁴⁷⁷

Discussion

After a fire in Stavanger cathedral in 1272 the rebuilding work was mainly undertaken during the office of bishop Arne (1277-1303). A new choir in the Gothic style was added to the earlier Romanesque nave. This resulted in substantial changes in the appearance of the cathedral over these decades.⁴⁷⁸ This could explain the change of the chapter seal which must have taken place sometime between 1307 and 1319 according to observation of these seal types.⁴⁷⁹ The last use of the older one was in 1307 and the first documented use of the new one is in 1319. (fig. 123)

⁴⁷⁵ Trætteberg, “Norge: Domkapitelsegl,” 206.

⁴⁷⁶ Glenn, “The late 13th-century chapter seals,” 453.

⁴⁷⁷ Ekroll, “Fjernsyn – nærsyn – vidsyn. Stavanger sett på avstand,” 43.

⁴⁷⁸ Ekroll, *Med kleber og kalk*, 175-178.

⁴⁷⁹ *Riksarkivet Oslo*, Segltegninger, kirkelige segl B, Stavanger.

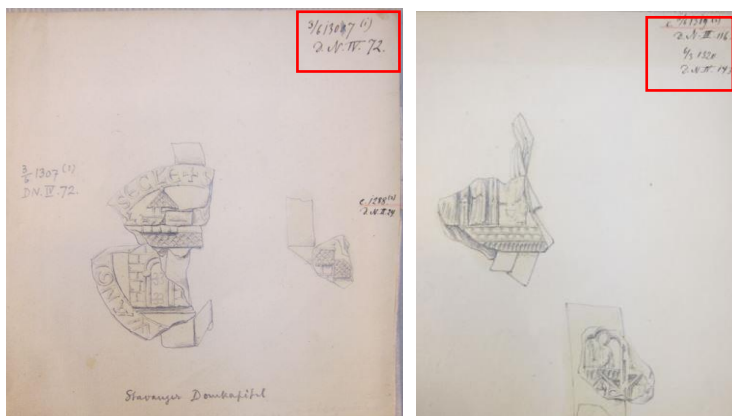


Fig. 123 Diplomatic information highlighted on the drawings of the older and younger Stavanger seals in Riksarkivet Oslo.

Reflecting on the form and iconography of the Stavanger II seal, the simple fact that the cathedral did not have transepts, rules out that the seal image was meant to represent a frontal view of the church. In comparing the preserved structure and the seal image it is evident that there is little likeness between the two except for the gothic stylistic element. However, there is one possible visual parallel between the two in some of the details. This applies to the separation between the windows in the gothic choir. The buttresses have a roof-like finish at the top, which reminds us of the form of the separation between figures in the seal. The figures with the censers on both sides of the tower are reminiscent of the ones in the Oslo cathedral chapter seal, which resonates with what Glenn pointed out about likeness of the Stavanger and Oslo seals.

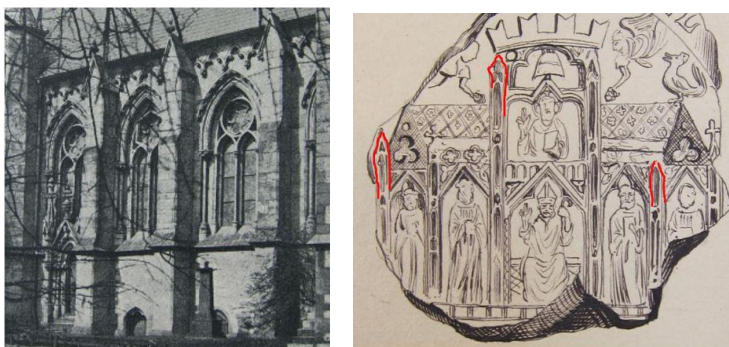


Fig. 124 Stavanger. The gothic choir and the second seal.

In his thesis on the gothic choir, Morten Stige does not make use of this seal, although he presents Trættemberg's reconstruction drawing when introducing the original building without further comments.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁸⁰ Stige, *Stavangerkorets utvidelse og innflydelse*, 30.

Concerning the dedication question Ekroll pointed out, it is clear that the church was perceived as dedicated to St Swithun at some point, for example, in the letter that has the 1288 fragment of the first seal attached to it.⁴⁸¹

Considering the crown on the tower like structure, the merlons on top it are an interesting feature. No such structure is now preserved in mainland Norway, but there is such a feature in the town seal of Nidaros (fig. 125a) in the building to the right, which symbolises the secular part, while the ecclesiastic one is to the left. The cathedral ruin at St German in Peel in the Isle of Man, (fig. 125b) former in the Nidaros diocese, provides an example of such features in actual ecclesiastic building. Due to the good preservation of the Stavanger cathedral the crenellation in the later seal may have more of a symbolic value as a union of ecclesiastic and secular power.



Fig. 125. Nidaros, city seal. - Peel, cathedral ruin.

5.4. Hamar cathedral

Research history

Rather little has been written about this seal. (fig. 8/126a) The richest comments are in the work of Harry Fett from 1903, in which he describes the seal and comments on the dating. He states that, despite the seal only being preserved on late medieval letters, its stylistic dating would be around 1300. He interprets the seal image in the way that it is presenting a central tower and west towers. He also points to the sun and moon to the sides of the church as being symbols of Christ's divinity and eternity. In relation to seals with church images in general, Fett notes that this type of seals (that is with church image) would not be considered a "portrait" of a proper building and sometimes is a clear fantasy. However, in some instances, Hamar being one of them, some visual relation seems to be between the seal image and the real building.⁴⁸²

⁴⁸¹ See DN II, nr. 24. "till Svitthvns kirkiv gef ek korsbræðrom"

⁴⁸² Fett, "Studier over middelalderens norske sigiller," 88-91.

Kielland mentions the Hamar seal but does not comment on it in detail. He, as does Fett, uses it to ask the question whether the seals of Hamar, Mariakirken in Oslo and the one from Utstein abbey did indeed reflect some likeness of the actual buildings.⁴⁸³

In the section on cathedral chapter seals in *Kulturhistorisk leksikon*, both Scheffer in the general section and Trættemberg in the chapter on the Norwegian material only briefly mention the Hamar seal. Scheffer comments on it as in line with the style of other cathedral chapter seals in Norway, and Trættemberg claims that the seal has a frontal view and is likely to accurately reflect the real building.⁴⁸⁴

In her 2015 edition of the ecclesiastic seals in the diocese of Hamar, Brita Nyquist mainly describes the seal in a similar way as Fett does, without further commenting on how the building material in the walls and roof are presented. She also comments more generally on how the architectural motifs in the seals from Hamar diocese seem to follow the general trends in the architecture of the time rather than being true representations of the actual buildings.⁴⁸⁵

Discussion

It is worth having a closer look and reconsidering the interpretation of the seal image of Hamar, which is based on what Fett published in 1903. I do not quite agree with Fett's view, especially what he and the later authors consider to be two front towers or that the seal image represents a frontal view of a church. The tower-like structure on top of the roof to the left and the small cross on the roof to the right makes a schematic side view of a structure more likely. This would indicate a west front with a tower-structure to the left and an apse, with a small cross on top, to the right. In fact, the block on the right is slightly lower than the one on the left. (fig. 126a)

How does this interpretation compare to the remaining church ruin?

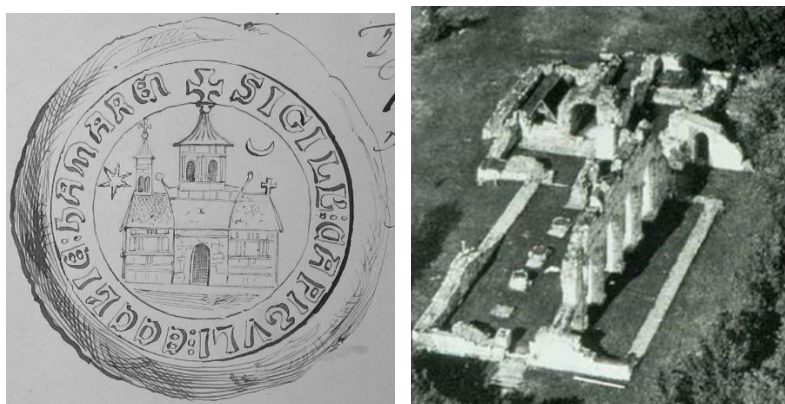


Fig. 126 a. Hamar, chapter seal and b. the cathedral ruins.

⁴⁸³ Kielland, *Norsk guldsmedkunst i middelalderen*, 123.

⁴⁸⁴ Scheffer, "Domkapitelssigill" 203; Trættemberg, "Norge: Domkapitelsegel," 205.

⁴⁸⁵ *Geistlige segl fra Hamar bispedømme*, 20-21, 92.

According to research on the ruin, Hamar cathedral was a basilica with a two-towered west front and with a central tower. The seal image could therefore be a quite clear *pars pro toto* representation of the actual church.

Considering the date of the seal, I agree with Fett's suggestion of around 1300 as a date for the seal based on the letter type in the legend. The fact that the seal belongs to the old Anglo-Saxon type of seals, with plain church building and no figures, is also of interest. It is the only cathedral chapter seal in the archdiocese in this style. The date of the examples from the British Isles is problematic. Some of them, like Hamar, have only survived in late examples.⁴⁸⁶

Maybe there is a clue in the architectural representation in the Hamar seal itself. What, in my opinion, is the representation of a choir, to the right, the roof is slightly lower than the middle section. Such lower choirs were common architectural features in early Norwegian stone architecture and considered clear Romanesque elements. The seal must, therefore, be made before any later (gothic) alterations, which often included an enlargement of the choir.

It can therefore be suggested that the Hamar seal may have remained the same from the foundation of the cathedral chapter in mid-12th century.⁴⁸⁷

5.5. Kirkwall cathedral

Research history

In his *History of Scottish seals*, Birch gives an interesting description of the seal image (fig. 12/127a): "This...gives a sectional view of the cathedral, an edifice of a pleasing design and proportion. Perhaps inspired by a Norwegian prototype, provided with a lofty central tower between two spires and side turrets"⁴⁸⁸ Virginia Glenn, in her 2003 edition of *Scottish metalwork*, has given the most detailed description and discussion about this seal. She provides a stylistic dating to 1300-1320 and presents that this seal is different from other Scottish seals, which may point to Norwegian provenance. She compares the Orkney seal to the one of the Nidaros chapter, as mentioned in the discussion on the Nidaros seal above, and comments on the general likeness of the Nidaros chapter seal to the St Magnus seal. She points to the fact that the both the structures lack a base, and they seem to be floating within the dimensions of the seal where the figures seem to stand on individual corbels. She also points to certain

⁴⁸⁶ Heslop, "English Seals from the Mid Ninth Century to 1100," 7.

⁴⁸⁷ Observation of the author.

⁴⁸⁸ Birch, *History of Scottish seals*, 41-42.

similarities in the roof pattern in both seals.⁴⁸⁹ Glenn discusses the preservation history of the matrix, as well as the iconography of the seal. She points out that, although Birch interpreted the central figure as St Magnus, both dress, hairstyle and attribute are in line with traditional representation of St Paul. She also proposes that this can be taken as an allegorical parallel to St Paul because of how St Magnus was killed. Similar parallels are also present in some of the St Magnus liturgy.⁴⁹⁰

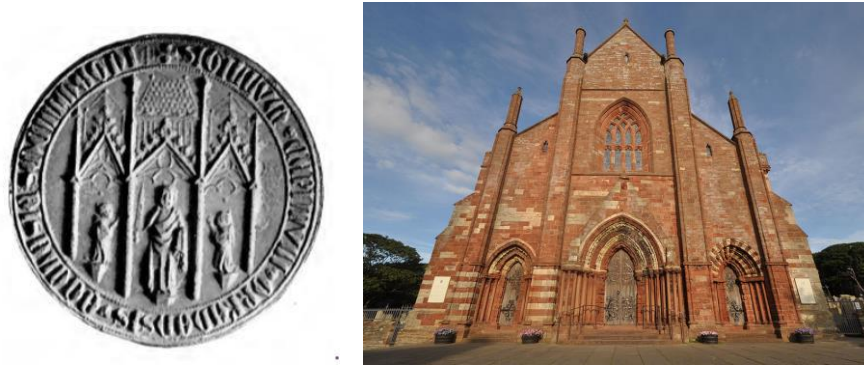


Fig. 127 a. St. Magnus, Kirkwall, chapter seal. – b. Kirkwall, The west front of St Magnus cathedral.



Fig. 128. The St Magnus seal in comparison with a certain form of timber framed buildings; a. Detail from St. Magnus, Kirkwall, chapter seal. – b. St. James, Kington, Worcestershire (15th century tower); c. St James, Marston, Warwickshire.

Discussion

There is not very much to be added to the comprehensive treatment of the seal by Glenn. However, I do not agree with her interpretation of the similarity of the pattern of the roof above the central figure in the St Magnus seal and the one of Nidaros chapter. Although the pattern in both seals is probably representative of some kind of roof shingles, the one on the Nidaros

⁴⁸⁹ Glenn, *Romanesque & Gothic decorative metalwork*, 122.

⁴⁹⁰ Glenn, *Romanesque & Gothic decorative metalwork*, 121-123.

seal is made with long criss-cross lines creating diamond shape pattern with different fill, but the St Magnus seal has a more naturalistic representation of shingles with round edges.

I should also like to draw attention to another item in the background of the St Magnus seal: the feature beneath the patterned roof. (fig. 128a) It does not recall a stone-built structure as many other seals do. Instead, it is composed of lines that rather compare with timber frame technique. When compared to surviving timber frame structures, the most relevant visual parallel to the form of the central background structure in the St Magnus seal would be the type presented, for example, the towers of St James, Kington, Worcestershire (15th century tower) (fig. 128b) and St James, Marston, Warwickshire (fig. 128c).⁴⁹¹ There the combination of stone and timber frame within the same building is of interest.

If this structure on the seal is meant to represent a timber-frame building, what information does that reveal on the relationship between seal image and the built reality around St Magnus in Kirkwall? What kind of buildings were at the site at this time? Is it possible that there was some kind of a gateway built in this manner? Or does the seal image take in the surrounding of the seal engraver? Where was the matrix engraved?

Glenn, in her overview from 2003, points to a possible Norse origin of the matrix, but these building element in the background would rather apply to the built environment in the British Isles.

It is quite clear that the structures in the Orkney seal do not portray the cathedral itself accurately as seen today, but they do represent some of the basic elements in the west front, the threefold doorway and the rims, which accentuate the edges of the nave and the side aisles.

5.6. Oslo cathedral

Oslo cathedral, Hallvardskirken/St. Hallvard

Research history

Harry Fett and Thor Kielland both treat the great Oslo matrix (fig. 11) in their art historical surveys on the Norwegian seal material. Fett states that it is made by an artist from the Oslo area during the reign of Håkon V of Norway (1299-1319). He does not comment much on the architecture in the seal.⁴⁹² Kielland, on the other hand, discusses the seal in quite some detail. He is certain that the church image in the Oslo seal represents a reliquary shrine similar to the

⁴⁹¹ https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:13th_Century_Church_of_St.James_at_Kington._-geograph.org.uk_-_6980.jpg and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long_Marston,_Warwickshire#/media/File:Long_Marston_Church_-_geograph.org.uk_-_55852.jpg

⁴⁹² Fett, "Studier over middelalderens norske sigiller," 91.

St Gertrude shrine in Nivelles, which has a very similar appearance. He compares the key elements in both the shrine and the seal. He points to the gables, the arcades, the decoration at the rooftop and even the bird on the upmost part of the rooftop in both items. Kielland states that the architecture in the seal must be imaginary and could just as well be engraved out of elements in either a tabernacle or even a bishop's throne.⁴⁹³ These are interesting points, and one of them, that is, the seal image as reflection of bishops' thrones will be discussed in the section on architecture in the seals of the bishops. Kielland also brings up the question whether the St Hallvard shrine would possibly have been some echo of the appearance of the gothic version of St Olav shrine in Nidaros.⁴⁹⁴

In his discussion on the St Hallvard chapter seal, Trættemberg points to the emphasis on architecture in chapter seals before 1350. He points to the fact that in Sweden, Denmark and Netherland, these types of seals mainly have an image of the patron saint. This is mentioned with the exceptions of Roskilde, Uppsala and Åbo, which have a saint in an architectural frame. He does not, however, bring up an explanation or connect the Norwegian material to other areas as he does in his article on the Bergen seals. Trættemberg reflects on the age or the dating of the matrix and how much older it is than the oldest wax impression which dates from 1299. He applies stylistic analysis and comes to the conclusion that the style of the design in the matrix is rather early. In this, he relies mostly on the type of the letters in the legend for the date for the matrix. Based on such an analysis, and compared to the French manufactured second seal of the Norwegian king Eirik Magnusson, Trættemberg comes to the conclusion that the matrix must have been made between June 1287 and July 1289. Trættemberg then reflects on whether the matrix is a Norwegian or a French work but does not propose an answer to that since it is very difficult to tell.⁴⁹⁵



Fig. 129 a. The St. Hallvard cathedral chapter seal; b. St Gertrude shrine, Nivelles.

⁴⁹³ Kielland, *Norsk guldsmedkunst i middelalderen*, 170.

⁴⁹⁴ Kielland, *Norsk guldsmedkunst i middelalderen*, 171.

⁴⁹⁵ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 32-33.

Discussion

I would like to develop further on the discussion of the question whether the Oslo matrix presents a church or a church-form reliquary. Trættemberg and Glenn have opposite opinions on this. Trættemberg is more inclined towards the image showing a church and Glenn more towards a reliquary. Trættemberg is quite firm that, despite the likeness of the Oslo seal to the St Gertrude shrine, the church image in the seal must be meant to represent the cathedral itself with its canons. It is possible to say that Kielland and Glenn have more in common in their opinions of the seal building in the Oslo seal than Trættemberg and Glenn.

Considering other aspects of the Oslo seal, Glenn presents an interesting point, which is a possible use of a sketch for the Dunkeld seal provided by the patron to the seal engraver to render the image in line with the order.⁴⁹⁶ There is at least good evidence on close collaboration between patrons and seal engravers.⁴⁹⁷

The Dunkeld seal (fig. 119a) can be labelled as the hagiographic type as beneath the house-form shrine there are figures kneeling in prayer. The Oslo seal on the other hand is primarily the building, and its base is emphasized by clear building blocks with the canons placed inside the building.

5.7. Mariakirken Oslo (Church of St Mary, royal chapter)



Fig. 130 Seal of the royal chapter St. Mary (Mariakirken) in Oslo.

The architectural elements in this seal of the royal church of St Mary in Oslo are different in essence from those in cathedral chapter seals. It is a hagiographic seal, and therefore the architecture is not a central feature as in the seals of the cathedral chapters. It is on one hand the frame above the scene with the Virgin and on the other, the church model presented to her by the kneeling king, the donor. The church model has been examined in relation to reviewed information on the history of St Mary in Oslo, but the conclusion was that the model did not

⁴⁹⁶ Glenn, "The late 13th-century chapter seals," 446.

⁴⁹⁷ Gardner, "Who were the microarchitects?", 40-41.

have a reference to the appearance of the actual church.⁴⁹⁸ However, that can be questioned on the grounds that it would be a stronger statement for the king to present some “identicalness” in that seal to the church he was remodelling in the manner evident in some cases of church models in donor portraits being “portrait-like” for legal reasons.⁴⁹⁹

5.8. Conclusion on cathedral chapter seals with architectural elements

The cathedral chapter seals of Nidaros archdiocese have a number of things in common: they are all round and have some kind of ecclesiastic structure within. Two of them, the first Stavanger seal and the one of Hamar, contain church buildings without any figures, but all the other seals are composed as a mixture of figures and buildings. The seals of Nidaros, Stavanger II and Oslo form one group, and the ones from Bergen and Kirkwall another.

These cathedral chapter seals show clear similarities to chapter seals from both England and Scotland and two of them, Bergen and Oslo, have direct connections to Inchaffray and Dunkeld.

When these cathedral chapter seals were compared to the relevant cathedrals or cathedral remains or ruins, the similarities are not clear. In the cases of Nidaros, Stavanger I and Hamar, there seem to be some fundamental parallels to the actual buildings; in all cases, though, the similarities are best interpreted through the perception of the *pars pro toto*. The “realism” of the other seal churches is more far-fetched, and their appearance is more general; however, they always have some identifiable link, such as the basic forms of the churches. The case of Bergen is probably closest to being imaginary, since it has a twin image in the seal from Inchaffray abbey in Scotland. That is illustrative of the rich cultural connections between these areas and a striking similarity between Norwegian and British seals.

This overview provides some answers to one of the research questions of the thesis, that is on the possible visual authority of the seals of Nidaros as a metropolitan centre. The answer is positive in the way that all the chapter seals have some versions of architecture, but in other respects, it is more negative. The Nidaros chapter seal does not seem to have influenced the other apart from presenting a church building. Their style seems to follow different patterns, partly dependent on the cultural relation in the North Sea area at the time.

⁴⁹⁸ Stige & Snekkestad, “The Church of St. Mary in Oslo” 183. The seal image can be interpreted differently from what is done in that article.

⁴⁹⁹ Klinkenberg, *Compressed meanings*, 248.

6. Architectural elements in monastic chapter seals from the Norwegian and Icelandic dioceses

6.1. Nidarholm, Nidaros diocese (Benedictine)

Research history

Harry Fett comments on the Nidarholm seal (fig. 15) in 1903, before any excavation took place at the site. He speculated about round churches in Norway, presenting the one in Tønsberg (Olavskloster). He pointed out that in Nidarholm are remains of a round bastion, (fig. 131b) and he asks the question whether that could possibly have been built on the remains of a former round church. He also comments on the uniqueness of this seal image and suggests that the matrix must be somewhat older than the oldest preserved copy from 1281.⁵⁰⁰

Kielland in 1927 comments on the excellent craftsmanship of the seal and its Romanesque qualities and wonders whether this was a representation of the abbey church. He proposes the possibility that the seal was made at the same workshop as the town seal of Nidaros.⁵⁰¹

Trættemberg in 1963 comments on the seal in the article on the categories of monastic seals in *Kulturhistorisk leksikon*. He repeats what Bugge wrote on the Olavskloster in Tønsberg 1931 on the open possibility of the seal portraying the Nidarholm abbey church at a certain point in time. Trættemberg proposes the year 1200 as a possible dating of the seal and then comments on the symbolism embedded in such a round church. He concludes that the image could be representing all items at once: the Holy Sepulchre church in Jerusalem, the octagon in Nidaros cathedral and baptisteries in general.⁵⁰²

In an overview of Norwegian monasteries published in 1987, Gunnes comments that it is difficult to prove or disapprove the possibility of a round church at Nidarholm.⁵⁰³ In the same publication, Lunde comments on the seal in a similar way and points to the fact that it is difficult to pair the excavated material with the seal image. However, he does make an additional point and opens up the possibility that there could have been a coexisting round church at the site.⁵⁰⁴

In the excavation report on the site from 1989 by McLees et.al., there are some items which have relevance in this context. A clear round apse made with the ashlar technique was unearthed. (fig. 131c) That masonry technique seems to have been introduced in Norway by the turn of the 12th century. McLees discussed this further and in larger context in an article from 1993. There, he reached the conclusion that the excavated monastic complex could not

⁵⁰⁰ Fett, "Studier over middelalderens norske sigiller," 89.

⁵⁰¹ Kielland, *Norsk guldsmedkunst i middelalderen*, 123.

⁵⁰² Trættemberg, "Klostersegl," 564-565.

⁵⁰³ Gunnes, "Klosterlivet i Norge," 51.

⁵⁰⁴ Lunde, "Klosteranleggene," 113.

possibly fit with the image in the seal. In an overview of Norwegian stone churches from 1997, Øystein Ekroll agrees with that interpretation, rejecting the possibility of a round church at the site.⁵⁰⁵ However, a slightly more recent study on Nidarholm abbey by Terje Brathen in 2002 takes the question from Lunde in 1987 a bit further and presents a new interpretation on the seal image where it is placed in a liturgical context. Based on the three-church model known from Centula (St. Riquier) in Northern France where in the Carolingian era there are documented important processions between more than one church at the site. Brathen points to such parallels existing in Selja in Western Norway, and proposes that one of possibly three churches in Nidarholm, triangularly arranged, might have been a circular St Mary, as was the case in Centula. He therefore suggests that the seal image may be meant to represent that church on this monastic island.⁵⁰⁶

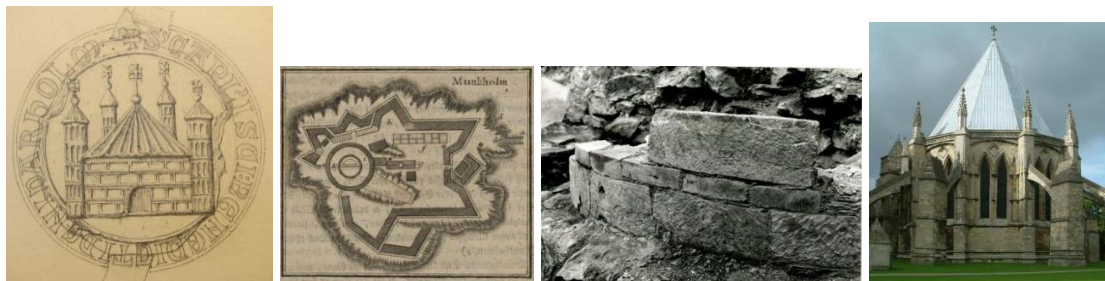


Fig.131 a. Nidarholm, chapter seal; b. map of Nidarholm/Munkholmen in 1773; c. part of excavated apsis at Nidarholm abbey church; d. chapter house, Lincoln cathedral.

Discussion

The clearly presented church image in the Nidarholm seal is in contrast with some of the interpretation of the available archaeological evidence. There are a number of points of view in this matter. It is also notable that a round church did exist in Norway: the abbey of St Olav in Tønsberg (Olavskloster). It cannot be ruled out that the image is representing a round church at Nidarholm itself, and the simple fact that the seal image is a presentation of a round church is of great interest.

I agree with Trætteberg in his comment in the *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon* that the church image in the seal represents more than one meaning. At this time, the notion of the Holy Sepulchre was part of the ecclesiastic mindset, and the location of this very old monastery is very Benedictine: isolated on an island in a similar manner as Mont St.-Michel in Normandy. Such an image is a strong confirmation of how powerful religious ideas were also in the peripheries of the Medieval church.

