CHAPTER 5

The Premonstratensians and Their Round Church in Tønsberg: Scandinavian Contexts and European Networks

Bjørn Bandlien
University of South-Eastern Norway

Neither the Premonstratensian Abbey dedicated to St Olav in Tønsberg, nor the round church belonging to it, are exceptional in a twelfth-century European context|. Norbert of Xanten's foundation at Prémontré in 1120 inspired thousands of clerics all over Europe to join communities where they could devote their lives to learning, liturgy and preaching with the help of a strict version of the Augustinian rule. By the end of the twelfth century, there were hundreds of abbeys all over Europe that followed the example set by Prémontré.[1]

The rise of the Premonstratensians coincided with what has been called the round church movement. Although some round churches were erected in early medieval Europe, there was a wave of circular churches built from the 1130s until about 1190. These churches are conventionally seen as recreations of the most holy of all churches, the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. As Catherine Hundley has shown, the round church

1 On the spread of the Premonstratensians in the twelfth century, see Bond 1993.

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movement was at its most intense from the second quarter of the twelfth century until the crusaders lost control over Jerusalem. From 1187 and into the thirteenth century the number of new round churches dropped dramatically (Hundley 2018). St Olav's Church and Abbey, whether contemporary or not, can both be dated roughly to between 1160 and 1190, and were thus built at the time both the Premonstratensian Order and the round church movements peaked in Europe.

In Norway, St Olav's Abbey was only one of many ambitious monastic foundations in the twelfth century. The other new abbeys from the late 1140s onwards were, however, mainly of the Cistercian and Augustinian orders. Only one other, quite small, Premonstratensian abbey, dedicated to the Virgin, was founded within the Norwegian kingdom, in Dragsmark in Bohuslän (present-day Sweden) about half a century later than St Olav's Abbey in Tønsberg.[2] Similarly, the round shape of the church has no precedence and hardly any successors in the Norwegian kingdom. The structure of the church, with its circular nave, choir, apsis, as well as the added semi-circular sacristy, must have been carefully planned by someone who appears almost obsessed by circles. As Øystein Ekroll shows, St Olav's Church in Tønsberg not only has a shape that imitates the rotunda of the Holy Sepulchre, but also has measurements that seem to parallel it. The only other structure that parallels this way of imitating the Holy Sepulchre was the rotunda, as part of the ambitious Nidaros Cathedral that was being rebuilt and extended from the 1160s onwards (see Ekroll in this volume). However, even though round churches were fairly popular in the neighbouring kingdoms, Denmark and Sweden (see Wienberg in this volume), the Norwegian outgrowth of the round church movement never really extended beyond Tønsberg and the Nidaros rotunda.

There are also some peculiarities to the Abbey and the round church even in a wider, European context. The combination of a Premonstratensian abbey and a round church is to my knowledge unparalleled anywhere

2 There are only a few studies published on Dragsmark Abbey, and the written sources to its early history are sparse. The year of foundation is uncertain, but it must have been in existence by the 1250s. The conventional dating is the 1230s. It is situated west of the modern city Uddevalla, now in Bohuslän, Sweden. This area remained a part of Norway until 1658. Dragsmark Abbey was excavated in the 1890s; see Berg 1895–99. Nyberg 1978 and 1993 discusses the dating and background, and its place in the *circaria Dacie et Norwegie*.

beyond Tønsberg. Moreover, even though dedications of churches to St Olav were popular all over northern Europe during the twelfth century, only one other round church, Sankt Ols, or Olsker, Church on Bornholm, was dedicated to this martyr saint of Norway. Third, no other Premonstratensian Abbey was associated with the cult of the Norwegian royal saint. Finally, it is one of very few Premonstratensian foundations placed within a town. There were others, for instance those associated with cathedral chapters, but the order attempted, like the Cistercian order, to avoid the urban entrapments.

St Olav's Abbey and its church thus consist of both typical elements of twelfth-century architecture and monastic spirituality, and at the same time a unique combination of various institutional, material and spatial features. In this article, I will discuss what the background – both the immediate, local context in the town of Tønsberg and the region of Viken, as well as the Scandinavian and European political, spiritual and intellectual networks Tønsberg was a part of – meant for the planning, financing, foundation and construction of St Olav's Church and Abbey. Since we, lacking written sources, cannot be sure if the church and the abbey were founded at the same time, or may have been two distinct projects, with different dating, patrons and reasons, these contexts and networks need to be discussed separately. However, because no abbey could be without a church, it is reasonable to assume that the round church was built before the abbey – or at least not after it (no other church, earlier or later, has been revealed on the site). Working backwards, we will first look at the most likely date for the Premonstratensian Abbey, and then consider whether the round church may have been older and built in a different context.

Dating the Abbey

There are no charters or letters that allow us to date the abbey and its church precisely, and archaeological excavations have so far not offered a precise year or decade for the structures.[3] Thus, attempts of a likely

3 There are perhaps materials under the altar that potentially, with new methods, can date the church more exactly than has been the case so far; see Lunde's article in this volume.

chronology must necessarily be based on few and fragmentary sources, each of which requires careful examination and evaluation. The most recent scholar to sift through the relevant sources of all Premonstratensian foundations in Scandinavia has been the Danish historian Tore Nyberg. He suggested that Tønsberg Abbey may have been planned in the 1160s but established in the early 1170s. His argument is part of his thorough discussion of the establishment of the diocese and the introduction of the Premonstratensians in Børglum, northern Jutland. From later sources, we know that Tønsberg was the daughter house of Børglum, and Nyberg suggests that it must have taken a generation from the establishment of Premonstratensians at Børglum until they had the resources to become a mother house for the Abbey in Tønsberg. However, the arrival of the Premonstratensians at Børglum is also contested and difficult to date: traditionally this has been placed in the 1180s, and the abbey is not indisputably documented until a letter from Abbot Gervasius of Prémontré to Børglum Abbey in 1216. However, Nyberg established that Børglum Abbey must have been considerably older (see below).

Two different sources firmly establish 1190 as the latest possible date for the foundation of Tønsberg Abbey. The first is the short *Historia de profectione Danorum in Hierosolymam*, written c. 1200. The anonymous author describes how, after the Danish court received the news of the fall of Jerusalem in 1187, a group of noblemen planned and carried out an expedition to the Holy Land. Following a long period of shipbuilding and preparations, a fleet left Denmark in 1191 and stayed for some time in Tønsberg. Although the author might not have been a native of Tønsberg, and probably wrote his chronicle in Børglum, it seems plausible that he had lived for a considerable time in Tønsberg – at least long enough to claim knowledge of the drinking habits of the town dwellers and to give a detailed description of the natural conditions of the town. More specifically he tells that on top of Slottsfjellet ('Castle Hill') in Tønsberg, there is a beautiful church dedicated to St Michael. The landed property of this church is used to finance the canons of the Premonstratensian order.[4]

4 *Historia de profectione Danorum*, ch. 9. On the chronicle, see Skovgaard-Petersen 2001, and her article in this volume. In the latter article, she quotes the description of Tønsberg in full, from the forthcoming edition and translation of *Profectione*.

Although this chronicle was written a decade after the events, there is little reason to doubt that the Premonstratensians were firmly established when the Danes stayed in Tønsberg.

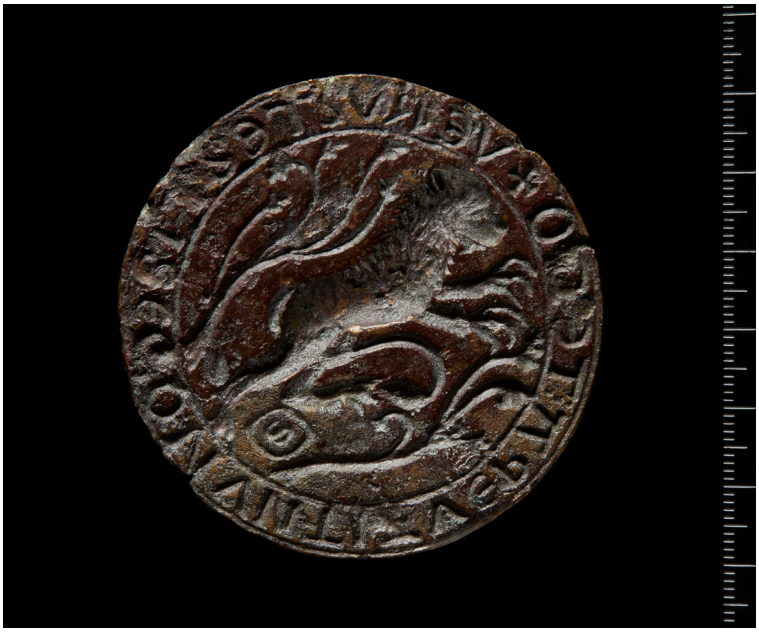

Figure 1. Seal matrix found in Tønsberg, probably belonging to King Sverre Sigurdsson (*r.* 1177–1202): *Verus testis ego//nuntia vera tego*. Photo: Ellen C. Holte/KHM.

