

# Preface

This book originates in the international conference ‘Jerusalem in Viken’ in Tønsberg and Borre in April 2017. The theme of the conference might seem somewhat narrow and of marginal interest in European history, considering that its points of departure were the ruins of a church and abbey in Tønsberg, and a site east of the fjord with barely any visible remains left of the buildings that had once stood there

However, these ruins can be seen as the remains of an extraordinary attempt at ‘recreating’ the Holy Land in the second half of the twelfth century. In Tønsberg an unknown patron, or patrons, decided to build the largest round church in Scandinavia, or indeed in northern Europe – not so very much smaller than the more famous Temple Church in London. The round church was part of a Premonstratensian abbey, the first of this order in Norway. Around the same time, members of the famous military order of the Hospitallers arrived at Varna, or Værne, a farm close to the modern town of Moss.

Scholars were invited to discuss why these ambitious buildings and institutions were established here in Viken (the medieval name for the region surrounding Oslo Fjord), and why at this exact time. Who initiated the foundations, and what were the local, national and European background and contexts? Factors such as holy warfare, sacred topography, developments of royal ideology, and the growth of papal and episcopal power may help to explain some of the background. Still, the fact that neither the Premonstratensians nor the Hospitallers, nor other round churches, spread to other parts of the Norwegian kingdom suggests that there were certain special interests and conditions in this region not found elsewhere in Norway. This book presents some clues to answering these questions, and will hopefully open up the field for new questions and further research in the relations between crusading, monasticism, networks, architecture and spirituality in relation to power and society.

The conference was organized in association with the research project *Tracing the Jerusalem Code* hosted by the Norwegian School of Theology under the direction of Kristin Aavitsland and Eivor Oftestad. This project studied Jerusalem as a cultural focal point through two millennia, and its impact on piety, pilgrimage and warfare in the Western tradition – in imitations, re-presentations and re-enacting of the Holy City in art, architecture and liturgy. Some of the papers from the conference in Tønsberg and Borre were included in the first volume of the project’s publication, named *The Holy City Christian Cultures in Medieval Scandinavia (ca. 1100–1536)*, edited by Kristin B. Aavitsland and Line M. Bonde, and published by De Gruyter in 2021.

The editor wishes to express his deep gratitude to the many people who presented their papers at the conference, and to those who facilitated our excursions and helped with all the practicalities – you made this event a joy to organize!

The conference was hosted in the best way possible by Slottsfjellsmuseet, Haugar Art Museum, and Midgard Viking Centre. This book is published with the generous support of the Cultural Heritage section, Vestfold County.



St Olav's Church, Tønsberg. Photo: Trond Isaksen, Riksantikvaren.