⁵⁰⁵ McLees, *The ruin speaks*, 12, 64; McLees, "Nidarholm ved Nidaros," 34-35; Ekroll, *Med klæber og kalk*, 159-160.

⁵⁰⁶ Bratberg, "Nidarholm kloster," Shøning mentions the fort as possible remains of the abbey church (p. 16), 16-18.

Some of the archaeological evidence on Nidarholm, as well as Brathen's observations, have opened up again some older questions on a possible round church at the abbey site. One of the possibilities would be that the post-reformation bastion could have been built on the older foundations of an abbey church, which is in line with older interpretations. There have been several fires at Nidarholm abbey, at least one in 1210 and another in 1317, with so much destruction that the church needed a re-dedication in both cases. The church must therefore have been rebuilt as a result of these fires. The oldest impression of the seal is from 1281, which is after the first fire.⁵⁰⁷ I am inclined towards the idea that the seal image must present some built reality that this earliest monastic community in Norway found appropriate to have represented in the chapter seal. I would like to draw attention to the excavated round apse. It cannot be excluded that it may have had a meaning, parallel to the octagon at Nidaros cathedral. As such it is open to interpretation with layers of meanings, one of them an expression of The Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, just as the octagon. According to medieval conceptions of architecture and architectural copies, the round, excavated apse might have been such an item transferred to the seal image in the form of a round church or Holy Sepulchre.

Yet another possibility for the seal image is that it represents a round or polygonal chapter house, such as at Lincoln. (fig. 131d) Although that one is younger than the seal image, the concept of round chapter houses is well known in England including Salisbury and Westminster abbey.

6.2. Munkeliv, Bergen diocese (Benedictine until 1426)

Research history

Fett in 1903 describes the Munkeliv seal (fig. 20) as a curious architectonic fantasy and suggests a relatively late date around 1350 for the seal image. He discusses the architectural style of the seal and how Romanesque and gothic elements can happily coexist in a piece of artwork like this.⁵⁰⁸ Kielland does not comment on the seal, but Trætteberg first discusses it in the overview of the monastic seals in the *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon* in 1963, also published in *Heraldisk tidskrift* the same year. There he comments on the type of the building and brings up the similarity of it to "Roma caput mundi" on imperial bulls. He also brings forward the interpretation that the seal image is representing the totality of the church building and its heavenly and earthly owners, the nominal saint and the monastic community. Here is therefore a clear interpretation of the two figures beside St Michael: the one with the crozier as an abbot

⁵⁰⁷ Bratberg, "Nidarholm kloster," 16-18.

⁵⁰⁸ Fett, "Studier over middelalderens norske sigiller," 91.

and the other as a monk. Trættemberg uses a comparison with the Norwich double seal which dates from 1258 as a point of departure to date the seal image to the 13th century.⁵⁰⁹

In his overview of ecclesiastic seals from Bergen diocese in 1968, Trættemberg does not add much to the earlier interpretation and comments on the seal. The only addition is that he brings the seals of Chester and Bromholm in addition to the reverse of the Norwich seal into the comparison to the Munkeliv seal.⁵¹⁰

Discussion

In addition to the British seals Trættemberg pointed out as close parallels to the Munkeliv seal: Norwich, Bromholm, and Chester (fig.132d,b,c) there are additional ones that are also quite similar to the Munkeliv seal in their design. These are the seals from Middleton abbey and even the Bergen/Inchaffray seals. (fig. 132e-f) The total lack of building remains for comparison makes it hard to estimate a likeness between church and seal.



Fig. 132 a. Munkeliv, chapter seal. – b. Bromholm, chapter seal. – c. Chester chapter seal, obverse d. Norwich priory, chapter seal, reverse. – e. Bergen cathedral, chapter seal. – f. Inchaffray abbey, chapter seal.

⁵⁰⁹ Trættemberg, "Klostersegl, " 565-566.

⁵¹⁰ Trættemberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme," 79-80.

6.3. Utstein, Stavanger diocese (Augustinian)

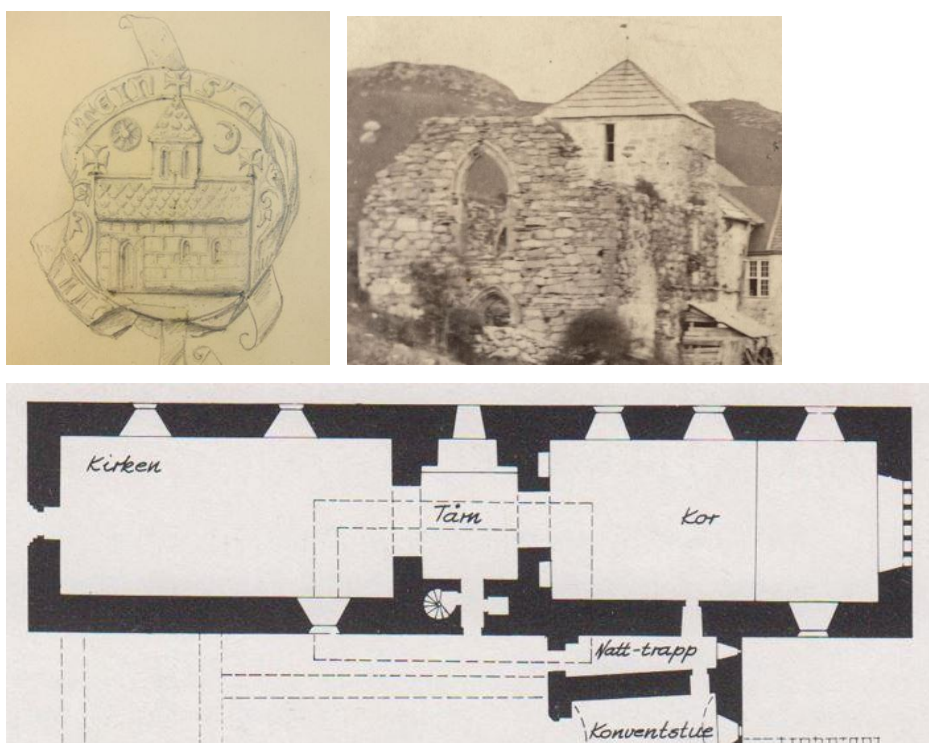


Fig. 133 a. Utstein. chapter seal. b. Utstein abbey church before restoration. c. Ground plan of Utstein abbey church. There is a clear relation between elements in the building to the image in the seal.

Research history

Fett comments only briefly but descriptively on Utstein chapter seal (fig. 25) and some stylistic relation the chapter seal of Hamar.⁵¹¹ Kielland does not discuss the Utstein seal in *Norsk guldsmedskunst*. Trættemberg comments on the seal in the overview of the monastic seals in the *Kulturhistorisk leksikon* in 1963. He describes it and compares it to the existing church ruin and points to how the seal image represents the actual church. He also dates the seal to the 13th century as date for the seal, on the grounds that the abbey church was built just before 1250.⁵¹²

In my own article from 2016, I presented the seal as an example of a seal image representing an actual church. In addition to Trættemberg, I published an old photograph from before restoration work as a comparison to the seal image.⁵¹³

⁵¹¹ Fett, "Studier over middelalderens norske sigiller," 91.

⁵¹² Trættemberg, "Klostersegl," 564.

⁵¹³ Guðrún Harðardóttir, "Myndefni íslenskra klausturinnsgila," 217.

Discussion

The simplicity in the representation of the church image in the Utstein seal is clear. Although the background is not with ornamental pattern, it is curious that the stylized plant to the sides is similar to the French lilies which spring out of the legend ridge of both of the seals of Bishop Eyvind of Oslo 1288-1303.⁵¹⁴ Utstein abbey does not have a clear founding date, but the range 1263-1280 is thought to be likely.⁵¹⁵ The seal can therefore not be older than that, and the preserved wax impression is a relatively early one, from 1307.

The monastic site is one of the best preserved in Norway, and a photograph taken before restoration work began is a reliable source on the appearance of the abbey church. Judging from that photograph, as well as the foundation itself, (fig. 133b-c) it is very clear that the church image in the chapter seal does indeed represent the basic elements in the church building as it is preserved. This seal is therefore a clear example of a church image in a chapter seal portraying the actual building on the site, that is, topographically accurate.

Other monastic seals with architectural elements

In addition to the monastic chapter seals with complete buildings, there are houses with seals with images of saints, framed with various degrees of architectural elements or have miniature church models included. These seals will not be discussed here due to the size of the thesis. However, it will be interesting and necessary to study them at some point. These are the seals of Helgeseter (second seal), Lyse and the Dominicans in Bergen diocese and Dragsmark, and the Franciscans, Tønsberg in Oslo diocese.

6.4. Reynistaðarklaustur, Hólar diocese (Benedictine)

Because of the lack of medieval built heritage in Iceland, the seals from Hólar diocese receive more detailed discussion than the seals from the Norwegian dioceses. Discussion on their production and the dialogue with what is known about the built reality will be taken after all the Icelandic seals have been presented. In some cases, however, part of that will be touched upon in the discussion of certain elements in individual seals.

Of all the Icelandic chapter seals, by far most has been written on the one of the Benedictine nunnery at Reynistaður. Because of this, it is helpful to treat this seal first because the discussion of it touches on many topics which are relevant to the other seals and Icelandic building tradition in general.

⁵¹⁴ Trættemberg, *Geistlige Segl i Oslo Bispedømme*, 102-103.

⁵¹⁵ Ekroll & Stige, *Middelalder i stein*, (*Kirker i Norge I*), 130; Lexow, "Utstein kloster i middelalderen," 157-159.

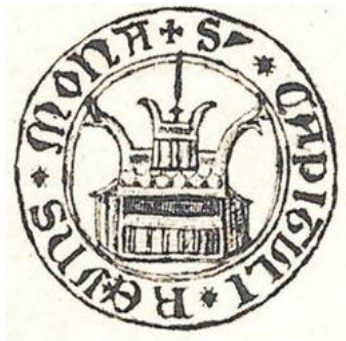


Fig. 134 Reynistaður chapter seal. Drawing from 18th century. - Skálholt, 19th century “útbrotakirkja”. - Borgund church, Norway.

Research history

This is the one Icelandic chapter seal (fig. 38) which has had most previous discussion. In an article from 1977, the artist and scholar Hörður Ágústsson made a comprehensive study of the seal image (in Icelandic) and placed it in the context of information from written sources about the Reynistaður abbey church and other churches of similar status in medieval and post-medieval Iceland.

He states: “I think that here we have an image of a timber basilica. Although simplified and stylized, there is no doubt that the engraver must have seen such buildings himself... No one who has seen Norwegian stave churches can be in doubt on what kind of building is being reproduced in the seal image.”⁵¹⁶ Hörður is the first one to present a comparison of this seal image to the appearance of the stave church at Borgund in Norway, (fig. 134c) which has wood shingles and dragonheads on the roof. He does not, however, bring into question that the seal image is representing the church at Reynistaður, and the aim of the article is to use miniature drawings of buildings in Icelandic manuscripts as proof for the existence of certain types of buildings in Iceland, such as those basilical in form but built with timber (ísl. útbrotakirkjur). (fig. 134b) He is therefore the first person to place the seal in the context of medieval church architecture in Iceland. Information on these timber basilicas can be reached by examining the

⁵¹⁶ Hörður Ágústsson, “Fjórar fornar húsamyndir,” 143–144. “I think here is an image of a timber-basilica. Stylized and simplified, but clearly showing that the engraver must have known such buildings in his surroundings... It is very evident to those who have seen Norwegian stave churches, what type of building is being drawn”

“Ég tel þarna komna mynd af útbrotakirkju. Einfölduð og færð í stílinn er hún að vísu, en sýnir svo ekki verður um villst, að höfundur hennar hefur þekkt slík hús af eigin raun. ... Það dylst engum, sem virt hefur fyrir sér norskar stafkirkjur, hverskonar hús hér er verið að afrissa.”

way certain written sources are phrased, and they stem both from medieval annals and narratives and post-medieval church accounts.⁵¹⁷

Ágústsson brings some information from 17th- and 18th-century accounts into the discussion to support his arguments. There, it is evident that the former abbey church at Reynistaður was not taken down until 1570, or some 20 years after the reformation in Hólar diocese. However, one part of the church, an apse which is called “Sancta Sanctorum” in the written source, was still in use until 1640, when it collapsed in a heavy storm.⁵¹⁸ Ágústsson interprets the pattern on the roof in the seal structure as wood shingles and supports that with information from reliable written sources on another church site of high status in northern part of Iceland which witness about wood shingles on a church roof still existing in the 17th century. Ágústsson argues that they must have looked similar to those on the roof on the stave church at Borgund, as well as on many other Norwegian stave churches. He uses this as an argument for some similarities of the Norwegian and Icelandic church architecture in the Middle Ages, including the use of roof shingles on wooden churches in Iceland.⁵¹⁹ Ágústsson also discusses the lines in the lower part of the seal. In his view of the seal image, in the broad horizontal part, he sees a roof of a side isle, but below/behind a vertical construction. He is, however, not sure of how to interpret the parts to the sides and proposes some artistic freedom by the seal engraver. Concerning the vertical lines in the lower area, Ágústsson interprets them as a certain type of wooden lining, a particular version or Icelandic adaption of stave construction still preserved as an indoor version in an 18th-century entrance house at Reynistaður itself. This type of lining consists of the juxtaposition of narrow muntins (ísl. *grópbord*) and broader shaped panel (ísl. *fleygbord*). (fig. 135) The way the vertical lines are drawn in the seal image could point to the representation of such a wooden boarding.⁵²⁰

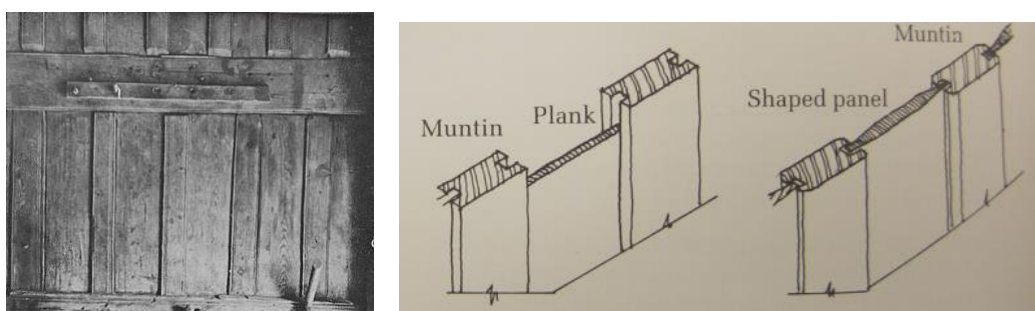


Fig. 135 Indoor lining with “miðsylla” at Bæjardýrport, Reynistaður. - Explanation of the muntin and panel type indoor lining.

⁵¹⁷ Hörður Ágústsson, "Fjórar fornar húsamyndir," 135-159.

⁵¹⁸ Hörður Ágústsson, "Fjórar fornar húsamyndir," 148. “Þá tók upp og brotnaði allt í sundur það litla hvolfda trévirkishús sem fyrir Reynistaðakirkju, sem verið hafði sancta sanctorum þeirrar miklu trékirku, sem forðum var á Reynistað og Jón Jónsson lögmaður hafði látið ofan taka fyrir nær 70 árum er hann hélt Reynistaðaklaustur.”

⁵¹⁹ Hörður Ágústsson, "Fjórar fornar húsamyndir," 145, 148.

⁵²⁰ Hörður Ágústsson, "Fjórar fornar húsamyndir," 146-147.

Ágústsson's main reasoning for that the seal image from Reynistaður not being an imported one is the fact that it presents a timber building while most foreign abbey churches are made of stone.⁵²¹

Ágústsson also presented the Reynistaður seal image in comparison to Borgund in an overview article in an exhibition catalogue on church art in 1983 but did not add more to what he had already presented in the 1977 article.⁵²²

In a short overview on Icelandic churches in 1995, I also briefly presented the Reynistaður seal, but mainly based on the research of Ágústsson. I state that there can be little doubt that the abbey church at Reynistaður must have been made of timber according to what is presented in the seal.⁵²³

The next one to comment on the Reynistaður chapter seal was Þór Magnússon, former State-Antiquarian, in his monograph on Icelandic silverwork published in 2013. He completely disagrees with Ágústsson and states that if the seal represents an accurate image of the church, the seal would most likely have been made in Iceland. It is, however, doubtful that the seal was made in Iceland; it could just as well have been made in Norway copying some Norwegian church. Most likely no special church and it is unsure that at that time anyone would want an image of a particular church in a seal, it would be more likely that it was just a general image of a church.⁵²⁴ In contrast with Ágústsson, who approaches the seal image from the point of view of building history, Magnússon approaches it from the point of view of the metallic craftsmanship, as he was writing on the manufacture of silver and gold objects in Iceland in his monograph, *Íslensk silfursmíð*.⁵²⁵

In an article on Reynistaður in 2016, Stefan Drechsler presents in English much of what Ágústsson had done in the Icelandic article from 1977. Drechsler publishes slightly more of the comments from the primary sources, which are useful for the study of the seal.⁵²⁶

⁵²¹ Hörður Ágústsson, "Fjórar fornar húsamyndir," 143.

⁵²² Hörður Ágústsson, "Íslensk kirkjubygging að fornu og nýju," 37.

⁵²³ Guðrún Harðardóttir, "Um íslenskar kirkjubyggingar á miðöldum," 54-61.

⁵²⁴ Þór Magnússon, *Íslensk silfursmíð* I, 321. "Sé svo, að það sýni raunverulega mynd kirkjunnar, ætti innsiglið helst að vera gert hér á landi. En innsiglið sjálft er nú týnt og eins hið eina afþrykk þess, sem þekkt var og myndin af því var gerð eftir. Samt orkar tvímælis, að innsiglið sé grafið hér á landi, það gæti fullt eins verið gert í Noregi og norsk kirkja fyrirmyndin, þó líklegast engin sérstök kirkja. Er enda óvíst, hvort menn hirtu á þeim tíma um að hafa nákvæmari mynd af tiltekinni kirkju í innsigli frekar en dæmigerðri kirkju yfirleitt."

⁵²⁵ Þór Magnússon, *Íslensk silfursmíð* I, 321.

⁵²⁶ Drechsler, "Reynistaðakirkja hin forna," 33-34.

Additionally, Drechsler places the Reynistaður seal in a larger cultural context than previous writers had done and discusses the seals in the context of other chapter seals from Benedictine abbeys in Hólar diocese, Þingeyrar and Munkaþverá. He makes connections between the seals and manuscript production centres in the North, such as Reynistaður abbey and other scriptoria. They are usually referred to as Akraskólinn after the farm Stóru-Akrar in Skagafjörður and Drechsler stresses further the cultural importance of Reynistaður, both in terms of manuscript and textile production.⁵²⁷ Drechsler presents the complicated preservation situation of the seal image with the lost original but extant charter itself. There, however, he draws a wrong conclusion about one of the seals still attached. He claims that a seal with a figure of St Olav (fig. 100b) is the seal of the abbess,⁵²⁸ but that can only be identified as the seal of bishop Ólafur Rögnvaldsson at Hólar. Drechsler points out the interesting fact that the type of church image as in the Reynistaður seal is not present in any other type of seal in Norway.⁵²⁹ Concerning the dating of the seal, Drechsler points to the observations of Ágústsson in an article from 1982, who discussed the possibility that, according to the style of the architectural elements, the seal image could date from shortly after the foundation of Reynistaður abbey in 1295 and suggests that an abbey church must have been ready around 1300.⁵³⁰ In his article in 1977, Ágústsson is more open concerning the dating of the seal, mainly commenting that the seal engraver must have been familiar with wooden churches similar to what the image presents.⁵³¹ Both Ágústsson and Drechsler lose focus of the discussion of the seal image *per se*, and discuss the use of the seal in the context of church buildings in medieval Iceland. However, the point from Drechsler on the letter type in the legend of the seal is quite valuable in the context. He argues that it is not usable for dating because such letter types would be standard for thirteenth century mainland while the type would be still in use in early modern Icelandic seals.⁵³²

Drechsler discusses adoption and then adaption of Norwegian church architecture in medieval Iceland. He presents the research of Ágústsson and Christie on medieval Icelandic church architecture in comparison to the Norwegian and attempts to compare some elements of the Borgund stave church and what is known about the Reynistaður abbey church.⁵³³ Drechsler comes to the conclusion that the Norwegian bishop of Hólar, Auðunn rauði (1313-1322), might have been the patron for the Reynistaður abbey church and would have had a

⁵²⁷ Drechsler, "Reynistaðakirkja hin forna," 25-27.

⁵²⁸ Drechsler, "Reynistaðakirkja hin forna," 28.

⁵²⁹ Drechsler, "Reynistaðakirkja hin forna," 28. He does, however, not give any reference to this statement.

⁵³⁰ Hörður Ágústsson in Ahrens, *Frühe Holzkirchen*, 584-585.

⁵³¹ Hörður Ágústsson, "Fjórar fornar húsamyndir," 148-149.

⁵³² Drechsler, "Reynistaðakirkja hin forna," 28; Norberg, "Sigillomskriften", 209.

⁵³³ Drechsler, "Reynistaðakirkja hin forna," 33-35.

preference for a strongly Norwegian inspired style of church. That would explain the “Norwegian stave church look” of the seal. He also frames the uniqueness of the seal image in comparison to the Norwegian ones.⁵³⁴

Many interesting points have been addressed in the previous research on the chapter seal of Reynistaðarklaustur. I will comment on them in the timeline they were presented. Therefore, I will start with the observations by Ágústsson from 1977. I agree with his interpretation of the pattern of the roof as wood shingles and the obvious similarity between the seal image and Borgund stave church, or at least its upper parts. I also think he correctly interpreted the vertical lines as the type of boarding in the lower part of the seal. However, I think it is possible to look at the seal image in quite a different way from Ágústsson. It can instead be seen as a composite view (fig. 136a) on two levels, both frontal and lateral as common in representations of medieval architecture in manuscripts and what has been pointed out in the introduction on the *pars pro toto* approach in seal images. The piece with the dragonheads would be the lateral and in front (outlined in red), as if placed in front of a simple church gable (outlined in blue). Therefore, the pieces to the sides can be seen as the side aisles and not the improvisation of the seal engraver as proposed by Ágústsson.



Fig. 136. a. The author’s interpretation of the seal image: Side-aisles in the back (blue) and a decorated piece in front (red). – b. Abbess seal from Reynistaður.

I disagree with the statement by Þór Magnússon in 2013 that the image in the Reynistaður seal was most likely imaginary. As discussed in the introduction to the chapter on architecture in chapter seals, there is a strong link between an identity of a seal owner and the seal image itself. The seal image had to be identifiable for the ones who received a document with the seal attached to it. The making of a matrix for a monastic community was therefore of great importance and had to have a clear visual cue or “identifiability” for the receiver. It is also possible to approach these ties between a seal image and the seal owner by questions such as:

⁵³⁴ Drechsler, "Reynistaðakirkja hin forna," 36, 24.

If the image was entirely imaginary, why would an engraver or the patron who ordered the matrix prefer this kind of image in it? If imaginary, would it not be more reasonable to have a more general appearance of a church, for example along the lines of something copied from a source such as *Íslenska teiknibókin*, mainly based on general medieval imagery? When these questions are asked and considered, it becomes quite evident that the image in the Reynistaður seal could hardly be entirely imaginary. The image is too specific in its reference to a special type of timber building to be able to be a standardized matrix.

On the contrary, there are stronger arguments for the seal image reflecting at least a reality of timber buildings and most likely a very distinctive type or a particular church. As Ágústsson argued, most abbey churches in the neighbouring countries are made of stone.

Regarding what Drechsler presented in 2016, I agree with the majority of the points he makes. Some of them are re-statements from the research by Ágústsson, but he also brought up some new and interesting angles of interpretation of the seal in the larger cultural context of Reynistaður abbey and the Hólar bishopric in general.⁵³⁵

What Drechsler states about medieval Icelandic timber basilicas (ísl. *útbrotakirkjur*) seems to be partly based on some misconception about the nature of a certain church type in medieval Iceland. While he correctly points to the relationship between the west-Norwegian type, traditionally termed Møretype (by Dietrichson), and the Icelandic ones, he does not quite use all the research Ágústsson has published and can-be labelled basilica type and is explained in the chapter on Icelandic church architecture here.⁵³⁶

It is truly distinctive in medieval Icelandic architecture that styles and forms were imported and adapted. For example, the monumental cathedrals had forms that were “translated” from one material to another, that is from stone to timber.⁵³⁷ To take examples from the Nidaros archdiocese, the monumental stone cathedrals such as in Nidaros and Kirkwall had the form of a basilica. This outer form was translated from stone buildings into timber buildings at the cathedrals of Skálholt and Hólar. In addition to the cathedrals, there is reliable information, both from archaeological excavations and from written sources about such a type of timber basilicas at some high-status places, such as Reykholt and Laufás. The Icelandic term, “útbrot”, is detectible in various written sources and would be translated in English as “side aisles”.⁵³⁸ Therefore “útbrotakirkja” should not be defined as a special form-type, as Drechsler uses it, but simply as a basilica made of timber instead of stone.

⁵³⁵ Drechsler, “Reynistaðakirkja hin forna,” 24-42.

⁵³⁶ Drechsler, “Reynistaðakirkja hin forna,” 27, 34-36.

⁵³⁷ It should be noted that Dietrichson had pointed this out already in his work, *De norske stavkirker* from 1892 although later authors which came to the same conclusion might not have been aware of that.

⁵³⁸ Dietrichson, *De norske stavkirker*, 175.

I agree with Drechsler in terms of the possibility of strong Norwegian cultural inclination in relation to Bishop Auðunn rauði. This brings up several interesting questions on Icelandic architectural history and general cultural contact at the time which have not yet been answered and will be discussed in the chapter in the end of this section.

A final point that none of the commentators have brought up is the question of whether the seal image represents a house-shaped reliquary rather than a church proper.



Fig. 137 a The seal image compared to the b. Reliquary shrine from Filefjell, Norway

As discussed in the chapter on the Oslo seal of St Hallvard, that possibility cannot be ruled out. In a similar manner to the Oslo seal, the Reynistaður seal presents some clear building elements. In the Oslo seal, there are some stone blocks at the base of the church image, but in the Reynistaður seal, it is the appearance of the lower part of the image as well as the shingles on the roof. (fig. 137a) Compared to preserved reliquary shrines such as the ones from Valþjófsstaður, Keldur and Filefjell (fig. 137b) the roof cover is different. Although some shrines have dragonheads on the gables in the style of the Reynistaður seal, these shrines do not have the roof-cover elements affiliated to buildings, such as the shingles in the Reynistaður seal. Instead, the reliquary shrines all have Biblical scenes on the roof area.⁵³⁹ The seal of Øvre Namdal, has a church image with dragonheads on the roof. In that case it must have been part of the buildings since this is in fact not a seal of a church but of a local community which used their church as a symbol in their seal. Therefore, it cannot be a representation of a reliquary but of the local church building itself. In some cases, a shrine can represent the form of the actual church.