The second reference is in *Sverris saga*, the story of King Sverre Sigurdsson of Norway (*r.* 1177–1202). In 1188 the half-brother of King Sverre, Eirik Sigurdsson, had been appointed Earl and the ruler of Viken. In 1190, however, Eirik became seriously ill when in Tønsberg. When his condition got worse, *Sverris saga* tells us he entered a monastery and took on 'monkish dress'. There he stayed for five days before he died. His wife died on the same day, while their young son survived them by just two days (*Sverris saga*, ch. 115). The name of this 'monastery' is not mentioned, but we know that there were no other monasteries in Tønsberg at the time – the only alternative in 1190 would be the Hovedøya Abbey of the Cistercian order, near Oslo. From the context, it seems most likely that Earl Eirik was buried in St Olav's Church in Tønsberg in 1190, and that the abbey must already have been in function for at least a few years.

The earliest possible date for the foundation of Børglum Abbey is more difficult to pin down. From the lists of the order's convents made at Ninove Abbey in the thirteenth century, it is clear that Tønsberg Abbey was a daughter house of Børglum in northern Jutland.[5] Still, the problem of dating the arrival of Premonstratensians to Børglum remains. Tore Nyberg has discussed the few and sometimes vague sources associated with its foundation (Nyberg 1986). Nyberg suggested that the Abbey of Børglum originated at the Provincial Synod of Lund in 1139, led by Archbishop Eskil of Lund (d. 1177). Also present at the synod was the canon Heriman, or Herman, from the Augustinian Abbey of Klosterrath or Kloosterrade, near Rolduc just north of Aachen. Heriman had, the previous year, been sent to Rome by Bishop Eskil of Roskilde, who had to wait for the pallium before he could call himself archbishop of Lund. The purpose of this embassy was to attain papal confirmation of the supremacy of Lund over the churches in the Scandinavian kingdoms, after this had been lost to Hamburg-Bremen in 1133. The metropolitan status of Lund was indeed recognized by Pope Innocent II, and Heriman brought back the pallium from Rome to Eskil, who was consecrated archbishop at the Synod of Lund.

In Lund, Heriman met Bishop Silvester of Børglum. Bishop Silvester wished, apparently, to establish a house of regular canons affiliated to the cathedral chapter. Although this is not explicitly stated in the sources, Silvester may have felt that the authority of Børglum was challenged by the important Vestervig Abbey in the western part of the diocese. At Vestervig a popular cult of St Thøger had developed since the 1070s, and a large church and a convent of regular canons had been established in the early twelfth century. Børglum lacked any such cult and had more likely become the episcopal centre of the diocese because it was initially a royal estate. The introduction of regular canons would raise the prestige of the cathedral chapter.

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5 There is a short description in the so-called *Catalogus Ninivensis II*, written c. 1235 with supplements added until c. 1270. This text was first printed in Backmund 1960, 386–402, for Tønsberg see p. 393: *In provincia Nidrosiensi Distat a civitate Asleensi per tres dietas si per terram si per mare ad unam Insula est ad leugam a diocesi Asloensi Tunsbergia usque occidentem et dicitur ista abbatia Tunsvberga filia Burgilanensis Oleuum*. It is printed without interpunctuation, and the passage is a bit unclear, especially concerning the geographical distances, but the affiliation to Børglum and placement in the diocese of Oslo in the province of Nidaros is accurate enough.

Heriman seemed to be an ideal emissary for this purpose. Klosterrath, the abbey of Heriman, had been important for Norbert of Xanten in the years just before he founded Prémontré in 1120. However, Heriman had been a controversial figure during his time in Klosterrath, as is evident in the abbey's annals (*Annales Rodenses*). He is depicted as opposing the introduction of a stricter interpretation of the Augustinian rule. He was blamed for instigating a fire in the abbey church and for the expulsion of two abbots, and after an unfortunate attempt to establish a new convent he more or less had to flee to Roskilde where he became Bishop Eskil's chaplain. Heriman seems to have come to terms with the canons at Klosterrath after his return from Rome.

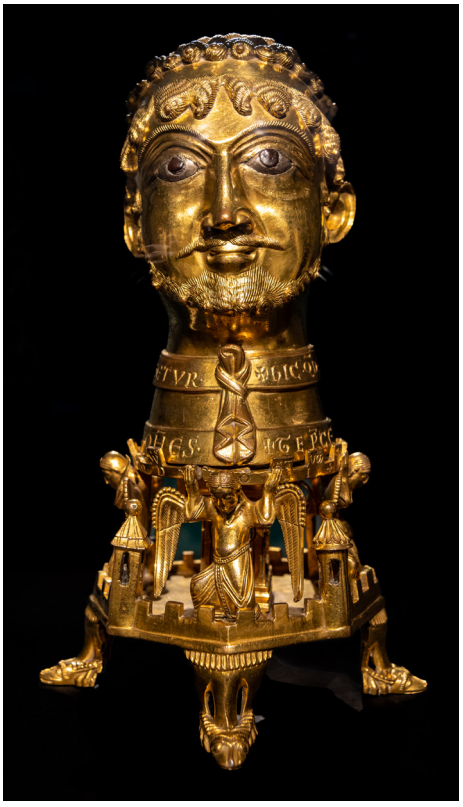

Figure 2. Cappenberg Head, reliquary bust in bronze commissioned before 1158 by Otto of Cappenberg, godfather of Frederick Barbarossa and founder, with his brother Gottfried, of the first Premonstratensian abbey in Germany. The was long considered to be a portrait of Barbarossa, but it more likely depicts John the Evangelist, the patron saint of the abbey church. Photo: Rainer Halama/Wikicommons, CC BY-SA.

Heriman ended his life as canon in Lund. His background close to the epicentre of the foundation of the Premonstratensian order, not only in the development of regular canons, but also to influential schools of art and architecture, has led scholars into seeing him as a personification of the influences from the Alsace-Westphalia region on Denmark. He has been attributed the application of a rule for regular canons in Lund based on statutes used at Marbach Abbey in Alsace, the so-called *Consuetudines Marbacenses*, but these were introduced before the arrival of Heriman. Similarities in sculpture between the abbey church in Klosterrath and the cathedral in Lund suggest perhaps not Heriman's personal contribution, but may rather indicate several levels of contact between Alsace and Westphalia with Denmark at the time.[6]

Despite his relations to Heriman, there is no evidence that Bishop Silvester of Børglum did actually introduce the regular canons to Børglum before he died c. 1145. This is also indicated by the necrology of Prémontré, where the establishment of a Premonstratensians convent in Børglum diocese is attributed to Sylvester's successor Bishop Tyge (Gelting 1992: 52, n70). Heriman might still be the one who contacted Klosterrath's daughter house, Steinfeld Abbey, to assist with the new foundation in northern Jutland. At Steinfeld, they followed the Augustinian rule, but had in the 1120s introduced the statutes for a stricter way of life that had recently been established by Norbert of Xanten. Tyge was bishop of Børglum from c. 1145 to 1176/77, which gives a wide timeframe. Still, Nyberg suggests that the foundation of the Premonstratensian Abbey should most probably be dated to the early period in Tyge's episcopacy: the late 1140s or early 1150s. This dating remains ambiguous, but Nyberg points to several indications that previous suggestions that the Premonstratensians

6 On the discussions concerning Heriman's influence on the customs for the regular canons in Lund, see Ciardi 2016: 45–46, 80–81. On the possible influence on sculpture, see Timmers 1969. However, Heriman seems to have left Klosterrath just as the construction started; see van Hartog 2011 on his turbulent career before he went to Denmark. The workshop responsible for the mural paintings at Vä church, later part of a Premonstratensian Abbey, as well as the paintings in several other churches in Zeeland in the early twelfth century, seems to have introduced elements from the Rhine-Meuse area and Westphalia region, for instance from the church of Knechsteden Abbey just north of Cologne; see Kaspersen 2003. For the most recent discussion of the dating of the murals, with references to previous debates about datings, see Ödman 2021.

did not arrive to Børglum until the late 1170s or 1180s are most probably too late: first, Steinfeld Abbey is known to have founded daughter houses up to the 1140s, but not later; second, Børglum would hardly have been able to establish a daughter house in Tønsberg until some years, perhaps some decades, after its foundation, and this took place, as we have seen above, in the 1180s at the latest; third, Abbot William of Æbelholt, an Augustinian canon from Paris who was invited to Denmark by Archbishop Eskil in the 1160s to reform the regular canons, wrote to Bishop Trugot (Tyge) of Børglum in the mid-1180s about the unruly canons in his diocese. The reference is vague, but as Abbot William seems to refer to a larger group of canons associated with the bishop, he might be alluding to the Premonstratensians at Børglum. Nyberg pointed out that it would take a second generation of canons to diverge from the discipline of the first canons, so this would again confirm a dating c. 1150. Perhaps most convincing is the many establishments adherent to and promoting new aspects and ideals of reform under Archbishop Eskil in the 1140s. The Cistercians established had their first abbey in Denmark in 1144, and the following year Premonstratensian canons may have been invited to establish an abbey In the old cathedral of Lund, when the new one was consecrated in 1145 (Nyberg 1986: 79–102; 2000: 159–160; 2008: 37–38).

Later studies have nuanced Nyberg's conclusions, pointing to the lack of evidence of Premonstratensian canons at the cathedral chapter itself in the twelfth century. The first letter dealing explicitly with the abbey (from Abbot Gervasius of Prémontré in 1216), suggests that the canons had just recently moved to Børglum. Since there was a Premonstratensian nunnery at Vrejlev, only some 13 km east of Børglum, in the thirteenth century, some scholars have suggested that Vrejlev in its early phase was a double monastery, consisting of both canons and nuns. In the aftermath of a fire in the early thirteenth century, the canons could have moved to Børglum while the nuns stayed in Vrejlev (Krongaard Kristensen 2013: 13–14; Lindholt 2017). The Premonstratensian Abbey in northern Jutland would then, in its early phase, not have been part of the cathedral chapter but situated at a more remote site. At Vrejlev, the Abbey would have been a centre for preaching and pastoral duties in the eastern and northern part of the diocese, while the Augustinians in Vestervig served the western

part. This adjustment of Nyberg's conclusions does not necessarily affect an early dating of the introduction of the Premonstratensians to northern Jutland, but does question if the Premonstratensian community lived in the episcopal centre at Børglum until about the 1180s.

Whether in Børglum proper, or initially living in Vrejlev at a short distance from it, Nyberg's conclusion that the Premonstratensian were introduced to this diocese c. 1150 has been relatively unchallenged. Then, as a daughter house of Børglum, 1150 would be the absolute earliest possible dating of St Olav's Abbey. Since Børglum Abbey would hardly have been able to establish a new community only a few years after its own foundation, this would give a plausible timeframe for the foundation of an abbey in Tønsberg from the 1160s until the mid-1180s.

If we attempt to narrow this frame even further, we have to move into even more speculative territory. There is an undated letter from Ulrich of Steinfeld, provost from 1152 to70, referring to an unknown bishop in an unnamed kingdom who requested assistance to establish a new house of the Premonstratensian order. Ulrich's wording points to a certain intimacy with the messenger that brought the request, suggesting that the kingdom in question was a neighbour of the kingdom of the messenger, and that there were no previous Premonstratensian Abbey in the kingdom where the bishop resided. In his analysis of this letter, Tore Nyberg argued that its content makes sense if the intermediary is from Børglum, the daughter house of Steinfeld, acting on behalf of a bishop in a neighbouring kingdom. This bishop would then be from either Sweden and Norway, but the Premonstratensians never had any convents in Sweden, nor are there any other sources indicating that there were plans in this direction in the 1150s or 1160s, when Ulrich was provost. The information given in the letter thus suggests that the kingdom lacking a Premonstratensian abbey, would be Norway. Steinfeld Abbey had ceased to establish daughter houses at this time, and it would then make sense that it was Børglum Abbey that became a mother house instead (Nyberg 1986: 110, n 481).

Assuming that this letter refers to the plans for introducing the Premonstratensians to Norway, the unnamed bishop who had made the initial request would most likely be Bishop Torstein of Oslo

(1157×61–1169). The sources offer little information about his background and involvement in foundations of new churches and monastic houses, except that he was a benefactor of the Cistercian abbey at Hovedøya, founded in the late 1140s, close to Oslo. A letter from Pope Alexander III, probably written in December 1169, says that the bishop of Oslo had been killed by some 'cruel men'. Archbishop Eystein of Nidaros was granted permission to consecrate a new bishop, but the pope expressed his bewilderment that the king of Norway had not punished this horrible crime.[7] Bishop Torstein's request of assistance from Ulrich of Steinfeld would then be sometime in the 1160s. But following his violent death, the foundation of a Premonstratensian abbey would have been postponed.

His successor, Bishop Helge (1170–90), may have taken up his predecessor's initiative and pursued the establishment of the first Premonstratensian Abbey in Norway. Still an *electus*, he went to the large royal assembly in Ringsted in Denmark in June 1170. This meeting was an important manifestation of the Danish king Valdemar I's idea of kingship, his relationship to the church, as well as his ambitions of political and religious hegemony in Scandinavia and the Baltic Sea area (see further discussion below). In the context of dating St Olav's Abbey in Tønsberg, it is relevant that both the orders of Premonstratensians, especially Vä Abbey in Scania, and the Hospitallers at Antvorskov, received most generous donations. The final settlement of the Premonstratensian Abbey in Tønsberg may then have received a push in the form of general support and donations from Erling Skakke and Valdemar I at the large assembly in Ringsted in 1170, or shortly after. The early 1170s may thus be as close as we get to a plausible date for the establishment of St Olav's Abbey, but it may have already been planned from the mid- or late 1160s.[8]

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7 *Latinske dokument*, no. 17, with comments on pp. 14–16. The king in 1169 was Magnus Erlingsson, who had been hailed as king at a thing assembly already in 1161, then only 13 years old. The *de facto* rulers were his father, Erling Skakke and his mother Kristin, daughter of Sigurd the Crusader (see below).

8 Saxo XIV.40.1. See also Johnsen 1976. He suggested that the foundation of the Tønsberg Abbey was inspired by the donations given to Vä Abbey by King Valdemar at Ringsted. He does not, however, discuss a possible preparation of the foundation by Bishop Torstein of Oslo.

Figure 3. Ceiling murals in the chancel, Vä Church, twelfth century. The angels are carrying speech scrolls with the text of the hymn *Te Deum*. Photo: Yakikaki/Wikicommons, CC BY-SA.

Since these events unfolded during the minority of the young King Magnus Erlingsson and the regency of his father Erling Skakke, it is tempting to see the latter as the person who founded the Premonstratensians in Tønsberg. As Trond Svandal argues (see his article in this volume), Erling Skakke, perhaps in agreement with Valdemar I, founded the Hospitallers at Varna after the model of King Valdemar's support of the Hospitallers in Denmark (Svandal 2006, see also his article in this volume). However, if the Premonstratensians were invited by Bishop Torstein, we should consider the bishopric's role as well. We will therefore have to take a closer look at the relationship between Valdemar and Erling Skakke leading up to the Ringsted assembly in 1170.

Premonstratensians, the murder of a bishop, and the rivalry over Viken

25 June 1170 has been termed 'one of the most important dates in the history of Denmark' (Riis 2015: 100). On this day all the clerical and secular elite of Denmark, along with Archbishop Stephen of Uppsala and the

elected Bishop Helge of Oslo, were assembled in Ringsted. Archbishop Eskil led two important ceremonies this day, first the translation of King Valdemar I's father Knud Lavard who had been killed in 1131 and in 1169 been canonized by Pope Alexander III, and second the crowning (and possibly anointing) of the king's seven-year-old son Knud. These ceremonies were clearly inspired by parallels in the Holy Roman Empire, where Frederick Barbarossa initiated the canonization of Charlemagne and the crowning of his son Henry in 1169. King Valdemar had himself been crowned by Frederick Barbarossa in 1162, after paying homage to him. This subordination had implied that King Valdemar accepted the so-called Antipope Victor IV. Archbishop Eskil of Lund remained loyal to Pope Alexander III and was forced into exile. From the mid-1160s, the emperor became deeply entangled in his Italian affairs and the Ringsted assembly was the end point of a reconciliation process with Alexander III and Archbishop Eskil on the one hand, and a break with the dependency on Germany on the other.

In this way, the assembly is often interpreted as the start of the strong monarchy under Valdemar. At the same time, it also signalled Danish expansion into the Baltic Sea with papal approval. Shortly before the assembly, Rügen had been conquered and its people converted, and its church organization was acknowledged at the Ringsted assembly as being part of the Roskilde diocese. Moreover, Archbishop Eskil had already, during his exile in 1165, appointed Fulk as bishop of Estonia, with the support of Pope Alexander III and Archbishop Henry of Reims. Estonia proved hard to win, and only Valdemar II, who was born just weeks before the Ringsted meeting in June 1170, managed to gain control over Estonia half a century later. However, by 1170 the ideology, attention and institutions of the Danish kingdom were directed eastwards, and were at times closely involved with holy warfare (see e.g. Jensen 2001).

To a certain extent, during the 1160s, the Norwegian regent Erling Skakke had a similar relation to Valdemar as the Danish king had to Frederick I in Germany. The background for the tense alliance between Erling Skakke and King Valdemar I of Denmark had started at least a decade before. Erling belonged to a powerful family based on the

farm Etne, south of Bergen. In the early 1150s he had journeyed to the Holy Land along with Ragnvald, earl of Orkney, and the Norwegian Eindride Unge ('the Young') who had served in the Varangian guard for the Byzantine Emperors since the 1140s. Just before this expedition, or perhaps shortly after, Erling Skakke married Kristin, the daughter of Sigurd Magnusson, known as 'the crusader'. Kristin was the cousin of King Valdemar I, since their mothers were sisters, daughters of Mstislav I of Kiev.