I agree with much of what has been presented about this. In addition to previous interpretations by Ágústsson and Drechsler, which tend not to be very precautions, there is a significant support in the theories of Krautheimer on how buildings were conceived in the eye

⁵³⁹ Hohler, "Reliquaries," 105-107.

of the medieval observer. A convenient visual example of that kind of perception is the seal of Kalundborg, (fig. 113a) which is useful in this respect. The five towers were distinctive enough for the visual recognition of the seal owner. An example of visual citation of a form from an outer item to an inner one is the dignitary seat in Burs church in Gotland, where the throne of the seat has the same form as the tower of the church itself.

Concerning the Reynistaður seal, none of the earlier commentators presented an interpretation in the medieval manner of *pars-pro-toto*. Based on those ideas, the seal image presents two different elements from two different angles: 1) some kind of roof construction presented as a side view, and 2) some elements linked to the nave represented as a frontal view. The lower central structure could also be interpreted as a separate bell tower in front of the church and the nave or side aisles of the church seen to the sides in the background. Representation from different points of view were common in the Middle Ages, as seen in some of the examples in the introduction. Placing representative elements in a seal renders it easily recognised by those receiving the letters it was attached to.

When all aspects of the Reynistaður seal are considered, it seems more far-fetched that the seal church was imaginary than real. If the seal image is interpreted through a medieval mindset, it renders the seal image even more convincing as representation of the actual church.

An additional point in this context is how an item related to a church building takes on a part of its form. Again, the throne (fig. 138b) from Burs church in Gotland is a useful example as it is made in the same form as the tower (fig. 138a) of that church.⁵⁴⁰ A detail (fig. 138c) in the form of the roof is informative for understanding the mindset of copying architectural form into an interior item. Although the roof of the throne is made of a plain panel, shingles are incised onto it, imitating an actual roof cladding. This is a clear example of translation of form from one medium to another.

⁵⁴⁰ Lagerlöf & Stolt, *Burs kyrka*, 58-59.



Fig. 138 Burs church, Gotland. - Choir throne from Burs church. - Detail from the throne: Incised shingles on the roof of the throne.

6.5. Þingeyraklaustur (Benedictine)

Research history

The Þingeyrar seal image (fig. 39) has been widely used as a representation of Icelandic monasticism or in relation to literary research on Þingeyrar manuscripts. The publication of it in *Sigilla Islandica* is probably the main reason for that.⁵⁴¹ However, only a few scholars have done any study on its appearance. Ágústsson does not make use of it, although he had written the article on the Reynistaður seal and published a rather detailed reconstruction drawing of the buildings at Þingeyraklaustur including the church according to accounts from 1684. That church had a basilical form and possibly had elements from the medieval abbey church. In a recent interpretation of the written sources on 17th and 18th-century buildings at Þingeyrar it is suggested that the church described in 1684 was indeed the last building phase of the medieval abbey church. It is evident from these descriptions of the building that it was made of stave building technique similar to the type in the preserved 18th-century secular building at Reynistaður. However, there is no hint of cross braces in these texts. Archaeological excavation is ongoing at Þingeyrar and will hopefully provide added information on the abbey church although details of this kind would hardly be traceable.⁵⁴² Other publications of architectural history do not make use of the seal except my own overview from 1995 in which I briefly

⁵⁴¹ *Sigilla Islandica* I, 165. See for example *Saga Íslands* III, 231 and the front cover on the conference proceedings of the Ninth international saga conference.

⁵⁴² Hörður Ágústsson, "Húsagerð á síðmiðöldum," 292-293; Gottskálk Þór Jenson. "Heimildir um klausturkirkjuna og bókasafnið á Þingeyrum," 275-279, 300-301.

mentioned it as an example of a simplified wooden church in a short overview of medieval church architecture in Iceland.⁵⁴³

The literary scholar Sverrir Tómasson was the first to suggest that the seal could indeed be representing the real west front of the abbey church at Þingeyrar. He first touches on it in a review of the book *The Development of Flateyjarbók* by Elizabeth Ashman Rowe (2005). On a comment of the illumination in Flateyjarbók (GKS 1005 fol. nr. 069va.), Rowe only describes it as a building with two towers and does not comment any further.⁵⁴⁴ In his review of the book in 2007, Sverrir proposes an interpretation of the illumination, makes a comparison to the image in the Þingeyrar chapter seal and comes to the conclusion that the illumination must be representing the abbey church at Þingeyrar itself.⁵⁴⁵

In an article in Icelandic, in 2009, Tómasson goes a bit further into this. Flateyjarbók is believed to have been composed in the end of the 14th century, and the person who most likely did so was the illuminator, Magnús Þórhallsson, who lived in Víðdalstunga in the neighbourhood of Þingeyrar abbey. Sverrir actually uses the illumination and the similar look of the seal image as the strongest argument for the Flateyjarbók manuscript being written at Þingeyrar itself. He says: “Myndin virðist eiga að sýna þann sem lýsti, þ.e. Magnús Þórhallsson og húsið er greinilega Þingeyraklaustur enda er þetta sama myndin og er á innsigli klaustursins.”⁵⁴⁶ Tómasson seems to take it for granted that the image in the seal must be representing the church building at Þingeyrar abbey itself. He does not, however, elaborate further on this.⁵⁴⁷

In his 2016 article, Stefan Drechsler also discusses the relationship of the chapter seal and the illumination on f. 069va in Flateyjarbók (GKS 1005 fol.) as Tómasson first speculated on. Agreeing with Tómasson, Drechsler proposes the illumination in Flateyjarbók as a terminus ante quem for the Þingeyrar seal.⁵⁴⁸ Concerning the problematic dating of the seal, Drechsler may only have had the information in *Sigilla Islandica* but only takes a date of 1489 as the oldest example of the seal, despite Árni Magnússon presenting three examples from 1424-1548.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴³ Guðrún Harðardóttir, “Um íslenskar kirkjubýggingar á miðöldum,” 56-57. Hjörleifur Stefánsson and Þorsteinn Gunnarsson do not comment on the seal in their texts on medieval Icelandic churches.

⁵⁴⁴ Ashman Rowe, *The development of Flateyjarbók*, 367.

⁵⁴⁵ Sverrir Tómasson, “The Development of Flateyjarbók,” 1034.

⁵⁴⁶ Sverrir Tómasson, “Þingeyrar - stærsta íslenska menningarsetrið á miðöldum,” 19-20.

⁵⁴⁷ Sverrir Tómasson, “Þingeyrar - stærsta íslenska menningarsetrið á miðöldum,” 19-20.

⁵⁴⁸ Drechsler, “Reynistaðakirkja hin forna,” 29-30.

⁵⁴⁹ Drechsler, “Reynistaðakirkja hin forna,” 29; *Sigilla Islandica* I, 163-165.

Drechsler mentions the general form of the church in the seal but does not go into further details than comparing it to the first Munkaþverá seal and drawing attention to how similar the form of the gables of these buildings in the seals really is.⁵⁵⁰

In my own article also from 2016, I discussed a wax impression of the earliest example of the Þingeyrar chapter seal from 1424 which Árni Magnússon noted in *Sigilla Islandica*.⁵⁵¹ This addition does confirm the reliability of the drawing of the seal as presented in *Sigilla Islandica*. It should be mentioned here that Drechsler and I were not aware of each other's work until after publication, both in the year 2016.

In my article, I also point to the similarities of the type of church presented in the Þingeyrar seal and the first Munkaþverá seal.⁵⁵² There I agree with Tómasson's suggestion that it is quite likely that the seal image represents the abbey church itself. In order to help the readers to envisage such type of a west front in an actual building, I used both the said illumination and the west front of St Magnus cathedral in Kirkwall, Orkney.⁵⁵³ This article initiated the process which has developed into this thesis, especially the part on comparing seal images with remaining actual churches in foreign examples where both seal and church exist. In the article I reached the conclusion that it is very relevant to ask the question of whether the Icelandic seals are a real *pars pro toto* echo of the appearances of these lost monastic churches.⁵⁵⁴

Discussion

For the Þingeyrar seal, I have come across a number of wax impressions, including the seals Árni Magnússon reports on in *Sigilla Islandica*. What he labels as nr. 1 now has the shelf mark AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. VIII, 10, Landskjalasafn AP 469 and AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. L, 23. The rather recent digital access (after Oct. 31, 2018) to the AM collection has made a complete difference to this whole thesis. These wax impressions reveal the accuracy of the drawing on behalf of Árni Magnússon and concerning both the Þingeyrar and the Reynistaður chapter seals.

One question arises from the asymmetrical number of X-crosses on either side of the central doorway in the seal drawing. Is that a mistake in the drawing or is this how the matrix was made? A close inspection of the best examples of the wax impressions reveals that in all the wax impressions there are at least 2 crosses on each side of the doorway. In the impressions from 1424 and 1548, only two X-crosses are clearly visible. But judging from the exceptionally

⁵⁵⁰ Drechsler, "Reynistaðakirkja hin forna," 30-31.

⁵⁵¹ AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. VIII, 10; DI IV, 319-320. Since 2016 more wax impressions have been discovered, all of them confirming the accuracy of the drawing in *Sigilla Islandica*.

⁵⁵² Guðrún Harðardóttir, "Myndefni íslenskra klausturinnsigla," 219-220

⁵⁵³ Guðrún Harðardóttir, "Myndefni íslenskra klausturinnsigla," 218-220.

⁵⁵⁴ Guðrún Harðardóttir, "Myndefni íslenskra klausturinnsigla," 220-222.

clear wax impression in AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. LI, 25, it is possible to interpret it with 3 crosses to the left of the door as well as the right side of the doorway.



Fig. 139 AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. LI, 23 -The 18th century drawing - AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. L, 25

It seems, therefore, that Árni Magnússon did not use the AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. LI, 25 example when the drawing was made but probably either the AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. VIII, 10 or L, 23 ones. This reveals a very cautious approach to the AM drawings, as they present only what can be observed with certainty.

In the article from 2016, although I agree with Tómasson about the similarity of the appearance of the Þingeyrar seal image and the manuscript illumination in Flateyjarbók, I now prefer a more cautious approach as described in the introductory chapters in this present thesis. I would rather present this in the way that the seal image and the illumination were meant to depict some similar type of architectural reality, and the abbey church itself at Þingeyrar would be the most likely candidate. However, it is worth noting that the side walls of the illumination appear to be made of stone blocks.

Considering the comparison and similarities of the first Munkaþverá seal and the Þingeyrar one, it should be noted that the latter does not show any side-aisles at the west front, thus not presenting a basilical type.

In the absence of existing medieval church buildings in Iceland, one must seek various ways to present what would be the most relevant possibilities, given the general architectural styles in the archdiocese or the cultural areas involved. Judging from what is known about building traditions in medieval Iceland via archaeological as well as historical methods, it becomes clear that the timber churches located at the highest ecclesiastic institutions, both in Skálholt and Hólar dioceses in Iceland, have more in common in their outer form with stone buildings, like St Magnus in Kirkwall and Gamle Aker in Oslo, than to Norwegian provincial stave church types, such as Borgund.⁵⁵⁵

This leads on to another question: What kind of building is presented in the Þingeyrar seal? Could it possibly be a representation of a stone building? Here the answer can only be no, since

⁵⁵⁵ See for example, Hörður Ágústsson, *Skálholt. Kirkjur*, 1990; Laufás við Eyjafjörð. *Kirkjur*, 2012; Hjörleifur Stefánsson, "Medieval Icelandic churches," 1997, 25-41; Þorsteinn Gunnarsson. *Hóladómkirkjur til forna*, 2015; Guðrún Sveinbjarnardóttir, *Reykholt. The church excavation*, 2016.

there are no signs of elements usually connected to stone buildings sometimes visible in seal images (such as Utstein or Hamar chapter seals). Instead, there are details in the seal image that could rather be identified with certain elements in timber buildings. The items of interest in this respect are the small X crosses on the facade.

There are two options here. They can be interpreted as tile cladding, as on the roof of the church image in the seal of Burscaugh abbey in Britain.⁵⁵⁶ (fig. 140a) In the light of the roof pattern of the Reynistaður seal this is not unthinkable, but I suggest a much more likely possibility. These crosses can be interpreted as structural support, often used on large timber walls. Because there is a larger cross in the gable on the facade of Þingeyrar seal image, I am more inclined to think that cross braces of some sort must be more relevant interpretation of the X crosses. This can, for example, be seen as wall supports in Borgund stave church. A modern use of this structural element can for example be seen in this Norwegian chapel at Nordseter ski resort. (fig. 140b)

A structural support, called “skakkslár,” is common in the description of timber churches in the rather accurate church accounts which were common in the 17th and 18th century. The X crosses in the Þingeyrar seal image seem to be representing such items.⁵⁵⁷

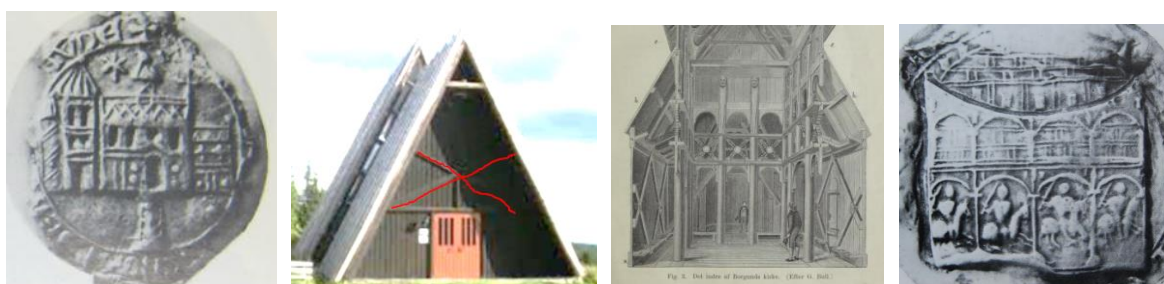


Fig. 140 Burscaugh abbey, chapter seal. - Nordseter chapel with cross beams at the gable. - Elevation of Borgund stave church. Two types of cross braces are visible in this structure. Between columns there are small ones, and on the walls, there are large ones. Nîmes, seal of the city council. (Council of the arena).

To explain these cross braces, Norwegian preserved examples are convenient. In some of the Norwegian stave churches, there is such a form of structural support between pillars in the arcade of the nave (norv. Andreaskors) but also in some churches, such support is on the larger wall parts (norv. skråstiver). (fig. 140c)

If the X crosses on the Þingeyrar seal are representing such structural support, another possibility is that the seal image is showing both interior parts and outer cover at the same time, something quite common in the visual culture of the Middle Ages. A clear example of such a representation of both inside and outside elements in a seal image is the seal of the arena at

⁵⁵⁶ Ellis, *Catalogue of seals ... monastic*, 15, plate 11 (M134).

⁵⁵⁷ Árnastofnun, Ritmálssafn: Skakkslár.

Nimes. (fig. 140d) Here is a representation of recognizable features from both outside and inside the building.⁵⁵⁸

However, I suggest that the seal does indeed represent cross braces at the west front of Þingeyrar abbey church.

6.6. Munkaþverárklaustur (Benedictine)

Munkaþverárklaustur I, first seal 1375

Research history

This first seal of Munkaþverá (fig. 40) is not included in the *Sigilla Islandica* and therefore much less known and written about than the Reynistaður and Þingeyrar seals.

Stefan Drechsler touches briefly on this seal in his article on Reynistaður and points to the likeness of the two buildings on the seals, this one and the one in the Þingeyrar seal. He describes the basilical structure and the towers at the four corners of the church. He also comments on how clearly the roof tiles are presented and on their likeness to the Reynistaður seal. Drechsler also draws attention to the charter it is still attached to and the secure *terminus ante quem* dating of the seal. He notes that, according to what is written in the charter, this chapter seal is in the correct row of the other seal attached to the charter. Drechsler then makes connection with the known Northern Benedictine school (*Norðlenski Benediktsskólinn*) in manuscript production, the strong ties between Þingeyrar and Munkaþverá and draws in the discussion the close contact that was between the Benedictine monasteries in Hólar diocese.⁵⁵⁹ On this ground, Drechsler suggest that these Benedictine seals are related and possibly made in the same location. He points out that there is lack of evidence for a production site. He also proposes the option that they could have been made abroad. However, he also points to the lack of similar seals in the Scandinavian corpus of preserved Benedictine seals and therefore a local production in Iceland would seem more likely.⁵⁶⁰

In my own article in 2016, I also pointed out the secure dating and identification of the seal as being from Munkaþverá. I presented the basilical form of the church with the side turrets and pointed to the similarities in the appearance of the churches presented in this seal and the Þingeyrar seal, despite of the different angles in the point of view and the basilical factor in the Munkaþverá seal. I also drew attention to how little is known about the actual Munkaþverá abbey church from written sources. There is only an account on the reading of a letter on a

⁵⁵⁸ Bedos, *Les sceaux des villes*, 380.

⁵⁵⁹ Drechsler, "Reynistaðakirkja hin forna," 30-31.

⁵⁶⁰ Drechsler, "Reynistaðakirkja hin forna," 2016, 31-32.

lectern within the church and that someone had the church door locked up. I pointed to the importance of the seal as a possible visual source on the elevation of the actual church. In relation to that, I presented the second chapter seal of Munkaþverá abbey, and pointed to the fact that the seal image had changed after the fire-at Munkaþverá in 1429. I concluded that it is more likely than not that the church images in the Munkaþverá chapter seals did indeed reflect the actual abbey churches before and after the fire.⁵⁶¹

Teresa Dröfn Njarðvík, also 2016, included a photograph of the seal in her overview of seals in connection with the publication of the writings of Jón Sigurðsson.⁵⁶²

In 2017, Steinunn Kristjánsdóttir commented on the seal based on the research of Drechsler and Harðardóttir and presented an image of it.⁵⁶³

Discussion

This seal image is a very clear representation of an appearance of a basilical church. The two towers at each end render it reminiscent of buildings like Nidaros cathedral or St Magnus cathedral in Kirkwall.



Fig. 141 Nidaros cathedral, north portal. – A modified photograph of the first Munkaþverá - St Magnus cathedral, Kirkwall. The church image in the seal shows similar stylistic trends as in the two cathedral buildings.

I should like to comment first on how very descriptive the church image the Munkaþverá seal is. The clear basilical form and the location of the small towers as well as the representation of the cladding in the form of the diamond pattern are quite astonishing. In the absence of visual sources on medieval Icelandic church buildings, the image creates a great urge to examine whether the image presents some important elements of the actual abbey church. I would now like to take the former research a bit further by taking a closer look at the image, as well as placing it in a wider context.

The diamond pattern covers both roof and walls, and there is no hint of elements of stone building, such as building blocks. On the other hand, the pattern hints to shingles of some sort

⁵⁶¹ Guðrún Harðardóttir, "Myndefni íslenskra klausturinnsgla," 220-222.

⁵⁶² Teresa Dröfn Njarðvík, "Stutt yfirlit um innsigli á Íslandi ásamt ritgerðum Jóns Sigurðssonar," 137.

⁵⁶³ Steinunn Kristjánsdóttir, *Leitin að klaustrunum*, 154-155.

which is more likely to be wooden than clay in this context. In an inventory from Munkaþverá from 1695 it says: “An ancient skewed *sanctuarium*, with vertical boards inside the roof, and covered with rotten shingles on the outside” (Icelandic: Sanctuarium gamalt og tilgengið með reisipili í rjáfri og gömlu fúnu spónþaki).⁵⁶⁴

These speculations bring the discussion to the place of production. If local, the ecclesiastic centres are the most likely, including Munkaþverá abbey itself. If made abroad, Norway can be considered most likely place, particularly Nidaros because of the ecclesiastical relations⁵⁶⁵ or Bergen because of trade-routes. Concerning the possibility of local production, there is evidence of a domestic seal production from a letter on the falsification of a seal in early 16th century in a rather low-key circumstances.⁵⁶⁶ If such production was mainstream, seal-making tradition at the more important ecclesiastic posts is very likely. Production abroad is therefore perhaps more far-fetched than domestic. This argument strengthens the one presented by Drechsler on how the Icelandic Benedictine seals stand out compared to the Norwegian corpus.⁵⁶⁷



Fig. 142 a. Munkaþverá, first seal; b. the city seal of Echternach in Luxemburg.

Next, I would like to comment on the three-dimensional qualities of the church image in the seal. It is unusual in the Nidrosian context, as discussed above. The only other touch of three-dimensionality in a seal church is perhaps the seal of Nidarholm abbey, but that one presents a round church. The Munkeliv seal has elements with perspective angles to the sides. The chapter seals from the Benedictine Sherborne abbey in Dorset (fig. 143b) and Emly cathedral in Ireland (fig. 143c) are examples from the British Isles of this three-dimensional quality of seal images.

⁵⁶⁴ Guðrún Harðardóttir, “Nokkrar kynslóðir kirkna og klausturhúsa á Munkaþverá”, 11.

⁵⁶⁵ Munkaþverá was a Benedictine house and there is documentary evidence of communication and travel between monasteries in Iceland and Norway. Gunnar F. Guðmundsson, *Íslenskt samfélag og Rómakirkja*, 215.

⁵⁶⁶ DI VIII, 315-316.

⁵⁶⁷ Drechsler, “Reynistaðakirkja hin forna,” 2016, 31-32.

⁵⁶⁸ However, the seal that shows the most striking resemblance to the Munkaþverá seal is the city seal of Echternach (fig. 142b) in present day Luxemburg and depicts the Benedictine abbey church at the former imperial monastery there. Although the seal image in the Echternach seal does not present side aisles as the Munkaþverá one, the form and location of the towers is very similar. The Echternach seal image has been detected to portray many of the main parts of the church itself which is well documented although now in a rebuilt state.⁵⁶⁹ From all this the question arises whether this is in some way a Benedictine element. This will be addressed here below.



Fig. 143 Munkaþverá, first seal. – Sherborne abbey, chapter seal. Emly (Ireland) Cathedral chapter seal.

Munkaþverá, second seal (Mþv II) 1445-1519

Research history

This second seal of Munkaþverá (fig. 144) was first published in my 2016 article on Icelandic monastic seals and has therefore not been commented upon before that. After a brief description of each seal, I drew attention to the fact that the first Munkaþverá seal is only found in a charter before a fire at Munkaþverá in 1429, and the later seal, Munkaþverá II, is only found on charters dating from after the fire. This fire is mentioned in Icelandic annal called *Lögmannsannáll*: “The church and the convent at Munkaþverá burnt down so quickly ... and the unaccountable goods that were in the buildings.”⁵⁷⁰ I conclude that the destruction of the former abbey church and perhaps or even most likely, according to the description in the annal,

⁵⁶⁸ Ellis, *Catalogue of seals ... monastic*, 81, pl. 33, M 772; *Sigilla ecclesiae Hibernica*, 12, Pl. II, fig. 9. There is an example with similar angle as in the Munkaþverá I seal, but that one is a 19th century matrix preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, but could stylistically be attributed to early 13th century. See Vilain, *Matrices de sceaux du Moyen Âge*, fig. nr. 79.

⁵⁶⁹ Klinkenberg, *Compressed meanings*, 177-180.

⁵⁷⁰ *Íslandske annaler indtil 1578*, 295. “Brann kirkian oc klavstrid allt at Mvkaþvera. A hinne næstv nott eptir laugardaginn fyrsta j þorra vm midnætti. med suo skiotum oc hordvm til burd. at þat brann ei meir enn halfa eygt oc allt þat goz sem seint er at greina er j uar kirkjunne oc j klaustrinu.”

the destruction of the matrix as well, called for a new matrix for the chapter seal, the Munkaþverá II. I argue that regardless of the reason, there must have been a need for a new matrix, and a new appearance of a church must have called for a new matrix with an image in line with the appearance of the new abbey church.⁵⁷¹

Discussion

In addition to my previous reflection on this seal and the historical circumstances concerning the fire at Munkaþverá, it is necessary to take a closer look at the seal image itself and make further observations. The horizontal pattern on the second seal of Munkaþverá is open to a few ways of interpretation. What could these horizontal lines represent in such a simple drawing?



Fig. 144 Two wax impressions of the second Munkaþverá seal provide a complete image.

These speculations are best presented as question-and-answer format.

1) Could the horizontal lines on the church gable in the seal be meant to suggest horizontal metal cladding intended as weather protection?

There are archaeological remains of such cladding from Skálholt cathedral. It is therefore clearly material that was used for waterproofing such buildings, in that case thin strips of lead, nailed to the roof. It cannot be ruled out that such material was used as wall cladding, but the use of it on roofs must be considered more likely.

2) Are the lines in the seal image meant to indicate a building made of horizontal timber logs?

As discussed earlier, in relation to the Reynistaður seal, the question of log buildings in Iceland has not been properly answered yet. The same applies to an import of prefabricated churches. The seal images-from Hólar diocese can be an important example in that discussion. The second Munkaþverá seal could possibly be representing a gable of a log-built church. There is an account of an import of a log-built church on behalf of the last medieval bishop at

⁵⁷¹ Guðrún Harðardóttir, "Myndefni íslenskra klausturinnsgla," 220-222.

Hólar for the nearby harbour site Kólkuós. That building technique was therefore one of those applied in local buildings in Hólar diocese.⁵⁷²

The Norwegian example is the only preserved log-built church from Gudbrandsdalen, now in the Maihaugen museum in Lillehammer. (fig. 145a) It was originally built in 1459, which makes it contemporary of the imported church at Kólkuós.



Fig. 145 Fiskekapellet, Maihaugen, Norway Granhult church, Sweden. - Rødven church, Norway.

3) Are the horizontal lines in the seal image to be interpreted as weather boarding of timber?

If the horizontal lines in the second Munkaþverá seal were meant to represent weather boarding, there could be two technical options. One is aligned wood shingles in straight rows, which are preserved in timber churches both in Norway and Sweden.⁵⁷³ That type of weather protection is natural to areas with abundant access to wood, such as at Granhults kyrka in Sweden. (fig. 145b) The other possibility would be horizontal boarding in the manner which can be observed on the stave church at Rødven in Trøndelag. (fig. 145c) Given the harsh and somewhat similar weather conditions in Iceland and western Norway, this would be a likely way of weatherproofing the late medieval, or post-1429 abbey church at Munkaþverá.