After returning from the crusade in 1155, Erling Skakke became one of two major supporters of King Inge Haraldsson. The other regional leader supporting King Inge was Gregorius Dagsson, who had his farm at Bratsberg, close to the town Skien in Viken. Gregorius and Erling were rivals, and in 1160 their men were fighting each other. Only with difficulty did King Inge reconcile them, but the grudge they had against each other was obvious to all. Therefore, Erling remained in the western part of Norway, while Gregorius followed the king to Viken. However, within a few weeks early in 1161, they both died during their armed struggle against King Inge's nephew, Håkon Herdebrei ('Broad-Shouldered'). Håkon Herdebrei was only aged 13 at the time, but was supported by Sigurd of Rør, a magnate from Ringsaker, just north of Hamar, the episcopal seat in the inland part of eastern Norway. Håkon was then hailed as a king of Norway.

Erling Skakke reacted swiftly following these events. He had his five-year-old son Magnus hailed as a king at a thing assembly in Bergen in 1161 and went to Denmark to seek the support of King Valdemar I against Håkon Herdebrei. He had the late King Inge's mother Ingerid with him, along with her new husband and two of their sons. In her first marriage to Henrik Skadelår, the cousin (and one of the murderers) of Valdemar's father, Knud Lavard, she had a son, Buris, who had become Duke of Schleswig and also participated in the negotiations in early 1161. After securing the support of Valdemar, Erling Skakke returned to Norway the same spring, made a surprise attack on the men of King Håkon in Bergen, and then made an attempt on the life of King Håkon himself, who at that time had moved to Tønsberg. Håkon fled, but the following year he was killed at the Battle of Sekken in western

Norway. In 1163, Sigurd of Rør was defeated and killed at the battle at Re, outside Tønsberg. Later in the same year, Sigurd Sigurdsson, half-brother of Håkon Herdebrei and fostered by Markus (and thus named Sigurd Markusfostre), a relative to Sigurd of Rør, was defeated and executed. Following these battles, the sagas claim that Erling Skakke struck a deal with Archbishop Eystein of Nidaros; if he crowned and anointed Erling's son Magnus, now seven years old, despite not being son of a king (but, as Erling pointed out, such a breach of tradition did not exclude William the Bastard from becoming king of England), the reform-minded Eystein would receive most of the privileges he wanted for the church.[9]

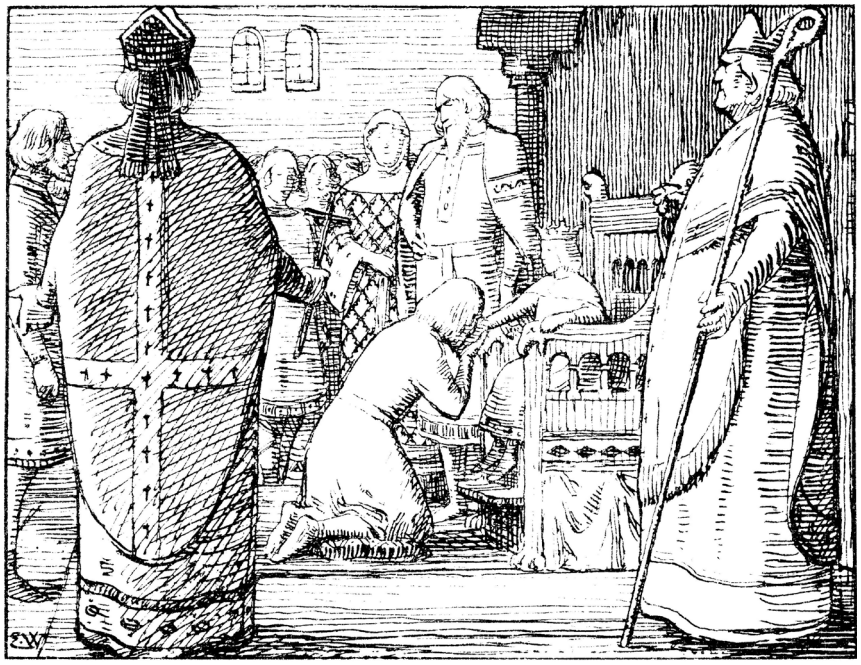

Figure 4. The anointment of King Magnus Erlingsson in Nidaros Cathedral 1163/64. Archbishop Eystein stands on his left. His father Erling Skakke and his mother Kristin, daughter of Sigurd the Crusader, are to the right of the young king. Drawing by Erik Werenskiold, 1899.
Photo: Wikicommons.

9 This summary of the complex events of the early 1160s is based on *Fagrskinna*, esp. ch. 93, and Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, *Magnús saga Erlingssonar*, esp. ch. 21.

The deal was concluded, and Magnus was crowned and anointed in Bergen shortly after, probably late in 1163 (although Snorri dates it to 1164). Interestingly, a legate from Pope Alexander III (then exiled), Stephen of Orvieto, was also present in Bergen at this time. Although he can hardly have been sent to Norway for the coronation – he does not seem to have taken any part in the ceremony – he probably trusted Eystein's judgement of the alliance with Erling Skakke. Eystein had shown his loyalty to Alexander III during his visit to Rome and France in 1160–61. Stephen of Orvieto might have been concerned about Erling Skakke's position because he had, since 1161, been allied to Valdemar I, the supporter of the Antipope Victor IV, but Stephen must have been convinced of the benefits for the young archbishopric (only established a few years earlier, in 1152/53).

What Erling had to offer in return for Valdemar's support in 1161 differs substantially in the main sources for the events: the Danish version by Saxo Grammaticus, whose patron was Archbishop Absalon of Lund, Valdemar I's relative and most important counsellor, and the Norwegian version represented in the sagas *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla*.[10] According to the kings' sagas, Erling had to the swear an oath of loyalty to Valdemar and cede the area of Viken to him – an area extending from Lindesnes at the southern tip of Norway, all the way up to Oslo and from there southeast to Konghelle (just north of present-day Gothenburg in Sweden). Viken was a region that at the time was regarded as a realm traditionally under Danish rule, notably during the reigns of Harald Bluetooth, Svend Forkbeard and Cnut the great. Hence, Valdemar I could merely claim that he recovered what was his inheritance to begin with. Saxo, however, says that Valdemar I started to oppose Erling Skakke in 1164, especially after the remnants of the flock who had followed the slain Sigurd Sigurdsson sought his assistance. For Saxo, Erling Skakke acted too independently in Viken, without seeking the support or advice of the Danish king.

Whatever the background for Valdemar's enmity against Erling Skakke, the Danish king seems to have felt that Erling Skakke had let him

10 On the differences between the sagas and Saxo concerning these events, see Gawthorne-Hardy 1946–53. He argued for the reliability of Saxo's version, while the sagas, he concluded, show a muddled chronology.

down. The saga version says that Danish men, disguised as pilgrims, went to Nidaros and tried to recruit men there in opposition to Erling Skakke. Valdemar I then led a large fleet to Viken in 1165, settling in Tønsberg where he wanted to organise a thing assembly at Haugar, a hill next to the town where kings traditionally were hailed by the local people. The expedition, however, seems to have been less a conquest and more an attempt to gain formal recognition of Valdemar over Viken. However, no one from Tønsberg or its hinterland showed up at the assembly site. Instead of plundering Tønsberg and Viken as a punishment, Valdemar is said to have thought it more prudent to raid in heathen lands in the east. Then, Erling Skakke attacked and raided Jutland before his wife Kristin went to the court of Valdemar and negotiated a peace between her cousin and her husband. Then, in the sagas, this is the end of the fighting.

Saxo's version, however, indicates that the sagas compressed a more enduring conflict into the period 1164–66. According to Saxo, Valdemar was hailed as a king in Viken, at the thing assembly in Borg, east of the Oslo Fjord, in 1165. Erling attacked Denmark, in alliance with Buris Henriksson (the half-brother of King Inge Haraldsson, who Erling Skakke had supported until Inge died outside Oslo in 1161). Buris had a claim to the Danish throne, and he was potentially a serious threat to Valdemar I. However, he was caught in 1167, blinded and castrated and probably died shortly after. In 1168 Valdemar returned to Viken and Tønsberg but achieved little. Kristin, the wife of Erling, acted as an intermediary between them and even travelled to Denmark to negotiate a settlement. The elected bishop of Oslo, Helge, was then present at the assembly in Ringsted in June 1170 and probably had meetings with Valdemar on behalf of Erling Skakke. The result was that Erling was to rule Viken as an earl, and if Erling's son, King Magnus, died without an heir, Valdemar's son should be king of both realms.

This suggests that the years 1167–68 seem to have been the most critical phase of the conflict. As it happens, another pretender who claimed to be the son of a king started to fight against Erling Skakke at this time. This was Olav Ugjæva ('the Unlucky'), the son of a magnate from the northern part of eastern Norway and a daughter of King Eystein Haraldsson (the brother of King Inge). Olav Ugjæva was especially active in the Viken

area, and in 1167 he managed, with the help of a local priest, to surprise Erling at a farm north of Oslo and almost managed to kill him. Erling made a narrow escape (hence Olav's nickname) and took his revenge by killing Olav's father the following year. Olav had to escape to Denmark and waited in Aalborg in northern Jutland. Here he mustered troops and prepared a fleet in expectation of the best new opportunity to have another go at Erling Skakke. Unexpectedly, he became sick and died soon after. He was buried in St Mary's Church in Aalborg, where he – for a time at least – was revered as a holy man (Snorri, *Heimskringla: Magnús saga Erlingssonar*, chs. 31–34).

This uprising of Olav Ugjæva is noteworthy to our discussion for two reasons. First, Olav seemed to have had support from Denmark, especially in northern Jutland, against Erling Skakke in 1167 and may have been prepared to rule Viken under Valdemar I. Second, the assistance he received from a priest indicates that some of the clergy opposed the rule of Erling at the time. Although not explicitly stated in the sources, Bishop Torstein of Oslo may have been part of this opposition to Erling. If Torstein had close relations to Børglum and had the support and confidence of Bishop Tyge in the period 1163–68, this would be during Valdemar I's allegiance to Victor IV – although it is unclear if all bishops supported the policy of Valdemar and Bishop Absalon of Roskilde in this respect. However, establishing regular canons in his diocese as a daughter house of a Danish abbey at this time must have been somewhat controversial, and this makes it less likely that the initiative came from Erling Skakke.

Erling Skakke and Kristin Sigurdsdatter, his wife, had admittedly founded a friary of Augustinian canons at Halsnøy in 1163, in close cooperation with Archbishop Eystein of Nidaros. There are no sources that say exactly when and where Archbishop Eystein had studied in his youth, but St Victor Abbey in Paris, following the Augustinian rule, sometime in the 1140s has been suggested as the school where he was most likely educated.[11] In 1160–61, during his travels to the curia to receive the pallium,

11 See Gunnes 1996, 32–40. Gunnes also suggests he was for some time in Lincoln. A parallel would be the Icelander Þorlákr Þórhallsson who studied in Paris and Lincoln in the 1150s, and later became Bishop of Skálholt and Eystein's ally in introducing Church reforms to Iceland.

Eystein visited St Victor and possibly also Canterbury in England (Gunnes 1996: 82–89). After his return to Nidaros, both the literature, liturgy and architecture produced at, or in association with, the cathedral chapter show heavy influence from, and links to, northern France (especially the Victorines) and England (especially Canterbury, Lincoln and York).[12]

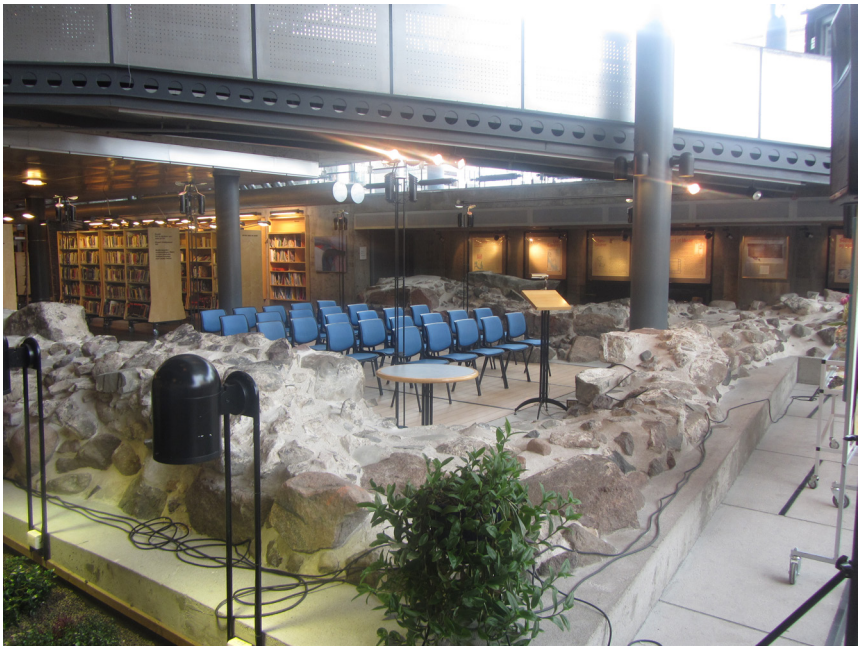

Figure 5. Ruins of the Premonstratensian Abbey, now integrated within Tønsberg and Færder library. Photo: Stig Rune Pedersen, CC BY-SA 3.0.

Halsnøy Abbey was situated not far from Etne, where Erling Skakke had his farm and owned much land. His and his wife's donations must have been substantial, and Halsnøy came to be one of the richest monastic institutions in medieval Norway (Iversen 2013). From a miracle collection of St Cuthbert written by Reginald of Durham a few years later, we know that the prior of the Augustinian Wellow Abbey in Grimsby,

12 The literature on Archbishop Eystein and the influences of international networks on Nidaros Cathedral and intellectual culture is large and growing: see for example Johnsen 1939; Boje Mortesen & Mundal 2003; Andås 2004; King 2008; Ommundsen 2010; Duggan 2012; Harrington 2012; Norton 2012.

Lincolnshire, was in Norway at the time, probably to assist the foundation of Halsnøy and possibly providing canons and manuscripts for their work.[13] Although situated in a rural environment, Halsnøy Abbey most likely had close relations to cathedral chapters of Bergen and Stavanger. At the same time, it was responsible for teaching sons of the élite families in the district and for providing the more talented canons to the cathedral chapter, and probably had obligations concerning preaching and working on sermons. Archbishop Eystein himself founded an Augustinian priory in Trondheim, at Elgeseter, close to Nidaros cathedral. Elgeseter priory is first mentioned in relation to events in 1183, but must have been established earlier, perhaps in the late 1160s or early 1170s, and was modelled on St Victor. In the case of Elgeseter, there is no mention of Erling Skakke's or Kristin's financial support. This makes it more likely that they funded Halsnøy generously and prestigiously, as part of their alliance with Archbishop Eystein in 1163. Other monastic or canonical institutions, especially in the troublesome Viken, were probably not on their agenda.

Bishop Torstein of Oslo, for his part, may have been inspired by the introduction of the Augustinian canons at Halsnøy and Elgeseter, but seems more distant from the Anglo-French influence dominant in western Norway and at Nidaros cathedral. If it was indeed him that was mentioned as the 'bishop of a neighbouring realm' in Ulrich of Steinfeld's letter, he may have sought to support a different nuance within the wave of establishments of houses for regular canons.

Clerics living in a community following a rule had become popular in Europe already from the eighth century, following Chrodegang of Metz's regulations in the 750s and the revised version from Aachen in 816. In England, it was more often Benedictines who served at the cathedral chapters. Both these forms of communal life were introduced after

13 Reginald of Durham 1834: 108–109. The presence of the Augustinian prior of Wellow Abbey, founded by Henry I, was first discussed in Norway in Bull 1915. His publication also provided a drawing of the seal matrix of a prior of Wellow Abbey, depicting both St Augustine and St Olav of Norway. This seal matrix had shortly before been discovered by chance in a bay close to Stavanger by the painter Eilif Peterssen. To medievalists, Peterssen is best known as one the artists illustrating the costly publication of a translation into Norwegian of Snorri's *Heimskringla* (often called the 'Storm-edition') published in 1899, illustrations that have since become reproduced frequently. See also Nenseter 2003: 46 and Myking 2017. On the fragmentary remains of the library at Halsnøy, see Ommundsen 2013.

the Christianization of Scandinavia; the Rule of Aachen was introduced at Dalby at the end of the eleventh century, and later at the chapter of Lund with the additions of statutes formulated at the Marbach Abbey in Alsace. The Benedictines in the English tradition were introduced at Odense in Denmark, Selje in Norway (the predecessor as a diocese of Bergen), and possibly also Stavanger. However, with the reforms of the Aachen rule, older traditions, such as allowing private property, were seen as too lenient. The Augustinian rule became more widespread in the second half of the century, adapting to the new demands of clerical reform with celibacy and asceticism.

However, the Augustinian rule was spread in two versions, one stricter than the other. While the Victorines were canons who emphasised the combination of learning and contemplation, Norbert of Xanten was more inspired by the Cistercian ideal of stricter asceticism and a tighter balance of seclusion from society and the urban world of the schools on the one hand, and the call to preach and be an example for the laity on the other. In the case of Norbert himself, he first established the remote Prémontré Abbey, but on the other hand he also became a powerful prelate in the circle of the Emperor as the Archbishop of Magdeburg.

In the diocese of Oslo, covering most of the Viken region, there were no institutions like this in the 1160s. The only monastic foundations were two Benedictine nunneries, one in Oslo and the other at Gimsøy, close to Skien, and the Cistercian abbey at Hovedøya, a small island just south of Oslo. However, churches in the eastern part of Norway from the twelfth century generally show more traits in common with Danish and German architecture than with those in western and northern Norway.[14] It is a distinct possibility that Bishop Torstein had initially planned to have regular canons for the support of the cathedral chapter in Oslo. This would have had precedence especially in northern Germany, but also at Børglum where, as discussed above, there are reasons to believe that Premonstratensians were supposed to act as a balance to the influential, prestigious and rather independent Augustinian community in

14 There is the potential for more systematic studies of this variance, but important surveys include Solhaug 2001 and Ekroll 2004. See also Hauglid 2019 on Rygge church in Østfold, a church that seems to have been influenced by Vestervig church.