When these possibilities in interpretation of the horizontal lines in the Munkaþverá II seal are reviewed, the first is the least likely. The two later ones need further discussion which touches upon elements common to all the Icelandic seals. This is presented in the next chapter, where possible places of production of all the Icelandic seals will be addressed and considered in the context of cultural contact and the Icelandic building tradition.

6.7. Elements in the seals in relation to Icelandic architectural research

⁵⁷² Hjörleifur Stefánsson, "Medieval Icelandic churches," 25-41; Biskupa sögur II, 317.

⁵⁷³ Anker, Leif. *Middelalder i tre. Stavkirker. (Kirker i Norge IV)*(fig.), 169. A curious example is on the west gable at Eidsborg stavkirke, where there is an imitation of shingles carved onto horizontal boards. *Kirker i Norge IV*, 75, 162.

Places of production of the Hólar seals

The question of places of production of the seals from Hólar diocese is important and fundamental but must be discussed in the context of the role of the patron, the person or entity that ordered the seal matrix, in the commission of such a work, as well as what is known about Icelandic building traditions.

How much impact did a patron have on the design of a seal and how much the engraver or the workshop? There is no simple answer to this, but there is some significant evidence that the role of the patron was dominant. As discussed earlier, Virginia Glenn pointed out the possibility that if the second chapter seal of Dunkeld was commissioned in a workshop in Paris (as much evidence points to), there must have been a drawing provided by the patron. Otherwise, the engraver would have been unfamiliar with the appearance of the type of crozier in the seal image.⁵⁷⁴ There is at least good evidence on close supervision by patrons on cardinal seals.⁵⁷⁵ In this context, it is useful to ask whether a seal engraver could produce something that was not in his immediate visual surrounding. There is evidence of a clear tendency of local production of seal matrices in parts of England.⁵⁷⁶ There is also evidence of the use of preparatory drawing for seal images.

When the whole context is taken into account, I am inclined to conclude that the patron would have more impact on the general design of a seal than the engraver. The latter would, however, be likely to have impact on how some details of a design would be executed. The close relation between the identity of the owner and the appearance of seal image in general also supports this point of view in favour of strong impact of the patron.

In the article from 2016, I did not go far into possible production sites of the Icelandic monastic matrices, but the incident at Munkaþverá, which is linked to both of the seals of that site, has value in that context and is used as a point of departure in that discussion. It can be helpful to simply trace the sequence of events in those circumstances. The fire at Munkaþverá occurred in February 1429, and, during that part of the year, travelling by sea was dangerous. If a new matrix was needed immediately, it would hardly have been acquired outside Iceland at this time of year. Unfortunately, the preservation of charters is not dense enough to be of help here. The last letter from before the fire dates from that same year and the first one after the fire only from 1445 with the new seal attached.⁵⁷⁷

However, it would be expected that an institution such as an abbey would have needed a new matrix soon after one was destroyed. That would be the most likely scenario, given how

⁵⁷⁴ Glenn, "The late 13th-century chapter seals," 446.

⁵⁷⁵ Gardner, "Who were the microarchitects?," 40-41.

⁵⁷⁶ Heslop, "English seals in the Thirteenth and fourteenth centuries," 115.

⁵⁷⁷ DI IV, 672.

the text in the annal is phrased: “allt það góss sem seint er að greina” means many precious items were lost in the fire. However the annal does not provide more information than that.⁵⁷⁸

If such a seal matrix was made in Iceland, there were some places of production that are more probable than others. Despite the fact that there were no cities or towns in medieval Iceland, there were several cultural centres with artistic productions of various kinds. The most obvious ones are the bishoprics at Skálholt and Hólar, as well as all the monasteries and other wealthy farmsteads, often also linked to manuscript production.⁵⁷⁹ In addition, there is some documentary evidence on the activity of individual Icelandic goldsmiths.

The way the narrative of the earliest bishops of Skálholt, Hungurvaka is phrased points to a local production of various ecclesiastic items, for example a chalice: “Hann (Klængur) lét gjöra gullkaleik og setja gimsteinum og gaf kirkjunni.”⁵⁸⁰ Both men and women are mentioned in relation to their artistic abilities, and the most famous names are Þorsteinn the shrine maker (ísl. skrínsmiður) and Margrét the skillful/adroit (ísl. hin haga). However, no securely identifiable work by them has been preserved, although there has been some presentation of an interesting hypothesis about Margrét.⁵⁸¹ In Lárentíus saga, there is a short passage admiring the work of the Icelandic silversmith Stefán Hauksson, who was in Nidaros in 1323-1324. also in relation to Bishop Lárentíus, the same narrative mentions the goldsmith Eyjólfur who was located at Hólar.⁵⁸² All this information points to a high standard of Icelandic production of this sort.



Fig 146 Chalice, made in Iceland. Now in the Victoria & Albert Museum. (VA 639&A-1902)

Þór Magnússon has identified many liturgical items of Icelandic origin. When both documentary and material evidence is put together, they point clearly to a high standard of artistic production in Iceland in the Middle Ages, most likely based at the ecclesiastic cultural

⁵⁷⁸ *Íslandske annaler indtil 1578*, 295.

⁵⁷⁹ Liepe, "Domkyrkor och kloster som konstcentra," 185-187.

⁵⁸⁰ Trans. "He (bishop Kængur) had a golden chalice made, set with gemstones and gave to the church" Þór Magnússon, *Íslenzk silfursmíð*, 139; *Biskupa sögur* I, 83.

⁵⁸¹ Þóra Kristjánsdóttir argued for Margrét being the artist who carved the head of the bishop's staff found at the excavation of Skálholt in 1954. Þóra Kristjánsdóttir, *Mynd á þili*, 13, 151; *Biskupa sögur* I, 134.

⁵⁸² Þór Magnússon, *Íslenzk silfursmíð*, 31-32; *Biskupa sögur* I, 843, 872.

centres, Skálholt, Hólar or the monasteries. One of these items, a set of gilded chalice and paten, is actually from Reynistaður, but they are somewhat older than the foundation of the nunnery (Þjms. 6120). Another beautiful example of an Icelandic made silver chalice is preserved at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (VA 639A-1902).⁵⁸³

This evidence, both documentary and material, indicates a flourishing artistic production in Iceland during the Middle Ages. Therefore, a local production of elaborated seal matrices would also be a clear possibility or even self-evident: the milieu to create such seal matrices existed at the time. The evidence of the local letter types in the legends of the seals of Þingeyrar and Reynistaður clearly supports this.

The Hólar seals and the Icelandic church building tradition

As just described, seal owners were therefore not forced to acquire such items abroad. Although the possibility of a local production of Icelandic seal matrices is high and a very likely, the origin of individual seals cannot be proven, and some may also have been made abroad.

As mentioned above, the instruction of a patron is more likely to have an impact on the seal design than individual engravers. As concluded on individual seals of the monastic communities, there is a rich tendency for an echo of a present church building in the seals. Even in the exceptions, those images still bear the mark of the architectural trends of the period.⁵⁸⁴ It would have been the decision of the patrons who commissioned the matrices to estimate what was appropriate as an image for the institution in question. The visual recognition of the seal image played an important part and was best secured by some items which the community around would be able to understand. This could be parts of or the entire seal image and the church building itself, as in the case of the chapter seals of Speyer and St Andrews. Considering the seals from Reynistaður, Þingeyrar and Munkaþverá and the general trend in medieval chapter seals, they are more likely to reflect some of the elements in the actual churches than being totally imaginary. An interesting general question in the whole context that has been touched upon but not discussed is: how imaginary is the imaginary? Or how imaginative can the imaginary be during the time frame of these seals? As a way of answering, it is possible to use the Munkeliv seal, which appears to be a standardized version of a look of a general high-status church, similar to many British examples. Despite this, the type of the seal building is still in a certain style, which can be linked to certain cultural area. The Munkeliv seal is clearly

⁵⁸³ Þór Magnússon, *Íslensk silfursmíð*, 135, 141.

⁵⁸⁴ The youngest Canterbury seal can be taken as an example in such context as well as Munkeliv.

in stylistic relation to several English seals, that were in a stylistic resonance with general trends in church buildings at the time.⁵⁸⁵

Although there is some uncertainty about the interpretation of the church images in the chapter seals from Hólar diocese, they do provide an interesting ground for discussion about what is known about church buildings in medieval and post-medieval Iceland. Whether the production of the matrix was local or not or whether the images are echoes of the exact buildings at each site or not, it can still be expected (almost a prerequisite) that the appearance of the church image in the seal would be in line with the built reality at the time in that geographical setting. These elements are: the shingles on the roof in the Reynistaður seal and on the first Munkaþverá seal, the cross braces on the Þingeyrar seal and the horizontal lines in the second Munkaþverá seal.

In the absence of preserved churches, information on medieval Icelandic church buildings is mainly based on evidence in written sources and material remains through archaeological excavations. Research on the latter has fortunately increased in the past few decades, and it is very clear in both types of source material on medieval church buildings in Iceland that the stave building technique was at least common or even dominant. Both the archaeological evidence and the terminology of buildings or parts of buildings in narrative texts, witness about the dominance of the stave building technique. It is also evident, mainly from the written sources, that other techniques did exist but apparently were less common.⁵⁸⁶ Another factor is the preservation of medieval timber churches into the 17th and 18th centuries. During that time, church accounts are gradually getting more detailed. Therefore, it is sometimes possible to access written descriptions of late medieval timber structures. Such information is very valuable.

A key element in medieval Icelandic architecture, which is of great importance in this context, is the lack of monumental stone buildings. There is reliable evidence on that both the cathedrals were timber basilicas, and the same applies to abbey churches and other important churches. All of them were made of timber, even in some cases with a turf cover.⁵⁸⁷ However, Bishop Auðunn rauði (1313-1322) attempted to build a stone church at Hólar during his time in office there, but that work was never completed and the stones were reused in the present cathedral at the site, which was consecrated in 1763.⁵⁸⁸ Concerning the building technique of

⁵⁸⁵ See for example Pedrick, *Monastic seals*, pl. 7, 22, 27-28, 37-38, 66, 75-76, and 80.

⁵⁸⁶ Hjörleifur Stefánsson, "Medieval Icelandic churches," 25-41.

⁵⁸⁷ See overviews Hörður Ágústsson, "Hóladómkirkjur hinar fornu", *Skálholt. Kirkjur, Laufás við Eyjafjörð. Kirkjur*; "Ísländischer Kirchenbau bis 1550," 343-347; Guðrún Harðardóttir, "Um íslenskar kirkjubýggingar á miðöldum," 54-61; Hjörleifur Stefánsson, "Medieval Icelandic churches," 25-41.

⁵⁸⁸ Magnús Már Lárusson, "Auðunn rauði og Hólakirkja", 5-18; Þorsteinn Gunnarsson, *Hóladómkirkjur til forna*, 27-32.

the monumental timber buildings, evidence is very clear on stave buildings but not in the same style as the Norwegian provincial churches which are preserved, such as Borgund in the Sogn area. There are many versions of stave technique buildings, and the type based on four corner posts and rising very high (hævet midrom og svalgang) is only one of them. There were some regional differences in Norway. On the west coast there was a common type, called Møretypen, which had a different structure, longer naves built up by pairs of columns with panel between. This kind of basic structure is related to the Icelandic types, which lived on into the 19th century.⁵⁸⁹ For example, the great hall at the turf farm Keldur in southern Iceland is basically similar in structure to Rødven stavkirke of the Møre type.

In some of these Norwegian inland types, such as Urnes, there was just a simple boarding without a cover. In other churches, including Borgund and Rødven, there is a weather boarding of different sorts. Due to hard weather conditions in Iceland, weather boarding would always have been needed on Icelandic churches. Similar hard conditions are also evident in the western parts of Norway. The seal image in the second seal of Munkaþverá may be representing something similar to what is now on Rødven stavkirke.

In written sources on medieval and post-medieval Icelandic churches, there is some evidence on horizontal types of weather boarding, although vertical ones are more common.

Concerning the knowledge of medieval Icelandic church buildings, there is some help in preserved artifacts from older buildings and the comparison of existing 18th- and 19th- century buildings with reused wood with description in accounts.⁵⁹⁰

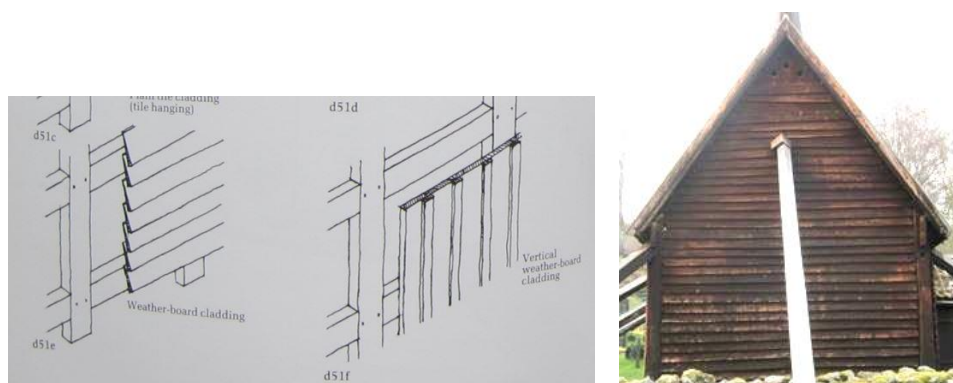


Fig. 147 Explanation of types of cladding. - Rødven stave church, Western Norway.

In addition to the lack of stone buildings, there is another key element in the Icelandic building tradition, which is the constant re-use of wood and the tendency to use it sparingly. In the absence of durable stone buildings, there was a frequent rebuilding of churches at each site.

⁵⁸⁹ Storsletten, "Norwegian stave churches of the Møre type," 42-52.

⁵⁹⁰ See for example Guðrún Harðardóttir "Gerðir horfinna Reykholtskirkna"; Hörður Ágústsson, *Laufás við Eyjafjörð. Kirkjur*.

Because no woods with proper building timber grew in Iceland, timber for buildings had to be either imported from other countries (mostly Norway) or acquired by the shore in the form of driftwood. Because of this situation, there is development in building techniques which is evident in the preserved buildings from the 18th and 19th centuries. This technique allowed for using wood very sparingly and apply re-use whenever possible. For example, when stave panel started to weaken and rot at the ends, there was the introduction of a panel type with shorter boards and horizontal boards were placed in mid-way. (ísl. *spjaldþil með miðsyllu*)⁵⁹¹ However, the wealthiest institutions did own parts of forests in Norway in the Middle Ages, for example both the Skálholt and Hólar bishoprics, which also owned ships for transport of goods.⁵⁹²

As discussed in the chapter on the Þingeyrar seal, the X forms on the church gable have here been interpreted as cross braces that functioned as structural reinforcements in timber walls. Although explained with Norwegian visual examples, there is evidence for such structural parts in post medieval Icelandic buildings. In the church at Reykholt from 1664-1702 there were such diagonal support (ísl. *skakkslár*) on the inside of the front panel of the church at that time.⁵⁹³ Concerning the X form at the top of the gable, there is an example of what was called scissors rafter (ísl. *krosssperrur*) in Laufás church, which was built in 1631 but was almost identical to the medieval one.⁵⁹⁴ This type of rafter is common in many types of Norwegian stave churches.

Another structural element I would like to discuss is in the Reynistaður seal is the type of wooden lining. Ágústsson interpreted part of the drawing as wooden side wall where the wooden lining would be similar to a type still preserved at an 18th century vernacular building (Bæjardýrabort) at Reynistaður itself.⁵⁹⁵ Depending on how the eye perceives the drawing, these lines could also be interpreted as part of a vertical weather boarding, similar to what can be seen on the drawing of Valgerðarkirkja in Skálholt presented above. (fig. 134b) The newfound wax impression the drawing is made from does not alter this view.

⁵⁹¹ Guðrún Harðardóttir, "A view on the preservation history of the last judgement panels from Bjarnastaðahlíð," 205-206. For example, it is due to this extreme reuse of wood that the last judgement panels from Bjarnastaðhlíð were preserved.

⁵⁹² Guðrún Harðardóttir, "Viðhald kirkjubygginga á Íslandi fyrir og eftir siðbreytingu," 21-23. Biskupaánálar Jóns Egilssonar 65.

⁵⁹³ This kind of cladding is shown in the drawings by the Stanley expedition in Skálholt. On the other hand, according to the earliest descriptions of Brynjólfskirkja the cladding was vertical (ísl. *standþil*). Hörður Ágústsson, Skálholt kirkjur, 175; Guðrún Harðardóttir, "Gerðir horfinna Reykholtskirkna", 25 (inner lining). According to Ágústsson 1998, the term skakkslár is more closely linked with timber framed buildings, 115. However, such structural support as at the front gable in late 17th century Reykholtskirkja seems to be a logical enforcement in any type of timber panel which has to be able to sustain some wind.

⁵⁹⁴ Hörður Ágústsson, Laufás kirkjur, 69 (fig.) 72, 75, 79; Skálholt. Kirkjur, 248-249.

⁵⁹⁵ Hörður Ágústsson, Íslensk byggingararfleifð I, bls. 115, 121.

In addition to that, the image in the Þingeyrar seal is possibly expressing cross braces and the Reynistaður seal may feature some vertical weatherboard cladding. There are two more indications of cladding items to discuss. These are the horizontal lines in the Munkaþverá II seal and the diamond and shingles patterns in the Munkaþverá I and Reynistaður seals, respectively.

There were two main ways to waterproof a church-roof at the time: with metal (lead/copper) or with wood, either in the form of boards or shingles of some sort, usually of clay or wood. In the seals with architectural elements from Nidaros archdiocese, there is not a clear-cut example of metal clad roof, but it is possible that the Nidarholm seal may be representing such type of roof. In most cases the roofs of church buildings are either shown with diamond pattern or clear roof shingles. Examples of the diamond pattern are the Nidaros chapter seal and shingles on the Hamar seal. The latter clearly presents shingles or tiles, while the others show diamond pattern.

There is archaeological evidence on the use of metal on the roof of an Icelandic church. In the Skálholt excavation in 1954, some considerable amount of lead was discovered, as well as stripes of lead intact.⁵⁹⁶ As mentioned in relation to the Reynistaður seal, there is also clear indication of roof shingles in several instances in written sources.⁵⁹⁷

The earlier Munkaþverá seal seems to have a diamond pattern on the roof, the roof of the side aisle and even between the windows. This is in contrast with the Reynistaður seal, which has the shingles only on the roof. Considering these roof elements in the Munkaþverá and Reynistaður seals, they echo a part of a built reality in medieval Iceland mainly witnessed through post medieval resources from the period when some medieval timber structures were still standing. However, there is one extremely important sentence in a fragment of Guðmundar saga on the second cathedral of Hólar. In describing what bishop Jörundur commissioned during his reign, there is a note that the cathedral was painted on the inside but clad with shingles on the outside (ísl. *pentuð innan en lauffökt utan*).⁵⁹⁸ This means that such shingles were a part of the building techniques in use in this area in the Middle Ages.

Considering the Norwegian aspect Drechsler mentioned, I think it is very open to discussion that the abbey church at Reynistaður could have been completed under strong Norwegian influence on behalf of Auðunn rauði. As mentioned, Bishop Auðunn was indeed a strong patron of the built heritage at Hólar in his attempt to build a stone cathedral and imported the

⁵⁹⁶ Kristján Eldjárn, "Forngrípaskrá." 64-65.

⁵⁹⁷ Hörður Ágústsson, "Fjórar fornar húsamyndir," 145-146. These examples are in post medieval sources, but not younger than the 17th century, when a number of medieval constructions were still standing.

⁵⁹⁸ Guðrún Harðardóttir, "A view on the preservation history of the last judgement panels from Bjarnastaðahlíð," 214-215; Foote, "Bishop Jörundur Þorsteinsson and the relics of Guðmundr inn góði Arason," 104.

Norwegian style *stofa*, called Auðunnarstofa. It is even possible to take things further and open up the possibility that the Reynistaður abbey church could just as well have been a prefabricated/ready-made import directly from Norway, just as Auðunnarstofa had been. That may not be at all far-fetched in the light of a text from “Réttarbót Hákonar háleggs um verslun útlendinga”: “It is also forbidden that any foreign men (in Norway) buy roof trusses, panels or rafters from other than the king’s men or ráðsmönnum and húsbændum in the town (Bergen).”⁵⁹⁹ This means that it must have been common for Icelanders (as part of útlenskir menn) to buy ready-made building parts in Norway. However, the nunnery was founded under the reign of Bishop Jörundur, the patron of the new church at Hólar, which had the cover of shingles according to the source. Why would Jörundur not have commissioned something similar for the church at Reynistaður nunnery shortly after its foundation in 1295? It may be of interest in this context that much of timber houses from around 1900, which still exist in Iceland, are indeed such types of buildings. That is, they were acquired through catalogues and were imported ready-made. However, the imported Norwegian catalogue buildings were adapted to the unique Icelandic climate by cladding them with corrugated iron, which was an import from England. Import of material and local adaptation are strong themes in the Icelandic building tradition, which is often times a unique mixture of something Scandinavian and something English (or later American)⁶⁰⁰

The gable in the second Munkapverá seal is very different from the shingles and the vertical lines in the Reynistaður seal. As discussed in the section on that seal, these lines on the gable can be interpreted in various ways. The possibility that the horizontal lines were either presenting weather boarding or a log building-- timber structures--will be taken into further discussion here in relation to Icelandic building traditions. In line with what is known about the Icelandic medieval church building tradition, it is most relevant to reach the conclusion that the horizontal lines were meant to interpret wooden elements, either log-building or some kind of horizontal weather boarding. It is somewhat difficult to tell which interpretation is more convincing in the Icelandic circumstances at the time. There is a reliable account of an import of a log-built church on behalf of the last medieval bishop at Hólar for the site Kólkuós. There is also evidence on a horizontal type of cladding, although vertical types seem to have been more common.⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹⁹ DI II, 333. „Það er og fyrirboðið að nokkrir útlenskir menn kaupi sperrur, borðvið eða rapta af öðrum mönnum en af konungsgarði eða ráðsmönnum og húsbændum í bænum.“

⁶⁰⁰ Although in different time-zone, an import of building parts from distant areas is also evident in the Madhia shipwreck. See for example: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madhia_shipwreck

⁶⁰¹ Hjörleifur Stefánsson, "Medieval Icelandic churches," 25-41; *Biskupa sögur* II, 317; Guðrún Harðardóttir, "Gerðir horfinna Reykholtskirkna," 25 (inner cladding).

Most of the features in the monastic chapter seals from the Hólar diocese open up new questions concerning the present knowledge of the Icelandic church building tradition.

Was there more import of prefabricated churches than assumed by previous scholars? Was the wood, some freshly ordained bishops, such as Jón at Hólar or Klængur in Skálholt, imported after their ordination trip pre-cut? Or was it more of a raw material? Information on that is scarce. The building account for post-medieval Brynjólfskirkja at Skálholt attests massive sawing and cutting of wood, so, in that case, the answer would be import of raw material. The monumental size of the medieval cathedrals could point in the same direction, since there were no timber buildings in Norway made in similar size and form. Given that in some instances there was a copying effect in institutionally-related church buildings, such as the Cluny abbey church and the churches of the daughter-houses, such as Paray-le-Monial. Could the Icelandic monastic seals be echoing some elements in the cathedral buildings themselves?

Considering further the possibilities of the items in the seals: Were perhaps only the roof shingles an import? Or were they local mass production in areas with a lot of driftwood, such as the Westfjords? The seals, as visual source material, evoke such new questions, thus clearly contributing important factors to existing knowledge on medieval Icelandic church buildings.

6.8. Conclusion on monastic chapter seals with architecture in Norway and Iceland

This overview of the monastic chapter seals with architecture and architectural elements brings out some interesting patterns which were discussed earlier, in the overview of the chapter seals. It is quite striking how relatively few, or only 3 out of 27 the Norwegian seals with buildings. In comparison, 4 out of 6 preserved Icelandic monastic ones have images of buildings. The monastic seals can be divided into two main groups comparable with the cathedral chapter seals: one with large buildings without human figures and the other with large building but with figures inside.

All the Icelandic seals from Hólar diocese fall into the group of buildings without figures, but only two of the Norwegian ones, Nidarholm from Nidaros diocese and Utstein in Stavanger diocese, belong to this group. The Munkeliv seal falls into the category of large building with figures. In this context, it is informative to consider the foundation dates of the houses in question: Nidarholm around 1100, Munkeliv around 1110, Þingeyrar 1133, Munkaþverá 1155, Utstein after 1263 and Reynistaður in 1295. Most of these are Benedictine, but not all; the Augustinian Utstein is the exception. Most of the chapter seals of these monasteries, present images with buildings only where no figures are involved. The exception is Munkeliv. The pattern is therefore not clear cut according to age of houses and/or monastic rules. However, there is a quite strong inclination towards the oldest Benedictine houses having plain buildings

in their seals. The exceptions to this are that the old Benedictine Munkeliv has figures in the building in its seal and the young Augustinian Utstein has the plain building type. A preliminary examination on the published monastic seals of the 13th century England also revealed a Benedictine inclination, but as in the Norwegian material, there are some exceptions.⁶⁰² In both areas, there are strong tendencies or inclinations, but without clear lines. This seems not to be addressed in British seal literature but is clearly something to be studied further. Explanation of why some chapter seals contain the type with plain buildings is hardly discussed in the seal literature. However, Heslop has touched upon this and referred to the plain building type in the British context as pre-conquest but does not take the point further.⁶⁰³ I therefore bring a particular seal into the discussion I believe is of importance in this context. This is the seal of Benedictine abbey of Monte Cassino, which is preserved as a lead bulla with an image of the abbot on one side and a church building on the other. (fig. 148) The church image has a strong resonance of the abbey church itself, as it is documented in various media despite the fact it is now destroyed. This seal of this mother house of the Benedictine rule dates to the 11th century, and it has been suggested that it probably was a prototype for seals with buildings in the Italian context at that time.⁶⁰⁴ I therefore propose the hypothesis that the Monte Cassino seal may have been a prototype for other Benedictine chapter seals in areas further North, from that time on. I also suggest that the channel this type filtered through were the imperial abbeys of the Holy Roman Empire. The chapter seals from Nivelles and Echternach may support that speculation. I would like to explore this further in another study. Also, the fact that the early British examples belong to Benedictine houses. The number of seals with church images in the North Atlantic region is quite a strong indicator of that interpretation. It is even possible to extend the hypothesis over to cathedral chapter seals via the monastic connection many English cathedrals had from the early Middle Ages.



Fig. 148 Chapter seal of Monte Cassino abbey, Italy.

⁶⁰² See illustrations in Pedrick, *Monastic seals*. Observation of the author.

⁶⁰³ Heslop, "English seals from the mid ninth century to 1100," 7-9; "Seals," 299-300.

Harvey and McGuiness refer to the study of Heslop in their overview on British seals, see p. 99-100.

⁶⁰⁴ Bascapé, *Sigillografia* II, 163; Gattula, *Historia* I, XVI.

A number of other monastic chapter seals contain architectural elements of some sort, although not with complete buildings. The seals of St Mary in Oslo and the Dominicans in Bergen portray a presentation of church models, but in other seals there is an architectural frame on the scenes depicted. There is a rich architectural framework surrounding the Maries in the second seal of Helgeseter, the one from Dragsmark and an even richer in the one from Lyse abbey. In addition to the church model, the seal of St Mary in Oslo also has an architectural framework or canopy over the head of St Mary. The model in the seal has been analysed in relation to the newest research of the building history of the church and not considered to have a reference to the appearance of the church.⁶⁰⁵ The church model in the Dominican seal is unusual with a large round tower on the roof of the church. There is little knowledge concerning the Dominican church in Bergen, but the iconographic type where two figures lift up a church model may have originated in the lead seal (*bullā*) of Hagia Sofia in Constantinople.⁶⁰⁶

Chapter or convent?

There is some variation in how the ecclesiastic communities are addressed in the legends of the communal seals. The word “conventus” seems to be rather common across many monastic rules, but other words, such as “capitvli” and “fratres” are also used.⁶⁰⁷ In the Norwegian and Icelandic material there seems to be the same tendency, but there is still a relatively large portion of the word capitvli. In the monastic seals with buildings (with and without figures), only one, Munkeliv, has the word “convent” in the legend of the common seal. On the other hand, the seals of Nidarholm, Þingeyrar, Munkaþverá I and Reynistaður have the word “capitvli” in their legend. The legends of the others, Utstein and Munkaþverá II, are not legible enough for observation of the text. It is of quite some interest that in many of the documents these seals are attached to, the use of the words capitulum and convent seem to be used as synonyms. A very common combination is that the convent, or the brethren of the convent (*conventa/conventubræður*), seal the documents with their chapter seal, but sometimes it is labelled convent seal.⁶⁰⁸

Concerning topographic accuracy, or the likeness of seal and church among the monastic examples, Utstein is the only church preserved and intact enough to compare with the seal

⁶⁰⁵ Stige & Snekkestad, “The Church of St. Mary in Oslo” 183. The seal image can be interpreted differently from what is done in that article.

⁶⁰⁶ Trætteberg, “Geistlige segl i Bergens Bispedømme,” 80. For an image see Ewald, *Siegelkunde*, plate 40, nr. 8.

⁶⁰⁷ Grandjean, *Dansk Sigillografi*, 275-279 and for example DN III, nr. 16; DN XVI, nr. 217

⁶⁰⁸ Observations by the author.

image. That comparison clearly speaks for itself but is less clear at other sites. The other two Norwegian seals with buildings are less clear but still open to interpretation. The Nidarholm seal is open to various interpretations, towards the imaginary and towards some topographical elements. Although an excavated part of the site presents a rectangular church building, there are other elements which can be considered in the light of the seal image. Those are the round 17th-century bastions, which may have been built on the ground of an earlier round church, and a round apse that was excavated around 1990. Because of this, I would like to keep the possibility open for a partial topographical transfer of some sort into the seal image. It cannot be excluded that the seal image might present a round chapter house. The Munkeliv seal is what may be considered closest to an imaginary image, but despite that, its design is a witness of the perception of forms and ideas in such a seal at that time.

A comparison of churches and seals is not possible in the case of the seals from Hólar diocese, but in the context of local building traditions, it is curious that all the Norwegian examples have a clear reference to stone buildings while the Icelandic examples have references to elements generally found in timber buildings. As far as research in Icelandic architectural heritage goes, timber and turf were the dominant building materials until the 20th century, and both of the cathedrals at Skálholt and Hólar were monumental timber basilicas, not built of stone. The monastic seal pictures in the presented chapter seals from Hólar diocese show a quite clear resonance of such a reality of timber buildings, representing weather boarding, structural support, and ornament, which could only have been of timber. On the other hand, all major cathedral and monastic churches in Norway were made of stone. The reference to timber elements in the Icelandic seals makes it more likely than not that they reflect the built reality at each site to some extent. In fact, they seem to be visual quotations to such structures.

After such an evaluation as provided here, it can be strongly argued that the seal images in the chapter seals can be interpreted as very important visual sources on the appearance of the now long-lost monastic churches in question. In the case of both Munkaþverá and Reynistaður, there is evidence on same or similar type of building material in post-reformation buildings at the site, some of them even with medieval remains such as a shingle clad “sancta sanctorum” at Reynistaður and a skewed choir at Munkaþverá with shingles on the roof.

The images in these seals can even provide some information on the cathedrals, given a common pattern of some resonance of the form of cathedrals to their subordinate churches which still existed in the 19th century in the use of forms originated in Reykjavík cathedral in various parish churches in the neighbouring areas.⁶⁰⁹ This is especially important because of

⁶⁰⁹ Guðrún Harðardóttir, “Reykholtskirkja,” 306; Þorsteinn Gunnarsson, “Dómkirkjan,” 82.

the total lack of preserved medieval churches in Iceland. Although only few examples, these seal images from Hólar diocese can be considered very valuable additions to the source material on the Icelandic church building tradition.

7. Architectural elements in bishop's seals

7.1. Introduction

Architecture in the seals of church officials is fundamentally different in perception from the architecture presented in chapter seals. Architectural elements in bishop's seals were not introduced in the seals of dignity until the late Middle Ages, while the architecture in chapter seals has a long tradition.⁶¹⁰ In the short overview of imagery in Scandinavian seals in *Kulturhistorisk leksikon*, Norberg comments on the development of architectural framing of the figures in episcopal seals from that area during the course of the 14th century. In the cases of seated bishops, he mentions how the seat grows into a throne with architectural framing.⁶¹¹ However, this development starts earlier in the British Isles, already in the 13th century, which is a useful area to study in this Nidrosian context.

In a recent overview of the seals of English bishops, Philippa Hoskin mentions the emergence of architectural framing of the bishop's figure in the 13th century. She does not elaborate more on that but bases the observation on the writings of Elizabeth A. New in 2010 and the still valid survey by St John Hope from 1886-1887.⁶¹² There, he presents the seal of Nicolas Farnham at Durham, from 1241, as the earliest example of architectural framing of a bishop's figure and publishes a drawing of the seal of Richard de la Wyche at Chichester from 1245.⁶¹³



Fig. 149. Chichester, Richard de la Wyche (1245-1253).

In his article, "Architecture of cardinal seals" from 2011, Julian Gardner explains the emergence of this development in the cardinal seals. He draws attention to how seals were perceived in contemporary sources and quotes texts from from 1260-1270 and is therefore of great value in this present context, particularly a comment on how architectural elements were

⁶¹⁰ Gardner, "The architecture of cardinal seals," 440-441.

⁶¹¹ Norberg, "Sigillbilder", 204.

⁶¹² Hoskin, "Administration and identity," 202; New, *Seals and sealing practices*, 59-61.

⁶¹³ Hope, St John, "The Seals of English bishops," 276-277.

perceived as “ad modo tabernaculi.”⁶¹⁴ That phrasing in the sources, therefore, informs us that the seal design was modelled on a pre-existing concept of forms already applied in tabernacles at that time.

In his work on archiepiscopal seals of York, published in 1992, John P. Dalton traced the emergence of canopies in the seals from York, as well as discussed the broader context. That applies here, although the York seals are later examples, such as the second seal of Walter Giffard (1266-1279). Dalton explains this development as a general trend in medieval art to “enclose figures within miniature architecture,”⁶¹⁵ and he also points to a similar development in illuminated manuscripts, particularly psalters dated to ca.1265-1280. He also presents how these canopied forms also appear in funerary brasses and imagery in stained glass windows, for example at York itself.⁶¹⁶ In his work mainly based on German examples, Toni Diedrich presents the seal of a dean from 1261 as the earliest example of canopy in an effigy seal but his overview is not aimed to trace the time factor, but mainly the types.⁶¹⁷

The architectural framework that developed around the human figures in bishops’ seals in the 13th and 14th centuries has a close parallel in tomb sculpture. Toni Diedrich discussed the general parallels of the presentation of bishops in seals and tomb sculpture in his *Siegelkunde* in 2012, and Elizabeth A. New also touched upon this topic in an article from 2014.⁶¹⁸ In both seals and tomb sculptures, the bishop is presented in full liturgical vestments and the form of the canopies, which appear in both formats, seem to go hand in hand with a general development of style at the time as introduced above. Indeed, there was an increased application of microarchitectural elements in various aspects of art.⁶¹⁹

As discussed above, it is not quite clear what comes after the other in terms of the canopies. The funerary canopies could be used for an estimation for whether the structure around a figure in an effigy seal would have a resonance in funerary sculpture or vice versa. However, the main aim here is to detect whether these structures would mirror some of the immediate built environment of the bishops in question.

As has been pointed out in the previous chapter, the architectural representation in chapter seals is, in a number of cases, quite true to the actual buildings at each site/institution and in other instances in some recognizable resonance with the building types in a local context. However, interpretation of the architectural elements in the seals of bishops and other church officials is not as clear.

⁶¹⁴ Gardner, “The architecture of cardinal seals,” 440-443

⁶¹⁵ Dalton, *The archiepiscopal and deputed seals of York*, 36.

⁶¹⁶ Dalton, *The archiepiscopal and deputed seals of York*, 35-37.

⁶¹⁷ Diedrich, *Siegelkunde*, 197.

⁶¹⁸ Diedrich, *Siegelkunde*, 178-220; New, “Episcopal embodiment,” 191-214.

⁶¹⁹ Gardner, “The architecture of cardinal seals,” 442-443.

In order to look further into that aspect, it is useful to draw attention to the larger context, including the theological thinking of the time. Here it is also of interest to reflect on the receivers of these seals. The majority of correspondence was “inter ecclesia”, or between members of the clergy or ecclesiastic institution. In addition to that, the upper level of the lay society was involved.⁶²⁰ This means that the people receiving letters with seals attached were familiar with the theological thinking of the time. Because of that, the imagery in the seals would have been legible to them. Phrasings in sermons, new styles and interior items in the surrounding churches must have been a field of theological and stylistic transfer into the general thought of each period. This also applies to the architectural elements in the seals of bishops and other church officials emerging in the 13th century.

From the mid-13th century, or approximately from the completion of the St Chapelle in Paris, the aesthetic vocabulary of architecture increasingly filtered into other spheres of art. This development was part of a general trend towards the visualisation of the medieval interpretation of the world or the church as a transcendent illumination of the heaven.⁶²¹

Very few contemporary sources actually comment on how architecture in seals of the church officials was perceived. However, some late-14th-century examples provide the concept of “tabernaculum” about architecture surrounding a figure.⁶²²

A growing veneration of the Host in the late Middle Ages played important part in this development. This resulted in the establishment of the Feast of Corpus Christi, which was partly established in 1264 and fully introduced (again) in 1317.⁶²³ Along with this development, “the decades around 1300 mark a particularly close, indeed unsurpassed, moment of rapprochement between macro- and microarchitectural worlds.”⁶²⁴ As a result, the 13th and 14th centuries were the time frame when architectural elements became a richer part of bishop’s seals. This growing veneration of the Host seems to have played an important part in that development: changes in the identity of the celebrant clergy resulted in a distinctive architectural framing in various items within the church, for example the sedilia, partly inspired

⁶²⁰ The majority of the medieval letters published in the DI or DN are between people of these classes, mostly men but some nuns and aristocratic women.

⁶²¹ Bucher, “Micro-Architecture as the ‘Idea’ of Gothic Theory and Style,” 72. Although the idea of the Heavenly Jerusalem is a widespread there are also other opinions on the interpretation of the gothic cathedral as representation of the Heavenly Jerusalem as presented by Wilhelm Schlink in 1998.

⁶²² Sillence, “Compositions and associations of architectural framework,” 101. That is more in line with the architectural elements in for example the seal of Archbishop Gaute and later examples rather than the one of Olav I, see *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 77.

⁶²³ Timmermann, “Fleeting Glimpses of Eschaton,” 59-60; Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 181-185, 209.

⁶²⁴ Timmermann, “Fleeting Glimpses of Eschaton,” 61.

by shrine architecture.⁶²⁵ It can, therefore, be stated that microarchitecture as a representation of this elevated state of the clergy became part of the visual identity of bishops in their seals.

In this context, the question asked in the chapter on the chapter seals: “How imaginative is the imaginary?” is also relevant in the discussion of architectural elements in bishops’ seals. If there is a possibility of a resonance from the built environment in the immediate surroundings of the bishops in question, onto their seals, what building parts would then be relevant? In order to attempt to answer that, it is necessary to consult with medieval sources on how the church building was perceived and whether there was a particular meaning associated with individual parts of it. A local Icelandic/Norwegian source is the 12th century *Homily book*, in particular the sermon on the dedication day, *Kirkjudagsmál*.⁶²⁶

The close relationship between bishop and church was sometimes allegorised, and the church was presented as the bishop’s bride. There are clear examples of this in the *vitae* of the Icelandic bishops, such as *Þorláks saga*, which is a narrative on the life of Bishop Þorlákur Þórhallsson at Skálholt (1178-1193). According to the narrative, Þorlákur was early in his life about to propose to a woman. But then he had a dream or a vision in which someone said to him: “‘I know that you are about to propose to a woman, but you should not, because there is another one, much greater, intended for you and you should not have anyone else’. Þorlákur wakes up and decided not to propose and never attempted to anytime later.”⁶²⁷ This is interpreted as prophetic for Þorlákur later becoming the bishop of Skálholt, meaning the church should be his future bride. This text also reflects the reform ideas of the 12th century with emphasis on clerical celibacy, and Þorlákur was later to become a strong advocate for this policy of the church.

In another text, an addition to *Guðmundar saga*, this concept of the allegorical relationship is very clear in an explanation of the relationship of Christ and the congregation his bride.⁶²⁸ A third example is the most straight forward one. In a version of *Guðmundar saga* written by Abbot Arngrímur Brandsson, at one point, the relationship between the bishop and Hólar cathedral is described with these words: “his bride, the Holy Cathedral at Hólar.” This phrase was used in explaining a situation around Bishop Guðmundur in his feud with the

⁶²⁵ Cameron, “From hole-in-the wall to Heavenly mansions,” 153, 160; Guðrún Harðardóttir, “The seal of dignity of archbishop Olav,” 11-12.

⁶²⁶ *Íslensk hómilíubók*, 147-153.

⁶²⁷ *Biskupa sögur* I, 93; 268 (another version of *Þorláks saga hin yngri*). „veit ek,” sagði hann, þat þú ætlar þér hér konu at biðja, en þú skalt þat mál eigi upp láta koma, af þí at þat mun eigi ráðit verða, ok er þér önnur brúðr myklu æðri hugut, ok skaltu öngrar annarrar fá.”... en þorlákr vaknar, ok var hann þá svá fráhorfinn þessu máli, at hann bað sér aldri konu þaðan frá.

⁶²⁸ *Biskupa sögur* I, 559. (Viðbætur Guðmundar sögu) “Eins hæsta allsvalda guðs speki ok forsjá, ölluri) hlutmn sælliga ok miskunnsamliga skipanda, prvd[d]i eigi at eins ok lýsti sína eigin brúði, lieilaga kristni, með inum fegurstum gimsteinum ok lýsandi lömpurn sinna útaligra manna.”

excommunicated local secular rulers at the time.⁶²⁹ The text does not only refer to the congregation as the church but the physical church building itself and its economic aspects.

With such concrete examples of how the relationship between a bishop and a cathedral was perceived by contemporaries, it is relevant to use that in the interpretation of the imagery in bishop's seals and the architectural elements in particular. The next step would be to reflect on what parts of a church building would be relevant as an inspiration for architectural elements surrounding a bishop's figure in a seal of dignity.

7.2. Places of authority in medieval church buildings

In the atmosphere of medieval exegetic symbolism, buildings and building parts could play a significant role in the visibility of authority of individual church officials, especially bishops.

As discussed in the previous section on the chapter seals, consideration of the imaginary and how far that can resach in the mind of medieval patrons and artisans is of interest concerning architectural elements in bishop's seals. Are all such elements imaginary or is there in some cases a reflection of the local built environment? What buildings or parts of buildings associated with the bishop? To explore this, it is relevant to present selected architectural forms and locations which had relevance for the presentation of the authority of church at the time. That authority was manifested in the church building itself as well as the bishops. These symbolic parts of the church building in question are therefore relevant as items on the seals of bishops. They are primarily doorways, choir screens and episcopal thrones.⁶³⁰

Church doors

In the ecclesiastic mindset, doorways in church buildings were powerful bearers of meaning. The portals had manifold meanings, and one of them was the interpretation as Christ himself.⁶³¹ This allegorical interpretation of the church and the separate parts of it is evident, even in Old Norse literature. In a dedication sermon (ísl. *kirkjudagsmál*), which is preserved both in the Icelandic and the Norwegian Homily books, there are several comments on the meaning of doorways. This collection of homilies, usually dated to around 1200, is rather early in relation to the development of the architectural elements in bishop's seals, but the allegory involved is

⁶²⁹ *Biskupa sögur* II, 88 (Guðmundar saga Arngríms): "sjálfr biskupinn, er keyrðr í útleigð, en brúðr hans, heilug Hóla kirkja með sínum réttarbótum, liggr sem herfengin ambátt í tárlegum trega undir bannsettra manna drottan".

⁶³⁰ Sedilia and choir stalls are not treated specially here but they are relevant features in the context. See for example Cameron, "From hole-in-the wall to Heavenly mansions," 153-161. Sedilia start to appear as part of the wall in British stone churches in the 12th century but in the second part of the 13th century these seats had gained gables and ornaments.

⁶³¹ Kendall, *The allegory of the church*, 80-91.

still interesting in this context.⁶³² The comments on the church doors themselves are: “The church doors mean the correct faith, the one which leads to a proper Christianity.” And later in the text “on this transverse panel is a doorway which leads into the church and the windows which enlighten the church because the Lord enlightens all those who walk into his faith.”⁶³³ The door itself in the doorway means a reservation of speech.⁶³⁴ The importance of the church door is very clear in this context.

In the interpretation of the unusual cathedral chapter of Chichester Lloyd DeBeer discussed certain exegetical context of that seal and the one of Burscough priory, (fig. 140a) which has a road leading up to an open doorway. DeBeer links that to the writings of Bede on the “straight path” in *De Templum*.⁶³⁵ In addition to this, there is evidence from Staßburger Münster that legal acts were performed outside of the south door of that church. Those acts were partly secular.⁶³⁶

In order to gain knowledge of medieval use and what acts of authority were done at church doors, the narrative of the Bishops’ sagas is very useful as well as the secular contemporary sagas. Various legal acts took place in front of church doors. The important act of the decision by landowners in Vestfirðingafjórðungur to pay tax to the king of Norway was manifested in front of the church door at Alþingi in Þingvellir.⁶³⁷ It is evident that legal acts of lay persons were performed in front of church doors, of which there are numerous examples, such as confirmations of buying and selling of real estate. This was often concealed with a handshake in front of the church doors.⁶³⁸ The church doors were also the place for reading of judgement acts,⁶³⁹ and the adoption of children took place there. Several examples of many of these acts is preserved in the *Diplomatarium Islandicum*.⁶⁴⁰ Similar examples are known in Norwegian context as explored by Margrete Syrstad Andås in her doctoral thesis. There she provides examples from various sources where legal acts took place at church doors. They stem from early Norwegian law (Gulapíng, Bjarkey and Frostapíng), *Árna saga biskups*, *Hákonar saga*

⁶³² *Íslensk hómilíubók*, VII.

⁶³³ *Íslensk hómilíubók*, 149. “Dyr kirkju merkja trúu rétta, þá er oss leiðir inn til almennilegrar kristni.” ... “Á þessu brjóstþili eru dyr inn að ganga í kirkju og gluggar þeir, er lýsa kirkjuna, því að Drottinn lýsir alla þá, er inn ganga í trúu hans.”

⁶³⁴ *Íslensk hómilíubók*, 150-151. “Á inu innra brjóstþili eru mikil dyr í sönghús” and “Hurð fyrir durum merkir tungu stilling”.

⁶³⁵ <https://doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-06/ldbeer/p14>

⁶³⁶ Wiek, “Das Straßburger Münster”, 87.

⁶³⁷ Sturlunga 1988, 751.

⁶³⁸ *DI* IV, 308-309: (Fyrir kirkjuhurðunum í Saurbæ); *DI*, VIII, 276-277: (Framan við kirkjudyr á Laugabóli við Isafjörð); *DI* IV, 517 (Jarðarsöluhandsal á Sjávarborg 1432).

⁶³⁹ *DI* V, 238.

⁶⁴⁰ For example: *DI*, IV, 614-15; *DI* IV, 583-584 (The adoption of the children of prior Sigurður Jónsson at Möðruvallaklaustur “firir kirku dyrom”; *DI* VI, 693, (nr 608 : “Stodo þessar kuinnur allar fyrir kirkjv dyrum... og helldo allar aa eirne bok”)).

Hákonarsonar and *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*.⁶⁴¹ They resonate well with the Icelandic material. Indeed, the instance in *Árna saga biskups* is very explicit in linking the authority of the bishop to the church door in the act of giving absolution.⁶⁴²

Other examples of ecclesiastic acts in front of church doors are the introduction of women to the church after giving birth (*kirkjuleiðsla kvenna*) and the relieve from excommunication.⁶⁴³ Church doors are therefore evidently locations of impact and authority in the medieval society.

A concrete example of resonance of an actual doorway onto a seal image can be found in the seal of Henry Gower, bishop of St Davids in Wales. (150a) However, it is interesting that it is not the doorway of his church but the doorway of the entrance of the bishop's palace. (fig. 150b) But in that case, he himself was the patron of that particular building at St Davids and therefore that doorway was linked to his identity presented visually in his seal.⁶⁴⁴ Although it is not church door, this provides at least concrete example of how a building and a bishop are intertwined and presented in a seal image. It is also possible that decorative elements from the doorway of the choir screen were used in the seal.⁶⁴⁵



Fig. 150 Bishop Henry of Gower, St Davids. - Doorway at the bishop's palace at St Davids.

Choir screens and their doorways

Choir screens have been in churches from early on, but important changes took form after the Fourth Lateran council in 1215. That led to the introduction of more elaborate screens later in the 13th and 14th centuries.⁶⁴⁶ Such elaborate screens were, however, removed after the reformation in many countries, or even later as a result of theological and liturgical changes.

⁶⁴¹ Syrstad Andås, *Imagery and ritual in the liminal zone*, 163-171.

⁶⁴² Syrstad Andås, *Imagery and ritual in the liminal zone*, 164.

⁶⁴³ *Biskupa sögur* I, 711-712. (*Árna saga*).

⁶⁴⁴ New, "Episcopal embodiment," 204.

⁶⁴⁵ The lace-like tracery beneath the ogee arch resembles similar elements in the doorway of the choir screen.

⁶⁴⁶ Coldstream, *Medieval architecture*, 137-139; Jung, *The gothic screen*, 25.

In written source material such as the Homily book, the meaning of the division between church and choir is explained in this manner: “The division panel (brjóstpili) between church and the choir means the Holy spirit, because that as we enter the faith because of the belief in Christ we enter the Heavenly glory through the merciful/(door of mercy) of the Holy spirit. In the same manner as Christ connected two nations/people into one faith, the Holy spirit connects these two nations in one love. On this division (between church and choir) is a large doorway because the one who finds the merciful doors of the Holy spirit can see the Heavenly things in his mind.”⁶⁴⁷ This allegory of the choir screen is repeated later in the sermon: “On the inner division panel is a large doorway because the one who has great love for God, will perceive the road to him less small.”⁶⁴⁸



Fig. 151 Lectorium in Kinn kirke – Inner choir screen in Nidaros cathedral.

The use of the choir screens, which can be observed in the Icelandic written sources, point to a very similar kind of use. The type that can be detected from these sources is the pulpitem- - a screen with pulpitem or lectorium which has the term “lestrarkór” in Icelandic which would translate directly as “reading choir”. The lectorium in Kinn church may give an idea of such a structure. (fig. 151a) Due to the nature of the narrative, the most numerous and most descriptive examples are from Lárentíus saga. However, the earliest example is from Jóns saga in a description of the translation of his relics, that were placed on the north side of choir screen pulpitem (á kór).⁶⁴⁹

⁶⁴⁷ *Íslensk hómilíubók*, 149. Transl. GH “Brjóstpili það, er er á milli kirkju og sönghúss, merkir helgan anda, því að svo sem vér göngum inn í kristnina fyr trúu Krists, svo göngum vér inn í himnadýrð fyr miskunnardyr heilags anda. Og svo sem Kristur samtengdi tvenna lýði í einni trúuu, svo samtengir helagur andi þá ina sömu lýði í einni ást./Á þessu brjóstpili eru mikil dyr, því að hver, er finnur miskunnardyr heilags anda, má líta hugskotsaugum marga himneska hluti.”⁶⁴⁷ 149.

⁶⁴⁸ *Íslensk hómilíubók*, 150. “Á inu innra brjóstpili eru mikil dyr í sönghús, því að hverjum sýnist því síður þröng vera Guðs gata sem hann elskar framar Guð.” 150

⁶⁴⁹ *Biskupa sögur* I, 186-187.

In Lárentíus saga there are numerous examples of the reading of letters on pulpit screens. Most of them are from Hólar diocese but also from Norway. The first announcement of the election of Lárentíus was made at the pulpitum in Nidaros cathedral after the singing of Te deum and under ringing bells.⁶⁵⁰ There is also a description of the declaration of the election of Lárentíus at the choir screen in the cathedral of Hólar, also with Te deum and bellringing.⁶⁵¹ There are examples of preaching as well as reading of letters in other churches, mainly at the Augustinian abbey church at Möðruvellir and the Benedictine Munkaþverá.⁶⁵²

The act of excommunication took place at the choir screen pulpitum, and Lárentíus saga provides examples of that, both from Nidaros and Hólar cathedrals, giving the details of candles turned over and clock ringing at Hólar.⁶⁵³

In a brief narrative of Bishop Jón Halldórsson in Skálholt (1322-1339), there is a description of a dream or a vision which took place in his former Dominican abbey church in Bergen. In the dream, Jón was preaching on the pulpit screen in that church.⁶⁵⁴ In the *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*, there is one example of the reading of a declaration on a choir in front of St Mary altar.⁶⁵⁵

It seems quite evident from the written sources that screens or the pulpitum incorporated in the screens were important locations within the church and closely linked with ecclesiastic authority. The declaration of a new bishop as well as the act of excommunication are clear examples of the power embedded in that location within the church building. It would therefore be a reasonable place to present on a bishop's seal providing the visual statement of ecclesiastic authority and identity.