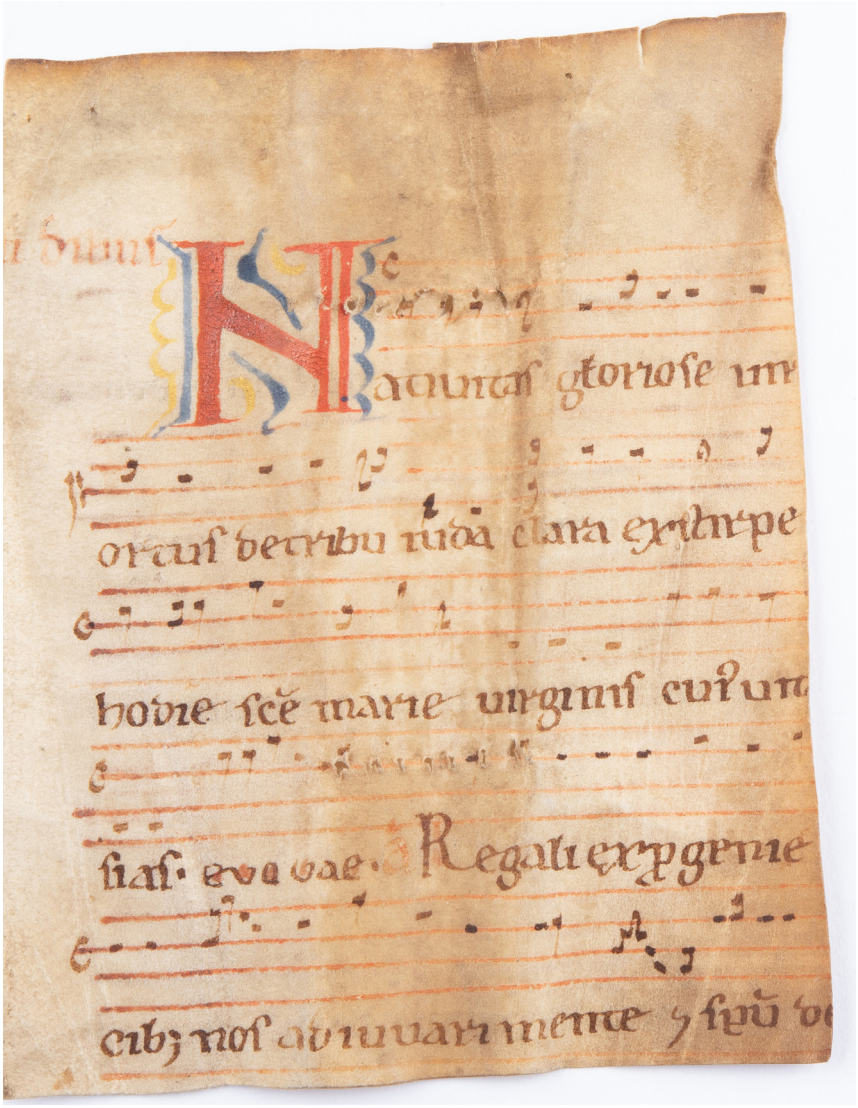

Figure 6. The invitatory of Mariae Conceptio. Fragment of a manuscript used in binding of account books from Tønsberg len. Photo: Mekonnen Wolday/Norwegian National Archives.

Vestervig. Bishop Torstein must also have been familiar with the new establishment of regular canons at Viborg in the 1140s, the neighbouring diocese to Børglum.

A community of regular canons in Viken would then counter-balance the influence of Erling Skakke in the region, and this could have served

the interests of Bishop Torstein of Oslo. There are at least indications that the bishop supported the unlucky pretender Olav Ugjæva in these unpredictable years. After his unfortunate attempt to kill Erling Skakke in 1167, Olav Ugjæva had to flee from Norway. He was welcomed in Aalborg, in the diocese of Viborg, not far from Børglum. The notion of him being a holy man witnesses to his popularity and possibly to initial plans of supporting a new candidate who could challenge the rule of Erling Skakke in these years. After Olav Ugjæva's premature death in 1169, Valdemar I might have come to terms with the fact that it would be hard to replace Erling Skakke. Kristin, Valdemar's cousin, seems crucial in finding a solution that both Erling and Valdemar could accept. Still, if Bishop Torstein had been in some way involved in the attempted assassination of Erling, this would explain both his murder in 1169 and why nothing seems to have been done to punish this 'cruel act', as Pope Alexander III calls it in his letter written at the end of that year.[15]

In the following centuries, St Olav's Abbey was remembered as the foundation of the episcopacy of Oslo.[16] However, the property of the abbey indicates that the backbone in its income came from a royal donation. The story of the Danish crusaders states that the income came from St Michael's church, which was located within the royal castle in Tønsberg. Some of the richest property that belonged to St Olav's Abbey previously belonged to royal farms.[17] This indicates that after the settlement between Valdemar and Erling Skakke in Ringsted in 1170, promoted by Kristin and the new Bishop of Oslo, Helge, Erling Skakke may have agreed to invest in the project and support its foundation economically.

15 *Latinske dokumenter*, no. 17, and Vandvik's comments on pp. 14–20 where he suggests that even Archbishop Eystein was ready to shift his support from King Magnus and Erling Skakke to Olav Ugjæva before the latter died in 1169. This is controversial and has been met with scepticism in later scholarship.

16 Bishop Hans Rev of Oslo claimed in 1533 that St Olav's Abbey in Tønsberg was founded by one of his 'ancestors', DN X 667.

17 St Olav's Abbey was by far the richest clerical institution in Tønsberg during the Middle Ages. The farms in its possession had a higher average income than other churches in Tønsberg, indicating wealthier donators. The main part of its property was in the central parts of Vestfold, some of it was in the vicinity of the royal farms, such as Sem just a few kilometres north of Tønsberg; see Wienberg 1991: 71–74; Eriksson 1993.

As Trond Svandal argues, he could have done something similar with the Hospitallers at Varna (see his article in this volume).

This combination of a house of Hospitallers and Premonstratensians was a parallel to the strategy of King Valdemar, under supervision of Archbishop Eskil of Lund. Although Viken was at that time recognised as part of the Norwegian kingdom, this combination was still very estranged from the church politics and clerical institutions supported by Archbishop Eystein of Nidaros. The negotiations between King Valdemar and Earl Erling Skakke were, as we remember, only a minor part of what was going on at the assembly at Ringsted in June 1170; the canonization of King Valdemar's father Knud Lavard and the crowning of his son Knud were of prime importance. At the same time, there were establishments of monastic and church institutions that served the expansion eastwards into the Baltic Sea. Archbishop Eskil had supported the establishment of many monasteries of several orders in Denmark since his episcopacy in Roskilde in the 1130s. Already in 1159 or 1160 Peter of Celle complimented Eskil for his efforts to multiply the brethren of the Cistercians and Premonstratensians.[18] The first of the Premonstratensian houses he promoted was probably that of the Church of the St Trinitatis and St Salvator in Lund, perhaps as early as in the mid-1140s.[19] The Premonstratensian Tommarp Abbey in eastern Scania was a royal estate, to which Archbishop Eskil added a donation, and it received its foundation letter from Pope Hadrian IV in 1155. Then Öved and Vä were founded in the following years – the latter, especially, had been an important royal estate with which Bishop Simon of Odense had been involved around 1160.[20] Presumably in response to the tension between Valdemar, who had supported Victor IV, and Eskil, who went into exile because he had refused to abandon his support to Alexander III, these donations and privileges to the Premonstratensian foundations were not confirmed until the assembly of 1170, maybe as a sign of reconciliation between king and church.[21]

18 Peter of Celle, *The Letters*, no. 12, p. 32. On the difficulties of dating the letter precisely, see Haseldine's discussion at pp. 703–704.

19 Cinthio 2002: 146–159. The Premonstratensians in Lund probably moved out of Lund at the end of the century.

20 For an overview of the Premonstratensians in Scania, see Wallin 1989.

21 For the royal donation to Vä in 1170, see Skyum-Nielsen 1952.

Figure 7. Fragment of a ram, Östra Tommarps Church, late twelfth century. Photo: Kulturmiljöbild, Riksantikvarieämbetet/Wikicommons.

The four Scanian abbeys seem initially to have been somewhat distanced from the abbeys around Kattegat and Viken: Børglum, Tønsberg, and later Dragsmark. This group of western and northern abbeys even seems to have included Fearn Abbey in Scotland, that later was part of the Danish-Norwegian province, or *circaria*. However, the events in 1170 would still have been inspiration for Bishop Helge of Oslo and Erling Skakke to work for the foundation of a Premonstratensian Abbey in Tønsberg (cf. Johnsen 1976: 521). Although it is impossible to be certain about this, the most likely scenario is that St Olav's Abbey in Tønsberg was planned in the late 1160s by Bishop Torstein of Oslo, but that after he was killed the project was taken on by, and the abbey eventually founded by, Erling Skakke in cooperation with Bishop Helge in the early 1170s. However, the purpose would then have changed; from being planned as a community of regular canons supporting the cathedral chapter in Norway, it now became a companion of the Knights Hospitaller at Varna on the eastern side of the Oslo Fjord.