When it comes to concrete examples where comparison is possible between seal and screen, material from the British Isles is the most convenient due to a good state of preservation, both of original church interior as well as diplomatic material, including seals. Although seal research is quite advanced in Britain, it seems that this particular aspect has not much been considered.

Episcopal thrones

The seat of a bishop, a bishop's throne, is a very logical structure for "visual quotation" when it comes to present an architectural frame in a bishop's seal. The preservation of such episcopal thrones is scarce in the Nidaros archdiocese, and it is therefore hard to draw any clear

⁶⁵⁰ *Biskupa sögur* I, 837: "Var þessum kosningi lýst á kór,"

⁶⁵¹ *Biskupa sögur* I, 839: "...var lýst yfir kór boðskap h[erra] erkibiskups um kosning Laurentii,"

⁶⁵² *Biskupa sögur* I, 813, 879, 911.

⁶⁵³ *Biskupa sögur* I, 819, 852.

⁶⁵⁴ *Biskupa sögur* II, 226.

⁶⁵⁵ *DN* III, 96.

lines. However, there are some preserved thrones in Britain, where the preservation is relatively good. A rather recent publication, *Britain's medieval episcopal thrones* (2015), is of great importance in exploring this aspect. Up until the 13th century, episcopal thrones were decorated seats without a canopy. A change in this presents itself in a canopied throne in the upper church at St Francesco in Assisi, made in the late 13th century.⁶⁵⁶ Another British study on the nomenclature of sedilia, in written source material, reveals that the Latin word *cathedra* was applied to seats used not only by bishops but also by liturgical celebrants in the mass.⁶⁵⁷ In addition to the few preserved canopied liturgical thrones in the British Isles, there is the beautiful Swedish example from Burs kyrka in Gotland, (fig. 152) now preserved in the History museum (Historiska museet) in Stockholm. However, there is little literature on it.⁶⁵⁸ Despite limited literature, the mere appearance of this canopied seat is very informative in this context. The form has a clear reference to a roofed structure, which turns out to be the tower of that church. Such an impressive item within the visual repertoire of a church choir does seem a logical item to quote in a seal of church official.



Fig. 152 Burs church, Gotland. Choir seat, now in the History Museum, Stockholm.

In the Icelandic context there is not a clear reference to the appearance of a bishop's seat in the literature, but it is mentioned in a few instances. In *Jóns saga*, there is a narrative about Jón in Denmark at table with the king, Svend Estridsen. Jón tells the king about his dream where "he was at a (unspecified) major church and in the bishop's throne he saw Christ himself but at his feet king David singing with his harp."⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵⁶ Tracy, *Britain's medieval episcopal thrones*, 14-15.

⁶⁵⁷ James Cameron, "Sedilia in choro sunt fracta", 119-122.

⁶⁵⁸ Lagerlöf & Stolt, *Burs kyrka*, 57-59.

⁶⁵⁹ *Biskupa sögur I*, 220. "í nokkurri höfukirkju á þessarri nátt, ok í kór kirkjunnar sá ek sitja í biskupligu sæti vorn herra Jesum Christum, en á fótiskör fyrir honum sat Davíð konúgr ... lystuliga sláandi sína hörpu."

The examples from Hólar cathedral are from the unusually descriptive Lárentíus saga. In the inauguration service of the electus Lárentíus, the officialis led him to his bishop's seat after bell ringing and Te Deum.⁶⁶⁰ Another example of the bishop's seat in Hólar cathedral, but without description, is also from Lárentíus saga.⁶⁶¹

There are not examples from Skálholt cathedral on this. Although it is not possible to present parallels between existing bishop's thrones and seals in Norway and Iceland, there are important examples from the British Isles.

The frame of the figure sitting on a throne in the chancery seal of bishop Fordham of Durham (fig. 153a) has been identified as the throne commissioned by his predecessor, Bishop Hatfield.⁶⁶² (fig. 153b)



Fig. 153 Durham, the chancery seal of bishop Fordham (1382-1388). The episcopal throne in the cathedral.

Another well preserved ecclesiastic throne may have a resonance in a seal image. (fig. 154) This is the prior's throne in the chapter house at Canterbury cathedral which was commissioned by prior Henry Eastrý, who also commissioned new choir stalls and new choir door.⁶⁶³ The frame around the figure in his seal has clear similarity to the central niche in the throne.



Fig. 154 Canterbury, Prior Henry de Eastrý. - Canterbury, prior's throne in the chapter house.

⁶⁶⁰ *Biskupa sögur I*, 839. (Lárentíus saga)

⁶⁶¹ *Biskupa sögur I*, 904.

⁶⁶² Budge in Tracy, *Britain's medieval episcopal thrones*, 114, 127-128.

⁶⁶³ On the Canterbury throne: Tracy, *Britain's medieval episcopal thrones*, 20-21.

Another concrete example (fig. 155) of the use of the built environment in this case is the interior of Old St Peter's in Rome. The seal of cardinal Giacomo di Colonna represents without doubt the distinctive columns at the altar enclosure of in the lower part of the seal.⁶⁶⁴



Fig.155 The seal of cardinal Giacomo di Colonna. - Interior of Old St Peter's Rome.

The throne from Burs church in Gotland, Sweden, is an interesting example of how a piece of church furniture takes on the form of the immediate local built environment. In that case, the tower of the church is echoed in the form of a seat for a dignitary, originally placed in the choir.⁶⁶⁵

7.3. Seal images and local architecture

After discussing the parts of church buildings, which, according to the medieval way of thinking, would have the most relevance for the visual identity of bishops, the next step is to examine individual churches and the seals of their bishops. The aim of this section is to provide this kind of information about the cathedrals in the Nidaros archdiocese (mainly in Norway and Iceland). It should, however, be noted that the preservation of the elements in question is very scarce.



Fig 156 Nidaros, the west front before restoration work began.

Nidaros

⁶⁶⁴ Gardner, "Who were the microarchitects?", 41, 44.

⁶⁶⁵ There is very little research on this item, but it can be interpreted as an episcopal throne, at least the throne for the highest dignitary serving at this church in the wealthy Gotland area.

Concerning the cathedral of Nidaros, its present appearance is the result of intensive restoration work in the 19th and 20th centuries. However, much research has been done on its building history, and there are reliable drawings and photographs that show the appearance of the church. (fig. 156) These images show the doorways on the west front of the cathedral before any restoration work was begun, as well as some of the other entrances visible on the ground plan. There are three doorways on the west front, two in the nave, and one to each side. One is at the gable of the northern transept, and there are two entrances to the chancel, one to each side. Finally, there is a doorway on the south-east side of the octagon, and, in addition to the entrances to the church proper, there is an entrance on the chapter house which is connected to the church through a passageway. One of these doorways is of special interest here. It is called the archbishop's entrance, and it opens directly into the octagon and is preserved relatively intact. Its modern appearance is very close to how it was before the restoration work began in the second half of the 19th century.⁶⁶⁶ According to the observations of Marianne Hermann and Øystein Ekroll, the upper part of the portal may have a later date than the lower part, but it cannot be younger than the 13th century.⁶⁶⁷

The earliest archiepiscopal seal at Nidaros with architectural elements is of Arne Vade (1346-1349). (fig. 157b.) Above the head of the bishop's figure, there is a wide trefoil arch with pinnacles to the sides. Of all the listed doorways on the Nidaros cathedral, the appearance of the entrance on the octagon (fig. 157a) is surprisingly similar to the architectural features in Arne Vade's seal. This applies especially to the form of the pinnacles but also to the trefoil elements between them.



Fig. 157 Nidaros cathedral, entrance of the octagon. - Nidaros, Arne Vade (1346-1349). - Stavanger cathedral, the bishop's entrance on the choir.

⁶⁶⁶ Ekroll, *The octagonal shrine chapel of St Olav at Nidaros Cathedral*, 145-149.

⁶⁶⁷ Ekroll, *The octagonal shrine chapel of St Olav at Nidaros Cathedral*, 149, Hermann 2011, 90.

Although this seems clear cut, the type is rather general, and a very similar bishop's doorway also exists at the cathedral of Stavanger. (fig. 157c) Although it is of the same type, the seal image has more in common with the one in Nidaros.

The next preserved archiepiscopal seal is of Arne's successor, Olav (1350-1370), which comprises of completely different elements, both in the whole concept of the seal and the architectural elements themselves. These forms seem to resonate with elements in the interior of churches, such as choir screens or bishop's thrones. As discussed in the section on the chapter seals, the patrons' wish may have counted more in the design of such a seal rather than mainly the artistic trend a particular workshop was following. Although the seal was most likely made somewhere outside Norway, these rich architectural elements deserve a concrete comparison with what is known about these elements in Nidaros cathedral.



Fig. 158 Nidaros. The seal of Olaf I in comparison to the present choir screen in the cathedral and a reconstruction drawing.

The preserved screen does not present much similarity to the canopywork in the seal of Olav I. The microarchitectural elements in the seal are much more elaborated and different in character when compared to the actual screen. The screen which is preserved at Nidaros cathedral is in fact the inner one of two and opens into the *sancta sanctorum* or the octagon. It was constructed after a fire in 1328 and has been preserved close to its original appearance.⁶⁶⁸ Much has been written and speculated about the choir screens at Nidaros cathedral, but the latest work by Øystein Ekroll (2015) provides an essential detailed discussion which forms part of his analysis of the building history of the octagon.

As discussed above, the outer screen, which is now lost, would have been relevant on a seal image. In this instance, the main visual link between the seal and the inner screen is that their

⁶⁶⁸ Danbolt, *Nidarosdomen*, 184; Ekroll, *The octagonal shrine chapel of St Olav at Nidaros Cathedral*, 178-179.

elements belong to the gothic style. Due to the likely origin and stylistic relations of the seal matrix, the microarchitecture in it can be considered more of a general type than an exact echo of a particular building.⁶⁶⁹

The later seals of the archbishops in Nidaros, after 1450 when the reuse of the seal image introduced by Olav I ceased, are in the smaller circular format with limited space for architectural elaboration. It is difficult or even impossible to estimate whether the frames around the figures have any direct connection with visual elements in the cathedral or other decorated surroundings.

The seal of Olav Trondsson is similar to a type introduced by Aslak Bolt in Bergen, and the seal of Gaute reminds us more of elements in a tabernacle than an actual building. An example of such an image is the reverse side of the chapter seal of Arbroath abbey in Scotland and a preserved one from Vatnsfjörður. (fig. 159)



Fig. 159 Nidaros, Olav Trondson (1459-1474). - Nidaros, Gaute Ivarsson (1475-1510). - Arbroath abbey, reverse. St Olav retable from Vatnsfjörður.

Bergen, Oslo and Hamar

Bergen

The medieval Bergen cathedral is now lost, but the present cathedral is the former Franciscan church.⁶⁷⁰ Therefore, there is no possibility of comparison of interior of the church and the seals of the Bergen bishops. As discussed in the overview of the bishop's seals, the architectural frame is more likely to be inspired from the seal of the archbishop than an actual screen that must have been in Bergen cathedral as is other such buildings in the later Middle Ages. However, the appearance of many of the preserved screens of English churches show clear hints of a genre of a similar type as present in many seals of this type. A possible likeness of an actual screen and the seal can therefore not be ruled out, although it is an unlikely possibility.

⁶⁶⁹ See Guðrún Harðardóttir, "The seal of dignity of archbishop Olav." *Iconographisk Post. Nordic Review of Iconography*, nr. 1/2, 2022, 73-92.

⁶⁷⁰ Ekroll & Stige, *Middelalder i stein*, (*Kirker i Norge I*), 162-165.



Fig. 160 Bergen, Jakob Jensson (1372-1401) in comparison to the cathedral seal.

Oslo

There is similar situation concerning Oslo as with Bergen. There is only a preserved ground plan of the cathedral, and there is not detailed enough information on the interior to be able to draw any conclusions. The earliest seal with architectural features is that of Bishop Sigfried (1352-1358). This type differs from the types of Nidaros and Bergen in the way that the central figure was the saint and the image of the bishop kneeling beneath, but in the Oslo seal it is the image of the bishop himself, which is central to the design. In some cases where the saint was also an ordained bishop, there can be doubt in interpretation, but here it is quite clear that the seal represents the bishop and not St Hallvard because he was not an ordained man in his lifetime.⁶⁷¹



Fig. 161 Oslo, Sigfrid (1352-1358). - Oslo, Hallvard Bjørnsson (1359-1370). - Oslo, Eystein Aslaksson (1386-1407) in comparison to the chapter seal.

Hamar

The state of preservation of Hamar cathedral is slightly better than in Oslo, but still with only scarce remains of the building, which make it difficult to draw any conclusions on the potential parts relevant for this type of seal. What is preserved is mainly the Romanesque basic

⁶⁷¹ Daae, *Norges helgener*, 163-166.

parts of the building, but it has been stripped of most evidence on details of the interior which could be useful for this study.



Fig. 162 Hamar, Magnus I Slangestorp (1364-1380). - Hamar, Håvard (1351-1363) in comparison to the cathedral chapter seal.

Magnus I Slangestorp is the first seal of dignity from Hamar with architectural elements, but the lesser seal of Håvard presents this type before 1363.⁶⁷² This cannot be compared to any existing parts of the cathedral ruin.

Stavanger

At Stavanger, the preservation is very different. As explained in the discussion of the chapter seals, the medieval cathedral is still intact and has a Romanesque nave with a gothic choir, which is a later addition.⁶⁷³ This provides some grounds for a comparison of what is known and preserved of the interior of the church with the preserved seal images of the bishops of Stavanger.

As discussed in the general chapter on the bishop's seals, the Stavanger bishops differ from the other Norwegian suffragan ones in that the bishops' figures are sitting and not standing like those in the other dioceses. That, however, does not have much effect on the estimation of the architectural elements in their seals, although their seated position makes a bishop's throne or the sedilia in the choir more relevant than doorways. There is no concrete evidence on the seats in the choir in the Middle Ages. The earliest account on a bishop's seat is from the 18th century. However, there is information on a *lectorium* above the choir door dating from the 13th and 14th centuries. There is also information on that the choir doorway would have been similar to the preserved western portal.⁶⁷⁴

⁶⁷² *Geistlige segl fra Hamar bispedømme*, 65-66.

⁶⁷³ Ekroll & Stige, *Middelalder i stein*, (*Kirker i Norge* I), 116-125.

⁶⁷⁴ *Stavanger domkirke*, appendix list, korbue, no page nr.

In the most elaborate Norwegian seals, there is a rich tendency for reuse of the images but with renewed legends.⁶⁷⁵ The Stavanger seals show the same tendency of reuse as the seals of the archbishops of Nidaros and the bishops of Hamar.

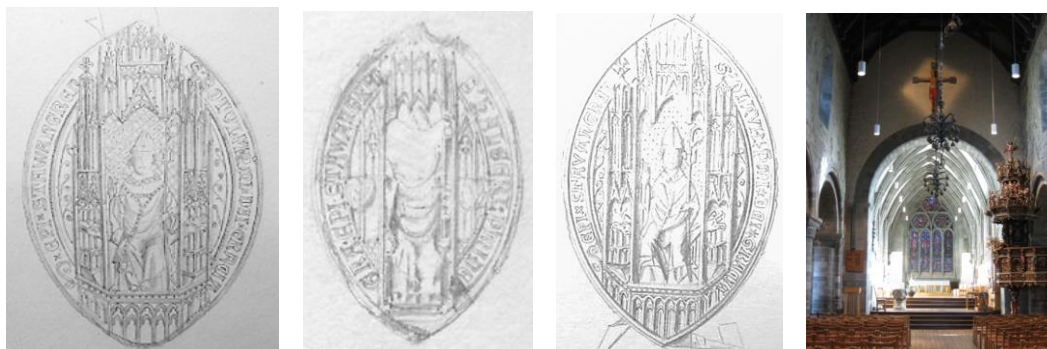


Fig. 163 Stavanger, Botolf Asbjørnsson (1355-1380. – Stavanger Hallgeir Osmundsson 1380/1381. – Stavanger Olav (1381/82-1398/1400). - Stavanger cathedral, interior towards the east.

There seems to be at least some resonance between the reused seals of Stavanger and the gothic style of the east end of the cathedral. However, in the absence of the preserved items or descriptions of them, it is impossible to estimate such likeness. Because of the sitting position of the bishop's figure in the Stavanger seals, the bishop's seat would at least be the most reasonable furnishing to be represented. That, however, remains subject to speculation.

Garðar and Kirkjubœur

The medieval diocese of Garðar in Greenland provides some interesting examples into this discussion of architecture in seals of dignity. Although very few seals from the diocese of Garðar are known, there are other factors which tell an interesting story. After 1400, when the Norse colony in Greenland was declining into extinction and no bishops were serving the church there, titular of Garðar were still being appointed. An even more surprising fact is that they also had some seals made for them which are preserved. These are the seals identified as belonging to bishops Henrik (impr. 1388) and Jakob Teppe (impr. 1417).⁶⁷⁶ In those cases, the architectural elements in the seals could hardly have been representing any features from the Garðar Cathedral itself.

⁶⁷⁵ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 59-69.

⁶⁷⁶ *Grønlands historiske mindesmærker*, 895-899, tab 1.



Fig. 164 Garðar. Henrik (impr. 1388) – Garðar, Jakob Teppe (impr. 1417) – Garðar, cathedral ruin.

There is not enough seal material for comparison of the Kirkjubøur seals and the cathedral ruin “Múrurinn”. The accessible seals are on one hand from the period with figures only and on the other hand contain a heraldic image.⁶⁷⁷



Fig. 165 Kirkjubøur, Erlendur (1269-1308). – Kirkjubøur Amund (1531-1537). - The ruins of St Magnus cathedral in Kirkjubøur, Faroe Islands.

The Icelandic cathedrals and the seals of their bishops

Both the Icelandic cathedrals are long gone, although there is reasonable information on their general appearance. In fact, there is enough information both in written sources and archaeological material about them for a reasonable reconstruction. However, details about the doorways and choir screens are not known.

Skálholt cathedral

No medieval cathedrals have been preserved in the Iceland nor any drawings of them, Fortunately, drawings by John Cleveley from the Stanley expedition in 1772 present the post-reformation cathedral at Skálholt built in 1685, which was quite smaller than the medieval one. The size of the ground-plan of the medieval cathedral is known from archaeological excavation made in 1954. It measures 50 m long and 11m wide and 27 m wide at the transepts, but the ground plan of the church in the 1772 drawing was approximately half that size.⁶⁷⁸ Studies have been made on the written sources on the church, resulting in some reconstruction drawings

⁶⁷⁷ Riksarkivet Oslo, Segltegninger, kirkelige segl A, Færøyerne.

⁶⁷⁸ Christie, “Kirkjugrunnar,” 21-36; Ágústsson, *Skálholt. Kirkjur*, 183, 237, 248, 298, 303.

published in 1990. The Icelandic cathedrals differ from the other cathedrals within the archbishopric of Nidaros in that they were made of timber and not of stone as the other ones.

The first cathedral at Skálholt was built in late 11th century, but the first monumental one was erected in mid-12th century during the episcopacy of Klængur Þorsteinsson (1152-1176) with an important addition by his successor Páll Jónsson (1195-1211). This building burned down in 1309 and was rebuilt in 1311 by Árni Helgason. That church also burnt down around 1525 during the episcopacy of the last catholic bishop of Skálholt, Ögmundur Pálsson.⁶⁷⁹

What is known about the elevation of Skálholt cathedral is from bits and pieces in various written documents. As the cathedral at Hólar in Northern Iceland was most likely been similar in size and form, information of the elevation of the last cathedral of Hólar has been used to complement what is known about Skálholt cathedral. This collective information has resulted in a hypothesis in the form of drawing: an enormous timber basilica with transepts.

Much of the basilical elevation is based on quite reliable late-medieval descriptions. The forechurch in the drawing is based on a description of this part at Hólar in late 16th century. The total height of it is not mentioned, only that the inner columns were around seven meters high.⁶⁸⁰ One can say that the reconstruction of the medieval Icelandic cathedrals has been made by placing the information in written sources mainly from Hólar on top of the excavated ground plan of Skálholt. (fig. 166 a-c)

⁶⁷⁹ Guðrún Harðardóttir, "Um íslenskar kirkjubyggingar á miðöldum," 55-56; Hörður Ágústsson, *Skálholt. Kirkjur*, 271-303.

⁶⁸⁰ Hörður Ágústsson, *Skálholt. Kirkjur*, 231-237.

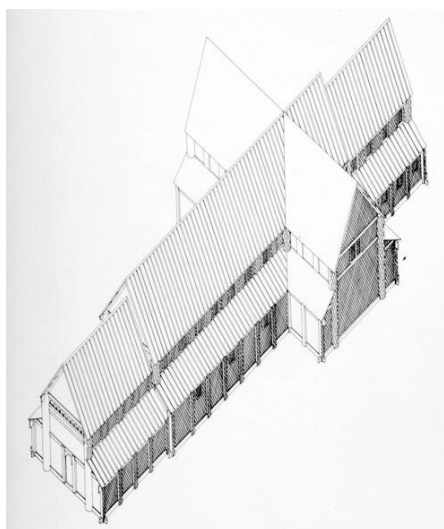


Fig . 166 Skálholt, the excavated foundation and a reconstruction, partly based on information from Hólar. - Hólar cathedral, reconstruction of the church built in 1395

Skálholt seals



Fig.167 Skálholt, Gyrðir Ívarsson (1350-1360). - Skálholt, Jón IV (1408-1413 mirrored lead matrix).

The earliest seal with architectural elements from Skálholt diocese is that of Gyrðir Ívarsson, (fig. 167a) who was consecrated as bishop in 1350, the same year as archbishop Olav I. This makes his seal very early in the chain of seals with architectural elements within the Nidaros

archdiocese. At this point in time, Skálholt cathedral was rather recently rebuilt after the fire in 1309. All the seals with architectural elements discussed here fall into the time frame of that version of the cathedral which, however, appears to have been similar in size and general structure to the older one. The next destructive fire was not until around 1525.

Because of the state of preservation of Gyrðir's seal, it is difficult to discern what the seal presents in detail, but it seems to be a view into a church with side aisles and a figure standing in the central space.

The lead matrix found in Denmark, (fig. 167b) which can be attributed to Jón fjórði of Skálholt (1408-1413), has a church-like structure around the figure in the centre.⁶⁸¹ Because of the many uncertainties of this seal, I prefer not to place great value in interpreting the seal image.

The seals of the late 15th-century and early 16th-century bishops, Sveinn and Stefán of Skálholt, are of great interest when it comes to comparison with what is known about the cathedral building itself. In fact, the sequence of seals from Sveinn to Stefán is very curious. The architectural frame in those seals is very similar if not identical, but the figures differ significantly. In the earlier seal, of Sveinn, (fig. 168 a) the figure is clearly St Peter himself and the heraldry below is the representation of the bishop. In the seal of Stefán (fig. 168b) it is the other way around. There is a clear bishop's figure, and the keys of St Peter are placed as heraldry below the bishop. It is also curious that between those two there was a third one, Magnús Eyjólfsson, who had completely different imagery in his two preserved seals. They also have architectural elements more associated with the interior of a church at this time that are completely different to those found in the seals of Sveinn and Stefán.

The older of the two related seals, the one of Sveinn, appears to be an electus' seal as the legend reads: "S: SVEINONIS. DEI GRA. ELTI SCALHOLLTEN. ECCLEL."

In his description of the seal in *Sigilla Islandica*, Árni Magnússon describes the figure as wearing a scholar's cap, "forte pileum magisterii". The figure holds a book in the left arm and keys in the right. The size of the original seal is the same as in the drawing according to the accurate observation of Árni Magnússon.⁶⁸² The diameter of the seal in the drawing is 3.8 cm, and compared to a preserved wax impression that is the correct size.⁶⁸³ Skálholt cathedral was dedicated to St Peter, and therefore the figure within the structure must be St Peter himself holding in his right hand his most common attribute, the keys. I may have to disagree with

⁶⁸¹ Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson, "Innsigli Jóns Skálholtsbiskups," 103-114.

⁶⁸² *Sigilla Islandica* I, 7, 11.

⁶⁸³ I made my own measurement on the wax seal, and it gives the same number if measured at the outer edges of the legend rim. The total size of the wax lump is 48 mm. The size of the seal of Sveinn is 37 mm but the total waxlump is 48mm.

Árni Magnússon's interpretation of the head. In the wax impression, the head seems simply to be bold or tonsured, which would be in accordance with a very common representation of St Peter as a bearded old man. On a shield below the figure is a runic sign, most probably referring to Sveinn. Although this is the seal of an *electus*, it was used on documents dating from 1469-1475, through his whole episcopate.⁶⁸⁴ Árni Magnússon had another drawing made of the seal of Sveinn by artist Hjalti Þorsteinsson in Vatnsfjörður. Here, the drawing appears as a negative and there are some variations between the two drawings, including that the legend reads *epi* instead of *elti*, the cap on the figure's head is smaller and the heraldic runes at the shield below is different or more detailed.⁶⁸⁵ The placement of the words on the legend is quite peculiar. Instead of starting at the top of the seal with S or SIGILLUM, the text of the legend starts to the side over the side isle of the structure.

On the seal of Stefán, the figure wears a mitre and carries a bishop's staff in the right hand and a book in the left. On a shield below his feet are the keys, referring to the St Peter's dedication of the cathedral. The legend reads: "S: STHEPHANI: DI: GRA: EPI: SCHAL".⁶⁸⁶ Here, the legend is in accordance with the general norms. The drawing measures 40 mm in diameter and the wax impression is very similar.

The frame of the building around these different figures is identical and worth comparing to what is known about the lost Skálholt cathedral.

Because of the straight lines in the central part of the church frames in both seals, it evokes the question of whether there was a proper west tower at Skálholt cathedral at that time. The frame closest to the figures continues up and above the roof level, which can be interpreted as indicating a tower-like structure rather than the nave itself. When the written sources on this part of the church as it was at that time are examined, information in these sources points towards the existence of a tower-like feature at Skálholt. The fact that it was the steeple that caught the weather and wind more easily than the church itself must tell something about its height relative to the church itself. The precious building, which burned down in 1309, did so because lightning struck the steeple (*stöpull*).⁶⁸⁷ It must therefore have been the highest point of the cathedral which is located high up in the landscape. The new church, which was built in 1311, broke partly down in a storm already in 1318, and the annals mention that it was the "stöpull" and part of the church. That fact would also be a clear indication of it being the highest and therefore most vulnerable part of the building. The word "stöpull" in older Icelandic does not have the same meaning as steeple in modern English; the meaning seems to be closer to

⁶⁸⁴ *Sigilla Islandica* I, 3-11.

⁶⁸⁵ *Sigilla Islandica* I, 320.

⁶⁸⁶ *Sigilla Islandica* I, 21.

⁶⁸⁷ Hörður Ágústsson, *Skálholt. Kirkjur*, 280-281.

the word tower.⁶⁸⁸ I will therefore refer to it as tower here. Around 1400, the tower at Skálholt cathedral was completely rebuilt.⁶⁸⁹ In a document issued by Bishop Sveinn in 1471, priests and church farmers in areas where there was plenty of driftwood were asked to donate wood for the repair of the cathedral. Repairs must have started shortly after and most likely ended by rebuilding the tower once again in 1476, just before the death of Bishop Sveinn.⁶⁹⁰

These visual sources on Skálholt cathedral are of great value in the absence of other drawings of the cathedral. Regarding the tower, the two types of sources, the written sources and the seal images are in accordance. Although the seal images do not give further information on the appearance of the tower, it at least provides a clear indication.

Another element in the seals is to be explored. On what can be considered as side aisles in those church buildings are lines that are open to interpretation. In many foreign seals, there is a clear representation of windows in similar locations. Due to the appearance of the lines in the seals of Sveinn and Stefán, it seems more relevant to interpret them as some isometric view of arcades between nave and side aisles from within the church. The small crosses in the top of the arch may be a representation of a certain types of cross braces found in many Norwegian stave churches. (fig. 168c)



Fig. 168 Skálholt, Sveinn Pétursson, (1466/67-1475) and Stefán Jónsson (1491-1518). Longitudinal section of a stave church where the arcade is visible with the author's note on how this can be interpreted into a simplified drawing.

Because of the nature of the written sources on Skálholt cathedral, such an element is highly unlikely to come through in description of events. A primitive symbolic drawing like this can therefore be an important addition to the knowledge of the medieval cathedral of Skálholt and to the knowledge of the lost heritage of Icelandic medieval church buildings. For an unknown reason the author of the reconstruction did not make use of these seal pictures in his work.

⁶⁸⁸ Guðrún Harðardóttir, *Stöpull Páls biskups Jónssonar*, 9-17.

⁶⁸⁹ Hörður Ágústsson, *Skálholt. Kirkjur*, 281.

⁶⁹⁰ Hörður Ágústsson, *Skálholt. Kirkjur*, 284.

The last point that the seal image of Sveinn and Stefán present are the pinnacles on the roof of the church building. Such details are not detectable in the written material and are therefore some indications of a decorative richness of the building in accordance with the style of its time, something which would hardly come through in the written sources or the archaeological material.



Fig.169 Skálholt, Magnús Eyjólfsson (1477-1490), both seals.

The two seals of Bishop Magnús Eyjólfsson (1477-1490), former abbot of the Augustinian Helgafellsklaustur, are very different from those of his predecessor, Sveinn and his successor, Stefán. While the seals of Sveinn and Stefán present the elevation of a church building, the seals of Magnús present ornamentation that can be associated with the interior of a church. Both contain decoration in the gothic style, and it has references to certain parts of the church. In the reconstruction drawing of Skálholt cathedral, there is only room for the basic forms and no concrete evidence for introducing any hypothesis on the interior decoration. Both seals of Bishop Magnús feature images of the Virgin Mary with the child. In one, (fig. 169a) she is crowned and standing with the child in a decorated structure that looks like a choir screen; in the other seal, (fig. 169b) in the central compartment of the image, a crowned Virgin is sitting in a throne with the child, and in the adjacent compartments there is a bishop's figure on one hand and an unknown figure on the other. Above their heads is a late-medieval version of canopies, the central one with tripartite arch and the ones to the sides with simple ones. Above is further decoration. Given the dedication of Skálholt cathedral to St Peter, it is interesting that Bishop Magnús had St Mary in both seals. However, the keys of St Peter are in the heraldic shields below.

As discussed above on the doorway of choir screens as points of ecclesiastic authority, it is curious that the frame around St Mary in one of the seals looks surprisingly like the choir screen in St Elizabeth at Marburg in Germany. (fig. 170. b) Since the cathedral was built in the 14th century, it must have had gothic elements in its decoration. There is knowledge about choir screens in the post-reformational cathedrals but no concrete evidence on the appearance of the medieval ones. It is very difficult to estimate whether the seal of Magnús is representing the

built reality of the interior of Skálholt cathedral at the time. But if so, the seal image is a valuable piece of visual information, a pure addition to a former knowledge of the building.

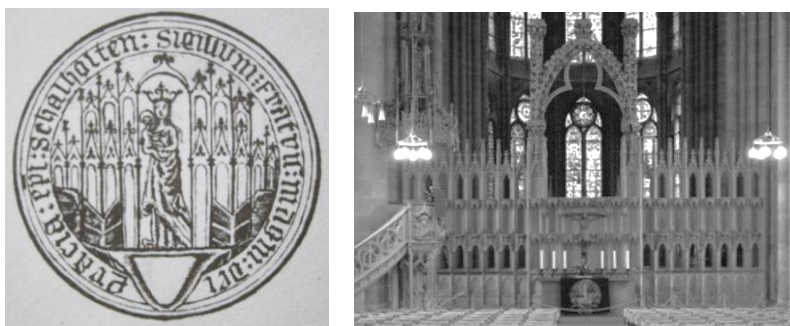


Fig. 170 a. Skálholt, Magnús Eyjólfsson (1477-1490). – b. Choir screen at St Elizabeth, Marburg.

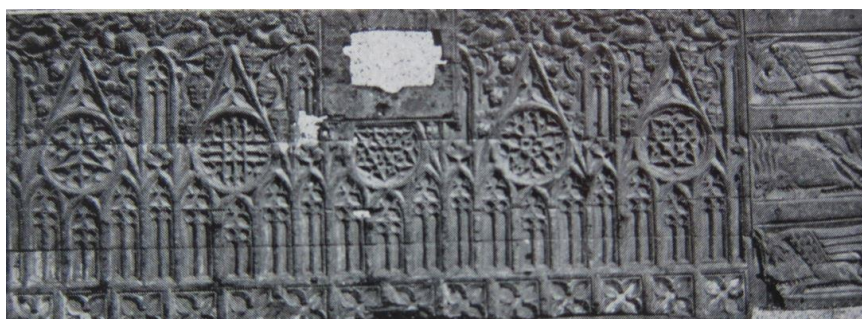


Fig. 171 Remains of chest from Skálholt cathedral, used for liturgical items (Pjms. 2437)

One physical item can be of assistance here: parts of a chest, (fig. 171) used for the storage of chalices and other inventory of the cathedral has been preserved. It is believed to have been in the cathedral since it was built after the fire in 1309. It served as an altar for some time in the post-reformation era and as a chest in a corridor at a farm in the neighbourhood until it was donated to the National Museum.⁶⁹¹ This item reveals the decorative atmosphere of the 14th and 15th centuries and gives a slight glimpse of the interior at Skálholt cathedral at the time.

The other seal of Bishop Magnús has a different version of St Mary and the child. It has the form of a tabernacle in the late 15th-century style. This seal also has a vague resonance in archaeological remains from Skálholt itself. They are some scattered remains of a large altarpiece.⁶⁹² A clear example of an image of a tabernacle in a seal can be seen in the seal of Arbroath abbey in Scotland. (fig. 172b) Although much earlier, the concept is similar.

⁶⁹¹ <http://sarpur.is/Adfang.aspx?AdfangID=322014>; Kristján Eldjárn, *Stakir steinar*, 122-133; “Varðveittur skróði og áhöld,” 185-191.

⁶⁹² Kristján Eldjárn, “Varðveittur skróði og áhöld,” 158-160.



Fig. 172 Skálholt, Magnús Eyjólfsson (1477-1490). – Arbrogata abbey, reverse.

Hólar seals

As mentioned in the discussion of the Skálholt cathedral, the Hólar cathedral was quite similar in size and in character, so much that information on Hólar was used in the reconstruction of the Skálholt one. Concerning more specific items of the Hólar cathedral there were also several “generations” of church building at the site, but, in this case, there was no destruction by fire but by heavy storms. The point of renewal of the cathedral are in fact directly linked to the episcopacies whose seals are preserved: the earlier was Jörundur (1267-1313) and the later was Pétur (1391-1411).

The earliest episcopal seal from Hólar diocese with architectural frame is that of Jón skalli Eiríksson (1358-1390) (fig. 173b) and falls into the time frame of the Jörundur version of the cathedral. The narrative of Lárentíus saga, mentioned here above in the discussion of doorways and choir screens, features this 14th-century version of Hólar cathedral. In the seal of Jón Eiríksson, there is a frame around the bishop's figure, somewhat similar to the frame in the seal of Gyrðir of Skálholt. However, more is preserved of the upper part of this seal providing a fuller view of the architectural frame. Before going further into discussion of the seal of Jón Eiríksson, it is worth noting that Jón Eiríksson was appointed bishop of Garðar in Greenland before Hólar⁶⁹³, and his seal as such is preserved (fig. 173a) although he may have been titular. That one is in the earlier fashion with plain effigy but hammered background.⁶⁹⁴ In the seal of Jón as bishop of Hólar, on the other hand, there is a tripartite arch above the bishop's figure and colonettes to the sides. Further to the left and right there seems to be some representative side aisles and above the mitred head are some pillar-work or turrets. In the absence of concrete comparison material of the cathedral itself, it is useful to compare this with the other seals from this period within the archdiocese. What is a bit surprising is that there is not clear similarity

⁶⁹³ Frost, *A Prosopographical Study of Bishops' Careers*, 119.

⁶⁹⁴ *Riksarkivet Oslo*, Segltegninger, kirkelige segl A, Grønland (Gardar).

to the Norwegian examples but primarily to the one of Gyrðir at Skálholt. Apart from that, Scottish examples or Lund seals may be the closest. It can therefore be suggested that this seal was a local Icelandic production and in the light of what was observed about the choir screens, there is a possibility that the seal represents some *pars pro toto* elements of the screen of the Jörundur version of the Hólar cathedral.



Fig. 173 Gardar, Jón skalli Eiríksson (1343-1357), titular. - Hólar, Jón skalli Eiríksson (1358-1390). – Hólar, Pétur Nikulásson (1391-1411), wax fragment.

The next preserved seal from Hólar diocese is that of bishop Pétur Nikulásson (1391-1411). (fig. 173c) In fact, it is only a small fragment of seal but a very important one. It is the top part of the seal, and it seems rather similar to that part Jón Eiríksson's seal. There seem to be colonettes or some vertical elements similar to the other one, but not identical. In accordance with the general types, it is likely that this structure was around a figure.

What is of great interest here is that Bishop Pétur was the patron of the last version of the medieval cathedrals at Hólar. There has been a recent re-evaluation of the information on Hólar cathedral, resulting in a slightly different reconstruction drawing. However, it does not change the greater picture of timber basilica of a monumental size.⁶⁹⁵ (fig. 174) The fact that the 14th-century church did not burn down opens up the possibility of reusing building material, for example choir screen. However, the annals inform that every large piece of wood was broken when the cathedral collapsed during a heavy storm around Christmas time in 1394.⁶⁹⁶

⁶⁹⁵ Þorsteinn Gunnarsson, *Hóladómkirkjur til forna*, 18-32; 107-150.

⁶⁹⁶ *Íslandske annaler*, 368.

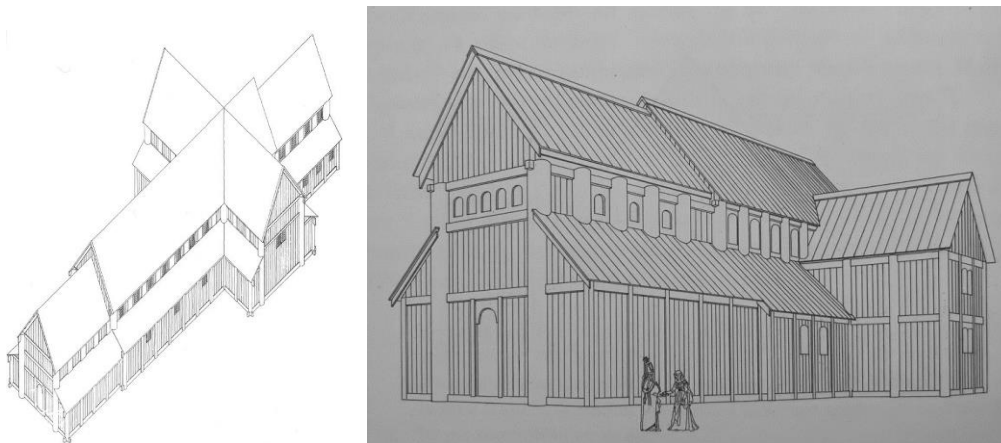


Fig. 174 Reconstruction drawings of the last medieval cathedral at Hólar, built during the episcopacy of Pétur Nikulásson (1391-1411). To the left: A reconstruction drawing by Hörður Ágústsson, 1989. To the right: A revised drawing by Þorsteinn Gunnarsson, 2015.

The seal of Jón Tófason (1411-1423) has a central figure under a baldachin. (fig. 175a) To either side there are items on two storeys, and the upper ones under something which appears to be more like roof than a baldachin. This only copy of the seal image is too unclear to allow for identification of the figures. Given the dedication of Hólar cathedral to St Mary, that would be the best guess for the central figure. Beneath is a suppliant figure, which must be the bishop himself. The architectural elements show a similarity to the composition of the great seal of the archbishops in Nidaros, initiated by Olav I.

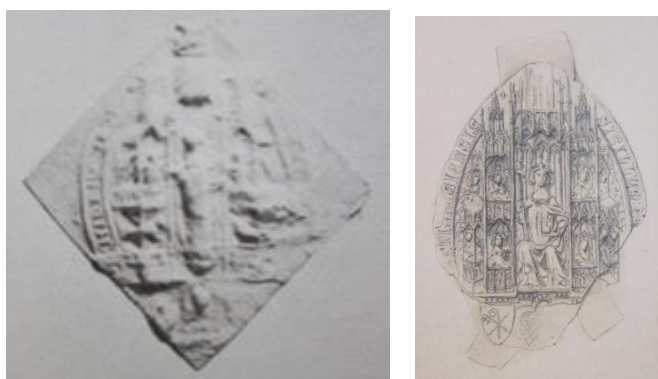


Fig. 175 Hólar, Jón Tófason/Henrikson (1411-1423). - Nidaros, Olav I (1350-1370).



Fig. 176 a. Hólar, Ólafur Rögnvaldsson (1460-1495). – b. Hólar, Gottskálk Nikulásson (1496-1520).

The seal of dignity of Ólafur Rögnvaldsson (fig. 176a) is very well preserved. It consists of a scene of the crucifixion: Christ on the cross and St Mary and St John to either side. The whole scene is staged within a church-like structure with clear windows in the side aisles. A crown-like canopy with colonettes is above the central scene. The seal of Ólafur's successor, Gottskálk Nikulásson, (fig 176b) seems to be a copy of the one of Ólafur. That one consists of the same elements but in a naiver execution. The suppliant bishop's figure below turns in different direction and its compartment around it has a slightly different shape.

Both of these seals fall into the time frame of the Pétur Nikulásson version of the cathedral building at Hólar, and the question arises whether there is some resonance between the seal images and the actual interior. That remains a speculation due to lack of comparison material. However, it is not unlikely that some themes from elements in the actual cathedral were transferred onto the seal images. Just as Bishop Gower of St Davids is presented in the doorway of a building he commissioned, it is possible that the same was the case with seal of Pétur, the patron of a new cathedral at Hólar. Another interpretation of the structure in the seals would be some form of a tabernacle.

Similar canopies as presented in many of the bishop's seals are present in a number of tomb sculptures. Many of them have rich microarchitectural features, which makes them an interesting parallel to the elements in the seal images. According to observations presented by Toni Diedrich, tomb sculpture does not seem to predate these elements in the seals.⁶⁹⁷

7.4. Architectural elements as a representation of identity

As discussed above, the emergence of architectural framing in seals of church officials goes hand in hand with the development of the elevated status of priests as a result of the doctrine of the transubstantiation of the sacraments, confirmed at the Fourth Lateran council in 1215. It

⁶⁹⁷ Diedrich, *Siegelkunde*, 178-220; New, "The episcopal embodiment", 191-214.

is quite evident in the seals of the bishops in the Nidaros archdiocese that architectural elements in the seals of dignity follow that pattern.

In addition to that, a small case study on published Norwegian material reveals that among the seals of the priests in the diocese of Hamar, all of those who were canons at the cathedral have architectural framework in their seals, while common priests do not or at least not to the same extent.⁶⁹⁸ In that context, there is a very clear correlation between the identity of a priest with the elevated position of a canon at Hamar cathedral and architectural frame in their personal seals. In fact, a canopied frame is the most common among these seals and indicative of the seal owners being canons.

However, a pattern like this is not as clear in the published corpus of ecclesiastic seals from Nidaros diocese.⁶⁹⁹ There seems to be similar trends in Oslo diocese as in Hamar. The material from other dioceses, like is Bergen and Oslo, with published seals shows some tendencies towards richer architectural framework in the seals of canons, but the publication only provides examples of priests' seals from Bergen but the Oslo publication is complete and provides a clear image of how this element presents itself.⁷⁰⁰ The pattern among priests' seals from Stavanger diocese remains unknown since a publication of those seals is lacking.

Cases where a clear correlation between immediate built surroundings of these officials can be pinpointed are rather few, but, in some instances, they are quite clear, such as the case of Archbishop Arne Vade and the doorway on the Nidaros octagon. Although the majority of examples may have fictive forms of microarchitecture around the human figures, these architectural elements were all around in the built environment at the time.

Related to this, I would like to make an additional point into the discussion on pulpit screens and seal images. Although it is complicated and often impossible to prove that structural elements in choir screens could be mirrored in the seals of many bishops, there are additional points which could have value in reasoning that the choir screen was a relevant visual surrounding for an image of a bishop in the later Middle Ages. One is a painted pattern dated to the 13th century that was preserved on the east face of the *pulpitum* at Rochester cathedral (fig. 177a) and the other is the wall painting on the lectorium canopy in Torpo stave church, (fig. 177d) dating from mid-13th century.⁷⁰¹ This type of pattern is also present in some of the preserved Norwegian altar frontals and other painted surfaces, as well as around the St Peter

⁶⁹⁸ *Geistlige segl fra Hamar bispedømme*, 99, 108, 120, 130-131 136-137, 141, 157, 166, 173, 175, 178-180, 185, 190, 194-195 198, 204.

⁶⁹⁹ *Geistlige segl fra Nidaros bispedømme*, 144, 180, 182-183, 193-194, 198, 202, 206, 222, 229, 232.

⁷⁰⁰ Trætteberg, "Geistlige segl i Bergens bispedømme," 84-86, 109-110; *Geistlige segl i Oslo bispedømme*, 63-82, 141-159.

⁷⁰¹ Vallance, *Screens*, 47-48, fig. 12; Anker, *Middelalder i tre* (Kirker i Norge) 228-231.

figure in the Westminster retable, dated to c 1270/80.⁷⁰² As discussed in chapter 3, in Norway and Iceland, this development begins in the first half of the 14th century. The earliest preserved examples is the seal of Bishop Arne in Bergen (1305-1314), Ingjald of Hamar (1305-1315) and Eiliv korte, Archbishop in Nidaros (1311-1332).⁷⁰³



Fig. 177 Examples with diamond pattern Rochester panels – Bergen. Arne Sigurdsson (1305-1314) Nidaros. Eiliv korte (1311-1332) The lectorium baldachin in Torpo stave church.

It can therefore be suggested that already before the actual architectural elements were introduced in bishop's seals, there was a trend towards linking the effigy in the seal with concrete decorative elements in church buildings. To further support the idea that the seals could reflect the built environment at the time is the fact that in some cases, even the effigies themselves show a likeness to the bishops in question as known from other sources. This would be the case of some 12th-century bishops of Ely and Winchester.⁷⁰⁴ Examples from the secular world would be the seals of Frederic Barbarossa and King Håkon Magnússon.⁷⁰⁵ This lozenge pattern can possibly have twofold meanings in seal images, on one hand to enhance the ecclesiastic figure similar to heavenly figures in paintings and the other to remind of locations of ecclesiastic authority in church buildings.

7.5. Conclusion on architectural elements in bishops' seals

Architectural elements in bishop's seals of dignity began to emerge in late 13th century in the Nidaros archdiocese and the neighbouring areas, such as the British Isles and the Danish dioceses. This development reached its high point in the 14th century. In the 15th century, there was a general change in the form and size of the seals of dignity, making less space for elaboration of microarchitecture. In the 16th century there was an additional trend introducing a stronger heraldic emphasis.

⁷⁰² Morgan, "Iconography" 55, 61; Westminster: <https://www.westminster-abbey.org/about-the-abbey/history/retable>

⁷⁰³ Archbishop Carl is the first example in Lund dating from 1332, Petersen, *Danske gejstlige sigiller*, Pl. II.

⁷⁰⁴ Hoskin, "Administration and identity," 203; New, *Seals and sealing practices*, 59.

⁷⁰⁵ Svanberg, *Furstebilder*, 27-31, 144-146, 231.

The aim of the chapter was to explore whether these architectural elements would echo or mirror some of the built environment linked to individual bishops. In accordance with the allegorical thinking of the time, certain parts of the church were more likely than others to be presented in a bishop's seal. These were particularly doorways or episcopal thrones. Written sources were explored to reveal what kinds of acts were linked to doorways, and that enforces the argument for the application of that onto episcopal seals as visual statements of authority. However, due to the state of preservation of both seals and the relevant built elements in question, this is a difficult task and remains incomplete. Despite that, enough examples could be found to make it reasonable to believe that in a number of cases, the architectural elements in the seals of these bishops would have some link to elements in the relevant cathedral buildings. It is, for example, clear that many of the seals share the visual vocabulary with various types of screens. An additional argument for the connection of episcopal visual identity to the choir screens is the fact that the same kind of diamond pattern that is present in seals as hammered background is also detectible on 13th-century panels that formed the eastern part of the main screen at Rochester cathedral. That can be interpreted as an indication of the perception of the choir screen as a display of ecclesiastic authority. The case of the lectorium remains at Torpo stave church is most interesting in this context since in its original state the church official would have had this diamond pattern in the background when reading/singing from that location which corresponds to “á kór” “uppi á kór” in the Icelandic sources. Indeed, many screens, both rood screens and altar screens, have very similar type of canopy-work, as in seals from the late medieval period, and it is therefore difficult to discern if the micro-architecture surrounding the relevant bishop's figures is based on a design of a screen or is entirely fictive. The Torpo lectorium canopy and the Rochester panel examples open up the possibility of a visual connection between the two means, but more detailed research is needed, which is larger than the scope of this thesis.

The other examples where architectural elements in seals are clearly mirroring real buildings, relate to doorways, such as in the examples from St Davids and Nidaros. Many examples are open to speculation since either the built elements have not been preserved or where they are, the seals are not. At least it cannot be entirely ruled out that there were these connections or reflections of the built environment.

The Icelandic examples have a special value in the absence of the medieval cathedrals at Skálholt and Hólar. This is especially true about the 15th-century seals from both dioceses. Among them, the seals of bishops Sveinn and Stefán of Skálholt provide an unusually strong connection with the cathedral structure at Skálholt, indicating elements which cannot be detected from the archaeological material or the written sources. Unfortunately, the seal

fragment of Bishop Pétur, the patron of the last medieval version of the Hólar cathedral, is too small to make a clear statement of the connection between seal and building, but enough is preserved to detect that it presents some architectural framing. These seals from both Skálholt and Hólar can be considered a clear addition to the visual source material of ecclesiastic culture in Iceland in the 15th century, providing important stylistic examples and possible visual expression of parts of the cathedrals in the form of *pars pro toto*.

8. General conclusion

Seals are in essence immensely rich historical source material, and this thesis has revealed several aspects of these visual records. The primary drive to explore the ecclesiastic seals from the Icelandic dioceses was the total absence of preserved medieval church buildings and the fact that in some of those seals are representations of church buildings or architectural framing. Alongside this, there was a lack of systematic overview of this part of the Icelandic ecclesiastic seal material.

The church was an integral part of medieval society, and its network was international, although there was a local aspect coinciding approximately with modern national boundaries. The seals of chapters and bishops in the Nidaros archdiocese are a convenient material to use to gain insight in that aspect of medieval life. It was therefore curious to explore a chosen sample of seals from within a bureaucratic entity within the church, in this case several dioceses within an archdiocese. Due to the limited scope of a PhD thesis and availability of material, I chose to focus on the dioceses of Iceland and Norway. In the case of the latter, the boundaries of Norway as defined in the Middle Ages, had Konghelle and Marstrand, now in Sweden, as part of Oslo diocese. The Norwegian and Icelandic dioceses in question were those of Nidaros, Bergen, Hamar, Stavanger, Oslo, Skálholt and Hólar, and they all formed part of the medieval Nidaros archdiocese that extended over to Garðar in Greenland to the west and Peel in the Isle of Man in the south.



Fig. 178 The Nidaros archdiocese before 1387.

The types of seals used as the basis of the source material of the thesis were the ones of the chapters of the cathedrals, royal churches, and monastic communities, as well as seals of

bishops, all originating from these areas in the Nidaros archdiocese. Chapters 2 and 3 provided an overview, or a sort of mapping of the material, and chapters 4-7 provided an in-depth study of the architectural elements in those types of seals. This research involved both main seals and subsidiary ones. In chapters 5-6 I discussed the seals of cathedral and monastic communities and in chapter 7 the seals of individual bishops. It was important to discuss the seals of individuals separately from those of communities due to the different nature of these groups. Seals of individuals, such as bishops, were used during a limited time in office, but seals of communities could be used for up to many centuries depending on circumstances. Therefore, the visual representation of the seal owners was different. A bishop's seal would consist of an image of a single bishop or some items symbolizing that individual, but a seal of community would consist of an image which would be representative of the values of each community according to conventions around it. That could sometimes be a saint and sometimes a building. Because of these differences, the seals were discussed in sections which corresponded to this. Chapters 5 and 6 consist of analysis on architecture in communal, that is, chapter seals, while in chapter 7 there is an analysis of the architectural elements in bishop seals.