The introduction of the Premonstratensians and Hospitallers in Viken shortly after 1170 would have been associated with the pan-Scandinavian crusading project. Archbishop Eskil seems to have been the architect

behind this project, but both Archbishop Stefan of Uppsala and Bishop Helge of Oslo must have been well informed about this. Pope Alexander III seems initially to have perceived Eskil's plans more as evangelizing than as a military venture, but in a series of letters written to Scandinavian rulers in September 1171 or 1172 he gave his full support to a Baltic crusade, authorizing penitential warfare against the cruel Estonians and other heathens (Fonnesberg-Schmitt 2012: 355–359). In this Baltic context, the relationship of the Hospitallers to Premonstratensians in Denmark and Viken can be compared to the one the Templars had to the Cistercians in Champagne and Burgundy.[22]

The Premonstratensians were, despite the deeply charismatic and highly influential Cistercian Bernard of Clairvaux, more efficient and trained for preaching – including in the context of the crusades. When Bernard was asked to send some Cistercians to the Holy Land, he refused. Instead, he sent Premonstratensian canons to the Holy Land, in the 1130s, with a letter of recommendation to Queen Melisinde of Jerusalem. The canons founded abbeys at two important sites, St Habacuc in Lydda and St Samuel on Mount Joy (Slack 1991–92; Hiestand 1995). All over Europe, numerous Premonstratensian abbeys were named after sites in the Holy Land, and the Order's ordinal indicates that the offices held during the Holy Week were to imitate those performed in the Holy Sepulchre. Their white habit itself, although clearly inspired by the Cistercians, was interpreted as a reminder of the most joyous day in Christianity; this was in imitation of the angel robed in white at the Holy Sepulchre on Easter Sunday, who told the visiting women that Christ was no longer there but had risen from the dead.[23]

Being associated to the world of withdrawal and practice of virtue, and at the same time having the obligations to edify the laity through words and the example of their conduct, they joined the old division of the active and contemplative lives. Bishop Anselm of Havelberg, Norbert of Xanten's

22 See Schenk 2012: 85–109. This included not only the spiritual and religious boost the Templars received from Bernard of Clairvaux's praise in *De laude novae militae*, but also the many familial networks between the houses of the two orders.

23 Petit 2011: 89–102. On the white habit of the order, Petit cites Adam of Scot (Abbot of Dryburgh 1184–89), *De ordine et habitu canonicorum Praemonstratensium* (pp. 101–102), and Zachary of Besançon, *De concordia evangelistarum* (p. 115).

pupil, stated in his *Apologetic Letter*, written in 1138, that the perceived dichotomy between Martha, representing the secular clergy who worked in the world, and Mary, representing monks who lived in constant prayer and devotion to the Lord, was false. Instead, the Premonstratensians imitated Christ who edified both Martha and Mary.[24] The process of personal conversion, from heathen or Jew to Christian, or the carnal into the spiritual, of sinner to saved, clearly appealed to twelfth-century nobility in the age of the crusades.[25]

This emphasis on preaching and edifying contributed to the popularity of Premonstratensian canons during the northern crusades. Anselm of Havelberg was appointed the papal legate during the Wendish Crusade in 1147 (Lees 1998: 70–97). Up to the early thirteenth century, when Gervase of Prémontré, abbot-general 1209–20, was one of the most important preachers of the Fifth Crusade, the Premonstratensians were central promoters for the expansion of Christianity (Slack 2001: 156–166).

Erling Skakke himself was closely familiar to crusading and penitential warfare. Not only had he fought against Muslims on his way to the Holy Land in the early 1150s, but he also used several elements of crusading rhetoric and practiced penitential warfare in his encounters with rivals and pretenders. During his battle against Sigurd of Rør outside Tønsberg in 1163, for example, Erling Skakke had his warriors make confession, receive communion and sing *Kyrie eleison* as they approached the enemy army. During their struggles against Sverre Sigurdsson towards the end of the 1170s, Erling Skakke and Archbishop Eystein promoted the idea that those who died in battle against Sverre would become martyrs.

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24 Anselm's text is translated in *Norbert and Norbertine Spirituality*; see especially pp. 53–58. On the interpretations of the story of the different way Mary and Martha served Christ, see Constable 1995.

25 On the popularity of the Premonstratensians among the crusading nobility in northern France and Flanders, especially in the Coucy family, Slack 2001. On the new spirituality of the regular canons, although not distinguishing the Premonstratensian from other strands of this movement, see Bynum 1979 and 1982: 22–58. On the emphasis on, and concept of, conversion in the alleged autobiography of Herman the Jew, a complex text written at the Cappenberg Abbey, see Schmitt 2010. Both the concept of conversion and the mixture of active and contemplative life seem heavily influenced by Bernard of Clairvaux's language of mixed beings.

This adaptation of holy warfare to the internal struggles within Norway was closely linked to the idea that the king was a knight of the perpetual king of Norway, the martyred St Olav. Thus, at the crowing and anointment of Magnus Erlingsson, the young king was termed a *miles Olavi*. St Olav was increasingly portrait as a crusader saint from the 1140s onwards, when he was said to have been particularly helpful in battles against heathens or other enemies opposing those who fought for the sake of the martyr king of Norway. This militarized aspect of the cult of St Olav was especially important among Scandinavians who served in the Varangian guard of the Byzantine Emperor, and homecoming Varangians may have supported its integration into the discourse of royal authority and warfare.[26] Indeed, as Kersti Markus has argued, there was a rapidly increasing number of churches dedicated to St Olav built in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century in the frontier regions of the eastward expansion initiated by Archbishop Eskil in 1170 (Markus 2017; 2020).

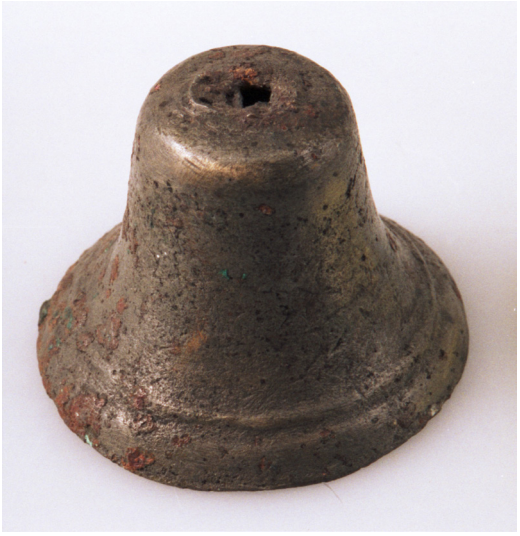

Figure 8. A small bell found within the ruins of St Olav's Abbey Church. Photo: Eirik Irgens Johnsen/KHM, CC BY-SA 4.0.

26 On crusading ideas in the internal wars of Norway in the twelfth century, see the discussion and references in Bandlien 2021.

The focus of the Danish expansion, as well as in the letters of Pope Alexander III in the early 1170s, was Estonia. In the mid-1160s a certain Fulk, a monk in Peter of Celle's monastery in Reims, was ordained as the Bishop of Estonia by Archbishop Eskil, who at the time was living in exile. Other references to Estonians at this time indicate that Norwegians were involved in this region too. In the Norwegian sources, Estonia was associated with a dangerous and wild world. In *Historia Norwegie*, a short chronicle probably written in Trondheim shortly after the establishment of the archbishopric of Nidaros in the mid-twelfth century, the Baltics, and especially Estonia, was a region full of pirates that imprisoned and enslaved Christians.[27] At the same time, there are signs of more peaceful relations linked to trade, even before 1170. The area was heavily visited by Scandinavians from the Viking Age, a traffic that continued also in the shadow of the sharpening of confessional borders (Jonuks & Kurisoo 2013).

When Alexander III sought to support Bishop Fulk's mission to Estonia, he probably knew of such Norwegian-Baltic relations. He sent a letter to Archbishop Eystein, requiring him to recruit the Estonian Nicholas to serve as an interpreter for Fulk. Nicholas was at the time a monk in a monastery in Norway, probably the Benedictine Abbey in Stavanger. Whether or not he ever met Fulk and returned to Estonia is uncertain.[28] In the miracle collection of St Olav, written by Archbishop Eystein in the 1160s and 1170s, a story is included of two young Estonians who visited Nidaros cathedral as pilgrims. They told about the many miracles performed by St Olav in their homeland, and also how he had converted the father of one of them, a stern heathen who had opposed Christianity for a

27 *Historia Norwegie*, ch. 17, see also Snorri, *Heimskringla: Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, chs. 6–8.

28 Peter of Celle, *Letters*, no. 96, pp. 398–400 (recommendation of Fulk to Archbishop Eskil of Lund); no. 181, pp. 686–688 (recommendation of Fulk to King Knut Eriksson of Sweden (1167–1196) and Archbishop Stefan of Uppsala (1164–1185)). Archbishop Stefan had been to the curia as a legate in 1169 and would have had the opportunity to meet Fulk on his return, during his stay at the assembly in Ringsted. The sources do not reveal if Fulk ever went to Estonia. He still seems to have had the status of a missionary bishop around 1180, visiting Peter of Celle in Reims and bringing letters to Archbishop Absalon of Lund (1178–1201); *Letters*, no. 104, see also Nyberg 1998: 60–61. Fulk must have travelled to Denmark for the first time no later than the autumn 1173, see discussion by Haseldine in his edition of Peter of Celle, *Letters*, pp. 719–720. The literature on Fulk (and Nicholas) is extensive as he is mentioned in most accounts of the Northern crusades – see for instance Christianson 1997; Bysted et al. 2012; Selart 2015: 50–52.

long time (Jiroušková 2014, II: 70–71; *A History of Norway*, transl. Kunin, pp. 67–69). The message of the miracle was clearly that St Olav was the most effective saint in Estonia.