The research questions asked in the thesis are in several layers. What kind of pattern is formed by this visual mapping of the seals? That is, which seals are the most similar and in what areas are new stylistic features introduced (and where might they come from)? What can that reveal about the cultural exchange at each given period of time? These questions applied to both types of seals, the communal chapter seals as well as the individual ones. And more specific question on the monastic seal material is: Did the rule matter in the choice of iconography for a monastic chapter seal? On the other hand, there was the question whether the authority of the archbishop somehow manifested itself in the seal material. For the individual ones: Did the imagery of the archbishops' seals impact the imagery of the suffragan bishops? For the communal ones, that is the chapter seals: Did the imagery in the seal of the metropolitan chapter in Nidaros have impact on the iconography of the other cathedral chapters?

The answers to those multi-layered questions also came in layers and are not clear cut. Some of them unfolded more straight forward but others were more nuanced and sometimes negative such as some of the comparison of seals and local architecture and the authority of the archbishop. Concerning the main seals of the cathedral chapters, the visual mapping revealed a very clear pattern of iconography: all the cathedral chapter seals had a representation of a building as a main theme. However, within that category there was some variation that formed into a pattern. The seals of Nidaros, the second seal of Stavanger and the seal from Oslo are all the same type with a church building with incorporated ecclesiastical figures, mainly the bishop

and the canons. The seals of Bergen and Kirkwall chapters also have this combination of a building and figures, but the figures are saints who have relevance to those churches and the structures have focus on doorways. They are St Sunniva in Bergen and St Magnus in Kirkwall. The seal from Hamar and the earlier seal from Stavanger have a plain church building without any figures. When these three groups of seal types with buildings were compared to seals outside the Nidaros archdiocese, it became very clear that there were not similarities to the cathedral chapter seals of the Danish or the Swedish dioceses. On the other hand, there was a close similarity to the iconography of chapter seals of several cathedrals in Britain, although some have only images of saints, such as Lincoln cathedral. The Nidaros, Stavanger II and Oslo group is of the same type as the second seal of Norwich cathedral, and the Bergen – Kirkwall group is a close relative of the type of the seal of Ely cathedral. The Hamar – Stavanger I group is a relative of a more archaic type of seals, such as the earliest one of Canterbury cathedral from before c.1160. The fact that the main seal of Nidaros cathedral is older than the Oslo and the second one from Stavanger, may indicate that the Nidaros type may have had impact on the choice of types in the two other seals. This forms a somewhat positive answer to the question of possible impact of the metropolitan seal on those two others. The size of the cathedral chapter seals ranges from 50-75 mm in diameter, but the Nidaros seal is the largest at 85mm, which may contribute to this positive answer. Concerning the rest of the cathedral chapter seals, the answer to the question of impact is positive in the way that these seals contain a church image, but negative concerning the type proper. What does this pattern reveal about the cultural exchange at the time? It is, in fact, in line with what is well known about English oriented trading relations and diplomatic delegations. The latter especially applies to the reign of Håkon Håkonsson (1217-1263).



Fig. 179 The five Nidrosian cathedral chapter seals in comparison to the seals of Ely and Norwich.



180 The two Nidrosian cathedral chapter seals with buildings only.

The seals of the monastic chapters clearly show a greater variety in iconography than the cathedral chapter seals, and the ratio between seals with buildings and seals with saints or hagiographic scenes is completely different from the cathedral chapters. The size of the monastic seals is smaller, ranging from 35 mm to 60 mm in diameter. Only eight out of the 27 monastic seals have a building as a main theme, and the rest of them also have some variations. Seven of the monastic seals have a representation of St Mary in some form. The images are mostly variations of the Virgin with the Christ child. What can be considered the older types would be the seals from Bakke and the earlier of the two seals from Helgeseter. The seals from Viðey and Kirkjubæjarklaustur could also be labelled as older types without architectural framework. In the seals of Dragsmark and the later one from Helgeseter there is the introduction of a richer architectural framework, and the Lyse seal is very elaborate. They can therefore be considered later types. Although not monastic, it is relevant to comment on the seal of the royal chapter in Oslo which has a still different version of iconography of the Virgin. It consists of a donor portrait where St Mary is standing with the child, in contrast to the sitting, enthroned monastic versions. This image has the most secure dating since it cannot be older than the foundation of the community in 1308, and the oldest impression is from 1344. The Cistercians were not allowed to have anything other than St Mary in their common seals after they were introduced in mid-14th century. In the preserved seal material, all rules have examples of St Mary in their common seal at some point, except for the mendicant orders.

Other iconographic motifs in the monastic material are St Olav, St Catherine of Alexandria, and St Erik where he and St Olav appear together. In addition to this a few seals have Biblical scenes. The variation in this category is considerable. The versions of St Olav are the following: three of the seals or seal fragments depict the saint-king enthroned with his regalia, and in the other two St Olav is joined with other figures: In one instance it is St Erik but in the other it is the archbishop. In three of the St Olav seals, there are representatives of the monastic communities suppliant below the scenes, but in two of them, such items are absent and St Olav fills the whole image space. Apart from one Premonstratensian, the other four seals with St

Olav all belong to the mendicant orders, three from the Dominicans and one from the Franciscans. The seal with both St Olav and St Erik belongs to the Dominican house in Bergen, and the seal with St Catherine is from the Franciscans in Tønsberg.

Concerning the seals with Biblical motifs, a seal with uncertain origin from Oslo diocese has a representation of the *Annunciation*, the seal from the Franciscans in Marstrand has the scene of the *Presentation of Christ in the Temple*, and the seal from the Benedictine Gimsøy has a version the *Crucifixion* without St Mary and St John. The sample is too small to see a clear pattern in the distribution in monastic rules, but some tendencies can be detected. In addition to this context of Biblical scenes, it is relevant to group the royal chapter of Apostelkirken (Church of the Apostles) in Bergen. That one has a scene from the *Pentecost*, a very rare motif in seal iconography but very relevant based on the dedication of that church, which had direct links to Rome and France. One main seal and one subsidiary seal had a representation of the *Trinity*.



Fig. 181 Wax impressions of the Norwegian and Icelandic monastic chapter seals with buildings.

An important by-product of this whole work is that the seal material provided important evaluation of the accuracy of the seal drawings made by or on behalf of Árni Magnússon in the 18th century. The study brought to light a large number of wax impressions, which were not previously known to exist, although the drawings had been published in *Sigilla Islandica*. The example of the Reynistaður wax impression was indeed quite a find. In all cases, where comparison was possible the accuracy of the seal drawings was quite astonishing.

The group of monastic seals with images of buildings are rather uniform in character. The majority has the type with buildings only, without any human figures involved. Four of those are from Hólar diocese, but the three Norwegian ones all come from different dioceses: Nidaros, Bergen and Stavanger. The only example of building with figures is from the

Benedictine Munkeliv in Bergen, but all the others are of the plain building type. Most of those seals belong to Benedictine houses except for the Augustinian Utstein.

This analytical overview of the monastic chapter seals provides some answers to the research question on the relation between monastic rule and the seal iconography. The seals with St Mary are distributed among most of the monastic rules, which is understandable because how strong the cult of the Virgin was in the Middle Ages. This is especially true in the late Medieval period, which coincides with the time frame of preservation of seals in the Nidaros archdiocese. The seals with St Olav, however, have a clear inclination towards the mendicant orders. In the group of seals with buildings, a pattern linked to the monastic rules also has a clear expression. There is a detectible Benedictine inclination, although this is not clear cut. This pattern connects with another research question on cultural exchange as it appears through the seal material. Some traceable parallels presented themselves in the Marian iconography of the Nidrosian material to both the British and Danish/Swedish material, but the similarity of the Nidrosian group of seals with church building is by far the strongest to the British seal material than to other areas. The British connection is most striking in the cathedral chapter seals, where there are combinations of buildings and figures. The context around the type with church buildings without figures is more obscure, and the material from Hólar diocese is a considerable addition to the corpus of that type within the Nidaros archdiocese. The type is considered archaic in the British context, where most examples are pre-conquest. Some of the Icelandic and Norwegian examples are old, but still a century later than the conquest. Although the type is rare or absent in the Swedish and Danish material, there are examples of it on the continent, such as the chapter seals of Nivelles, Echternach and Speyer, which have imperial affiliations to the Carolingian heritage. The clear Benedictine inclination towards church buildings in chapter seals lead to my hypothesis on the role of the seal of the abbey of Monte Cassino in this context. The abbey was the mother house of the Benedictine order, and that rule was central to the Carolingian reformation. It is therefore suggested that the fact that the Monte Cassino seal had a church image, this style became a prototype for other Benedictine seals perhaps via the imperial abbeys. Furthermore, due to the monastic affiliation with cathedrals in Britain, the tradition of having a building in a chapter seal may have become a richer tradition there than elsewhere. This also clearly applied to the cathedral chapter seals. And while new fashions made their way to many parts of Europe through later centuries, this type of seal remained a constant in these parts of the North Atlantic area.

An additional point in this context is that the word “capitvli” is more common in the legends of the chapter seals with buildings than in other types. On the other hand, in the letters those

seals are attached to, the use of the word “conventvs” is common, even when the seal attached to it has the word “capitvli” in the legend.



Fig 182 a.-c. *Continental examples of chapter seals with buildings. a. Nivelles; b. Speyer; c. Monte Cassino.*

The overview of the bishops’ seals revealed both uniform and complex patterns. In the earliest phase, from ca. mid-13th century to the middle of 14th century, the general trend in seals of dignity was a representation of a bishop. The figure was either standing or sitting, vested in the liturgical clothing and with the right hand raised in blessing and holding a crozier in the left. At this point in time, subsidiary seals were also in use, often as counter seals. Their iconography was entirely different from that of the main seals, with images of saints or hagiographic scenes, and below that there were kneeling figures, representing the bishops. While the size of the seals of dignity ranged from ca 75-95mm in height, this type of subsidiary seals was around 40-50 mm. The answer to the research question on cultural relation needs to be answered in layers or sections because the pattern of the iconography of bishops’ main seals changed through time. A comparison of seals from this period to those in neighbouring countries reveals stronger likenesses in terms of the pose of the figures with seals of British bishops than with Danish or Swedish seals. The British seals are in similar style as French seals while the Danish and Swedish seals are of imperial type. The seals of the bishops of Skálholt, Hólar, Bergen, Hamar and Oslo all consist of a standing bishop’s figure. In the seals of the archbishops, the figures are seated and enthroned in an imperial style. This also occurs with the bishops of Stavanger. This enthroned position of the archbishops is explicable by their authority and perhaps because they copied the posture of the figures in the seals of their predecessors, the archbishops of Lund which were the metropolitans of the North-Atlantic dioceses from 1106-1152/3 when the archdiocese of Nidaros was established. An explanation as to why the bishops of Stavanger were in a sitting position was not found. An early excavated matrix of Henrik, bishop of Stavanger, with a standing figure makes this puzzle even harder. A link to a seal of the Swedish dioceses where bishop’s figure is sitting is far-fetched yet necessary to mention. Another suggestion is that the sitting figures were representing St

Swithun, but, in such cases, there should be a suppliant representative of the bishop himself, underneath the saint. Considering the research question on possible impact of the archbishop's seal on the suffragans, it is in fact one possibility that the Stavanger bishops simply copied the style of the archbishop without claiming any special authority. The answer to that question would therefore be negative for the other suffragans. However, the basic style of bishops' seals at that period was very uniform across different areas, except for the poses of the bishop's figures, so the answer is not clear.

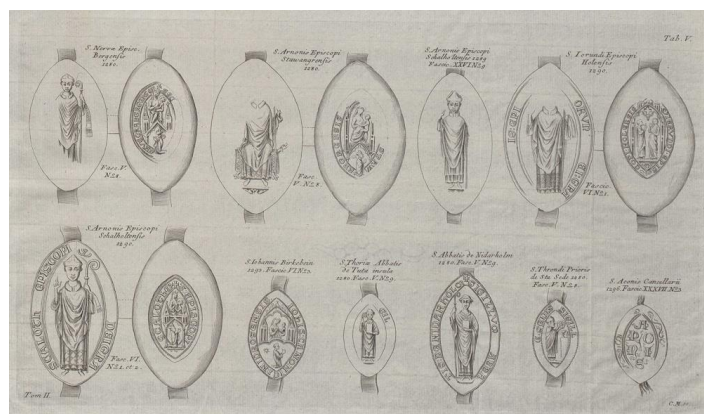


Fig. 183 The earliest types of bishops' seals of dignity and their counterseals.

In the next period in the development of the bishops' seals in the Norwegian and Icelandic dioceses, there is the import of the hagiographic types from the subsidiary seals onto the main seals, also known as the seals of dignity. The first example of this is the extraordinary seal of Olav I, ordained in 1350, and a more modest version in the seal of Gyrðir of Skálholt. The matrix for the archbishop's seal was most likely made by an extremely skilled and Île De France trained craftsman. The design was reused by subsequent archbishops until 1450. The design of



Fig. 184 Hagiographic types with architectural elements.

this seal had an impact on at least one of the seals of the suffragan bishops. This provides an answer to the research question on the impact of the archbishop's seal on the suffragans. This is particularly clear in the seals of the bishops of Bergen. During the same time frame when this shift in the iconography of the seals of dignity occurred, there was also the introduction of architectural elements around the bishop's or the saint's figure. This element has an early introduction in the seals of the bishops of Skálholt, Hamar and Oslo within the category of the effigy types. In the group of the hagiographic types, there is the seal of the bishop of Bergen in

1370s. Around 1450 there is another rather abrupt change in the Nidrosian material when the form of the seals of dignity and the division between those seals and the subsidiary ones becomes blurred. By 1460/70 the seal of the archbishop and all the suffragan seals have become round and much smaller. In addition to that, the iconography has also changed from effigy types into saints or symbols of the person in office. In this development, it is not the archbishops' seals where changes are introduced, but the seals of the bishops of Oslo, then Bergen and Skálholt, all in the time frame of 1407-1413. However, the bishop of Skálholt at that time was also a governor, and his seal was therefore round, which was common for secular rulers. A round main seal of the archbishop was not used before 1459. For this time frame, the answer to the research question on authority of the archbishop in the seal material is clearly negative. The seals of the archbishops did not set a stylistic tone for the others at that point in time. Concerning the research question on the cultural relations, the answer is complex. There were many changes in medieval society at the time, as well as in the ecclesiastical and political landscape linked to the Nidaros archdiocese. From 1319, Norway, which Iceland was then a part of, entered into an alliance with Sweden, and in 1380, the Norwegian state entered into a joint kingship with Denmark. In the late 14th century, the appointing of bishops was moved from the metropolitan chapter in Nidaros to the curia in Rome, but Queen Margaret (1389-1412), the queen of the joint kingdoms Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, had strong influence on these appointments. This coincides with many nationalities in bishops' offices in many of the dioceses and significant movement of officials between dioceses. The *sigillum rotundum* development, which appears to have its origins in Scotland, is detected relatively early in the Icelandic dioceses and is a remainder of the fact that remote areas were not necessarily culturally isolated. The "Icelandic" example is in fact the seal of an Englishman who was appointed to Hólar in 1425. In this respect, again, there are close similarities with the British material, Scottish in this respect, where the *rotundum* development evolved in early 15th century.



Fig. 185 Three examples of round seals of Icelandic bishops.

Due to the lack of existing medieval church building in Iceland, there was an emphasis on answering the question whether the church images in the chapter seals did in fact echo the appearance of the relevant church buildings. To answer that, an extensive comparison was

made to assess representation of church images in chapter seals. Examples were chosen so that the church image in the seal could be compared to existing church buildings or images of those buildings in their authentic appearance without later restorations. This was examined on three levels. Firstly, to assess whether miniature buildings or models in various context would show some likeness to the building they were representative of. The next step was to compare church buildings in city seals with actual churches, and, thirdly, how church images in chapter seals compared to the buildings themselves. This provided grounds to determine whether the church images in chapter seals can be rooted in the visual appearance of the churches they belong to. Rarely were these accurate reflections but rather representations of significant and recognisable parts of these churches. These types of representations were in line with how architectural copies can be interpreted as a way of a visual “citation” rather than of exact images of the buildings, a *pars pro toto*. With this in mind, the next step was to examine the Nidrosian material in the same way, first the chapter seals and then the bishops’ seals. Because of alterations and losses of buildings, this was only possible in very few cases. Regarding the metropolitan chapter seal, there are some hints of possible reflection of the Nidaros cathedral in the image. At the likely time of production of the seal, the cathedral was not yet completed. It is therefore possible that the Nidaros chapter seal reflects some intermediate stages of the cathedral in the 12th century. Another possible reflection of parts of a church proper and a seal is the second seal of Stavanger cathedral, which came in use between 1307 and 1320. There was a fire in the church in 1272, so its appearance must have changed in the rebuilding phase. However, an older seal was still in use some decades after the fire. Certain items in the second seal are clearly similar to preserved and authentic building parts, although others are not. The seal of Hamar cathedral, which is of the plain building type just as the earlier Stavanger seal, has some resonance with the cathedral ruins at the site. The seal image represents a side-view of a Romanesque style stone church with west towers and a large central tower. The church is now too ruined to make a detailed comparison, but there is clear evidence in foundations of west towers. The seal of St Magnus, Kirkwall showed some curious features, more related to timber building techniques than the stone-built cathedral itself. The only resonance is the threefold arcade at the façade of the cathedral. In the chapter seal of St Hallvard in Oslo, there is a side view of a Gothic style cathedral, but all that is left of the church itself are the foundations. Because how similar the image in the Oslo seal is to the shrine of St Gertrude in Nivelles, the question on whether seal images could be representations of house formed reliquaries rather than the buildings themselves was addressed. The conclusion was that although there are such examples, such as in a seal from Dunkeld, it is in general more likely that the seal images are representing the church buildings themselves.

The seal of the royal chapter of St Mary in Oslo contains a different iconographic type of architectural elements than presented in the cathedral chapter seals. In the seal of St Mary, there is an architectural canopy above the head of the Virgin, and the donor holding a church model. The canopy seems to be more of a template, seen also in manuscript illuminations, but the church model, may contain some features of the actual church at the time.

There are many variables in the monastic material. Among the Norwegian seals, the Munkeliv one has the least ground for comparison of seal and church. There is some evidence that in Nidarholm there was indeed a round church that had foundations which may have been reused for a fort after the reformation. The image in the Nidarholm seal could therefore reflect the earliest abbey church or another ecclesiastic building at the site. The third Norwegian example, the seal of Utstein, is the only clear Nidrosian seal where the image truly reflects the actual church which is preserved well enough to estimate this. These two examples of possible reflection of actual buildings from within the archdiocese provide a ground for approaching the Icelandic ones with the open possibility of a similar situation.

The four seals from the three sites in Hólar diocese are all from Benedictine houses. None of the abbey churches are preserved, but there is access to some information on their building history, mostly through written sources. Each case was examined separately and compared to what is generally known about the Icelandic building tradition. It stands apart from the Norwegian one in the use of timber as a high-status material, while stone was mostly used in Norway as the prestigious building material. There, all the cathedrals and major churches were built in stone, while in Iceland, both the cathedral of Hólar and Skálholt were made of timber. The same applies to the abbey churches, and some of them even had a coating of turf. It was therefore a significantly different reality than in Norway and, in fact, the rest of Northern Europe. The seal of the nunnery at Reynistaður is a very clear example of a representation of a timber building made by the stave-building technique, and it actually reminds us of rural Norwegian timber churches. However, the roof tiles in the seal image do have resonance in the written source material on the ancient abbey church, which was still standing in the 17th century. The seal of Þingeyraklaustur also contains elements rooted in timber buildings, especially some cross beams used for wall support. Although it is difficult to pinpoint special items in the seal to what is known about the abbey church, the seal image is clearly meant to represent a timber building. The third site, Munkaþverá, had two seals. The earlier of the two has an unusual representation in three-quarter view of a basilica-type church clad with shingles. The reference to a timber building is perhaps the least clear here since shingles can both be of stone and timber. The second seal of Munkaþverá has a strong visual reference to a timber building with some vertical lines, which can most likely be interpreted as vertical weather

boarding rather than log building. A fire in the Munkaþverá abbey church may shed some light on these two seals. The earlier is only detectible on documents from before the fire in 1429 while the other only on documents after that.

The architectural framework in the seals of bishops is different in nature from the church images in the chapter seals. These features were explored, as was the question of whether there was some reflection of the local built reality in these types of seals. Written sources were used to evaluate the question of what parts of churches, including its interior, would possibly be presented in such types of seals. Information embedded in sagas of bishops, as well as some charters, were used to approach an answer, and these texts revealed certain locations within church buildings clearly linked to episcopal or ecclesiastic authority. These were the main doorway, the doorway on the choir screen and the episcopal seat or throne in the choir. Such seats of authority developed much decorative richness during the later Middle Ages. Comparative material was provided for reasoning that some of the framework in bishops' seals, could be reflections of those parts of the interior of the affiliated cathedral. Also, an example was provided of how forms of a church part could be copied into elements of parts of an interior.

Concerning the individual examples from within the Nidaros archdiocese, there was a considerable variation. The seal of Arne Vade may be a resonance of a certain doorway, that is, on the octagon, while the seal of the archbishop Olav I, which was made abroad, may have had fictional framework. However, the preserved choir screen in Nidaros cathedral is of a related style, and there is clear evidence for the use of sketches between distant areas in the seal making process. In the case of the bishops of Bergen and Oslo, it is impossible to attain comparison in the absence of these building parts at those sites. Certain items in the seals of the bishops of Stavanger, however, can be interpreted as elements in episcopal throne. Information from older inventories could hint at an existence of such a throne still existing in the 18th century. The examples from Hólar diocese are rather unclear. Unfortunately, the seal of Bishop Pétur Nikulásson, who was the patron of a new cathedral building just before 1400, exists in too small a fragment to determine the nature of the architectural framework in his seal, although it appears similar to his predecessor Jón skalli Eiríksson.



Fig. 186 Comparison of some Icelandic bishop's seals and information on the cathedrals.

The seals of two of the bishops of Skálholt, Sveinn and Stefán, are of particular interest in this context. There is a clear reuse of the architectural frame around the figures in their seals that contains elements that resonate with what is known about Skálholt cathedral in the Middle Ages. This architectural frame in the seal image may be seen as additional visual source material on the elevation of the cathedral building.

The architectural framework in those bishops' seals provide positive answers to the research question on the reflection of the built reality onto the seal images of this category. The answer is vaguer than in the chapter seals, but individual seals provide strong evidence in this direction.

The seals of Gyrðir Ívarsson and Magnús Eyjólfsson also have clear architectural features that more difficult to pinpoint. However, one of the seals of Magnús have more relevance to church interior rather than structural features.

The question on production place of the Icelandic seals was also addressed. In most areas of the medieval world, seals were such necessary items and an integral part of document production that a local production is the basic norm in this respect. There is evidence in both written sources and in material objects on a high standard of liturgical equipment which was locally produced, such as a chalice now in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London. The fact that the letters in the legends of the Þingeyrar and the Reynistaður seals are nearly identical points strongly to a common local place of production, which is most likely somewhere within Hólar diocese.

Because so little is known about the medieval Icelandic church building tradition these seal images from Hólar diocese can truly be used as an addition to the knowledge of this heritage. Even if those images were general and not reflections of the building at these sites, they are clearly some reflection of a built local reality with features that were considered relevant to the church images in these seals. These micro images can therefore be interpreted as reflections of the macro local surroundings and therefore important visual source material for medieval Icelandic architectural history.

Looking back again at this presented corpus of ecclesiastic seals from the medieval dioceses of Norway and Iceland, there are some rather clear patterns which have emerged and express cultural currents in the whole material. This corpus reveals that stylistic influences reveal themselves in sections which have different essence at different points in time. Therefore, this cultural pattern is not always the same during the time frame in question here, that is from the 13th to the mid-16th century. The seals of cathedral and monastic chapters have a slightly different perspective than the seals of bishops due to their essence and long use. Largely, the

corpus of the seals of bishops presents three main layers which are clearly correspondent to both church-political history of the North Atlantic area as well as trade routes at each period. Sometimes the stylistic touches turned out to be more individual than general since personal taste always plays a part in general stylistic atmospheres.

The ecclesiastic authority of Nidaros is only visible in the oldest material up to mid-14th century. After that, stylistic innovation in the archdiocese appears in other locations. Bishops of Bergen take the lead, and then there are Danish and Hanseatic influence from the late 15th century on. This provides a negative answer to one of the layers of the research questions. In a larger perspective, both in time and topography, the early Nidrosian bishop's seals with standing figures correspond to British types, which, again, have resonance with seals of French bishops rather than the German imperial types. An interesting example of this is presented in similar images in seals of a bishop of Paris and one in Oslo in the 13th century. The archbishop's seal and the seals of Stavanger present the seated imperial type, dominant in the Danish and Swedish dioceses, as well as the German dioceses. The seated version of the archbishop's seal can be explained by the authoritative imperial position which could have its root in the appearance of the seals of the archbishops of Lund, which was the metropolitan for the Northern areas before the Nidaros archdiocese was established in 1152/3. After the mid-fourteenth century, architectural elements became prominent in the seals of bishops, and they can be interpreted as expression of authority. The parallel in episcopal thrones, seal images and tomb sculpture are a strong indicator of this.

The pattern is somewhat different in the corpus of the chapter seals. There, the British influence with images of church buildings is dominant. Due to the long use of chapter seals, innovations in design comes with new monastic orders, such as the mendicants. In the Franciscan seals there is the introduction of Biblical scenes while the design of seals of the older orders is more focused on saints and in the case of the oldest rules, the church buildings.

The tradition on having a building in a chapter seal is strongly expressed in the British seal material, and the Norwegian and the Nidaros material follows that trend. It is suggested here that this tradition of church building in communal seals, either cathedral chapters or monastic chapters, may have its origin in the seal of Monte Cassino, the mother house of the Benedictine rule. This tradition, which remained alive and became local in the North Sea areas, has provided some very interesting and important examples of chapter seals from the peripheries of the medieval world, which very likely prove to be the only accountable visual sources of some long-lost medieval church buildings in the far North. These seals can be interpreted as very important micro images reflecting parts of the macro world at the time.

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