Neither Erling Skakke nor his son King Magnus ever joined an expedition to the Baltics. The son of Valdemar I, Knud VI of Denmark (*r.* 1182–1202), did not lead an expedition to Estonia until 1197, after forcing the Wends to submit to Danish rule. Only with Knud VI's brother and successor, Valdemar II (*r.* 1202–1241), in the early thirteenth century, was there a successful attempt to conquer Estonia. However, there was a constant focus on fighting off Estonian pirates, and in 1184 an association of Danish town dwellers organized an expedition against Estonia. Sometime in the mid-1180s, perhaps accompanying this Danish fleet, a Norwegian also went on a military expedition to Estonia. This was Eirik Sigurdsson, allegedly a half-brother of the kings Håkon Herdebrei (*r.* 1157–1161 (årspennene veksler her, men det bør være med århundre også for konsekvens skyld)) and Sverre Sigurdsson (*r.* 1177–1202).

Eirik Sigurdsson had, in his youth, made a career as a member of the Varangian guard, and returned to Norway in 1181 with a notable following. He had been in the service of Emperor Manuel Komnenus (*r.* 1143–1180) and probably in the late 1170s made a visit to the Holy Land, including the main sites in Jerusalem. Returning to Norway, he claimed to be the son of King Sigurd Munn ('the Mouth', *r.* 1136–1155). According to *Sverris saga* (ch. 59), Eirik had proved this when he submerged himself in the River Jordan with a candle in his hand; it was still burning when he rose from the water. Even though Eirik had several men with him who could testify to this miracle, King Sverre made him undergo an ordeal. He passed the test, and Sverre reluctantly accepted him as his brother on condition that he would not make a bid to be accepted as a king. Still, it must have been obvious for anyone that Eirik, his son and any future offspring were all potential pretenders in the future.[29]

29 A similar agreement had been made when Harald Gille (*r.* 1130–1136) had arrived from the British Isles in the late 1120s and by an ordeal proved he was the half-brother of Sigurd the Crusader (d. 1130). Harald promised not to strive for kingship after Sigurd's death, but was hailed as a king at Haugar, the thing assembly in Tønsberg, in 1130. This challenge to the reign of Magnus, son of Sigurd the Crusader, who was hailed as king at an assembly in Oslo at the same time, ignited the so-called civil wars in Norway.

Sverre continued to be suspicious of his half-brother and must have felt threatened when, in 1185, Eirik asked to have a share of the kingdom. Sverre flatly refused the request, and Eirik instead went east with five ships and many men to raid in heathen lands. They won several battles in the Baltic Sea region, looting heathens in Viek in Estonia, as well as looting Saxon traders on Gotland. This successful journey made it possible for Eirik to return to Norway in 1188 with eleven ships. His fleet was filled with experienced warriors, and his large booty could be distributed as gifts to recruit new supporters. Sverre at first gave in; he gave Eirik the title of earl and put him in charge of Viken. Eirik's main base from 1188 seems to have been the fortress on Slottsfjellet ('Castle Hill') in Tønsberg (*Sverris saga*, ch. 113). It was here, in 1190, that he and his family became sick and died. There were rumours that this was an assassination instigated by Sverre, caused by the fear that Eirik would make Tønsberg his personal stronghold in order to challenge King Sverre's power. It has been suggested that Eirik supported the faction later known as the Baglar ('the Croziers'), led by Bishop Nikolas of Oslo against Sverre. If this is the case, being a generous benefactor to the Premonstratensian Abbey, the most important preachers to the laity in Viken, would have been strategically important for Eirik's purposes. After Eirik and his family were buried in St Olav's in Tønsberg, the Premonstratensian Abbey functioned as a royal mausoleum for the Baglar until 1217.[30] The Baglar supported pretenders descending from Magnus Erlingsson, whom Sverre had killed in battle in 1184, and sought support from the Danish kings with such zeal that Valdemar II was welcomed to Tønsberg in 1204. Even so, the Premonstratensian author of *Profectione*, writing c. 1200, included a fairly positive portrait of King Sverre (see Skovgaard-Petersen in this volume). Eirik Sigurdsson's burial in St Olav's Abbey still points to the important role of the Premonstratensians in these struggles between pretenders, and between the Church in Viken and King Sverre.

30 Vandvik 1958, 512–513. Vandvik discusses some papal letters that probably refer to Earl Eirik. Most notable is a letter indicating that he had been responsible for having killed a priest. Pope Clement III (1187–1191) still spoke of Eirik with considerable respect. He received merely a lenient punishment, at the same time as Clement III reacted harshly to Norwegian clerics for acting like laymen, see *Latinske dokument*, nos. 25–26. Vandvik concluded that Eirik had the favour of the pope because from 1188 he, Eirik, was secretly allied to the Croziers in Viken.

The round church and the intellectual networks between Tønsberg, Paris and London

The Premonstratensians in Scandinavia had, in contrast to, for example, the Cistercians, no distinct architectural programme for their churches. At most, the distinguishing feature of the Premonstratensian churches in Scandinavia, such as in Vä, Lund and Børglum, is that they show signs of being prestigious buildings with wealthy donors (Lorenzen 1928). St Olav's Church fits this pattern in that it must have had ambitious founder(s), who seem to have been almost obsessed with the circle shape. There is thus the possibility that the planning of the church's structure may be separate from the establishment of an abbey of regular canons. Whether it is older or younger than the abbey cannot be established for certain from either archaeological or written evidence, but there are no indications that the Premonstratensians used another church when they settled in Tønsberg. It is also difficult to place it chronologically within the Scandinavian branch of the round church movement, since it differs in size and structure from those in Sweden and Denmark – it is twice as large as the second largest round church in Scandinavia, and it is the only one with three circles, with a sacristy in the shape of a semi-circle added later.

It seems most likely that the church was projected before the abbey was founded and then fitted into it in the 1170s. In this case, the building of the church would have been initiated in the 1160s. In this section I will discuss the possibility that inspiration came from contemporary round churches elsewhere in Europe, in particular the Temple Church in England built between 1158 and 1161 (Wilson 2010: 19–21). To this can be added other significant churches of the military orders, such as those of the Templars in Paris from the late 1140s, and of the Hospitallers in London from around 1150, both with a circular nave. From the hypothesis that the round church was constructed in the years before the establishment of the abbey in the early 1170s, possible founders that were active in Tønsberg, showed interest in the crusades, and were part of international networks in the late 1150s and 1160s, will be considered.

In Scandinavia, around thirty round churches were built (see Wienberg in this volume). Charters or narrative sources do not, however, reveal a

precise date for any of them, nor mention names of the founders, and for some their early history is merely known through excavations. However, most of them seem to be from a relatively confined timeframe, most from the latter half of the twelfth century, and some from the early thirteenth century.

For the rather extensive group of Danish churches, however, we have some clues to go on with respect to dating and founders.[31] A cluster of these round churches reveal a network of founders in the circle around Valdemar I and Archbishop Absalon. An inscription on two tablets on the wall of the round church of Bjernede, some 40 kilometres southwest of Roskilde, states that Ebbe Skjalmsen raised a church together with his wife Ragnhild, and that his son Sune had a church built in stone. This may indicate that Ebbe Skjalmsen (d. 1151) built a wooden church at the site in the 1140s, and his son Sune Ebbesen (d. 1186) replaced it with the round church in stone, presumably around 1170. At Pedersborg, a few kilometres southwest of Bjernede, there was another round church, possibly erected a few years before Sune Ebbesen's church. Of this round church only the ruins are visible, but as the establishment of Pedersborg itself is associated with the magnate Peder Thorstensen (d. 1175), it can be assumed that he was the founder of the church as well. The round churches at Bjernede and Pedersborg are thus roughly contemporary and also comparable in their dimensions.

Peder Thorstensen was married to Cecilia, the daughter of Sune Ebbesen. His grandson Bishop Peder Vognsen of Aarhus (d. 1204) is associated with a third round church, at Thorsager, that has tentatively been dated to the 1190s. An even more ambitious church, with certain similarities with Bjernede, Pedersborg and Thorsager, and perhaps by the same master-builder as the latter, is the Church of Our Lady at Kalundborg. This church is conventionally dated to the 1190s or shortly after 1200. It has a remarkable and unique structure, with five towers surrounding the round nave, giving an impression of a circled town, an image of Jerusalem. This church was probably initiated by Esbern

31 On this subject, see Nilsson 1994; Wienberg 2017; Markus 2019, as well as Wienberg's article in this volume.

Snare (d. 1204), and it might have been completed after his death by his daughter Ingeborg and her husband Peder Strangesen (Roesdahl & Sass Jensen 2014).

These patrons of round churches were, then, in some cases, and were central members of the Danish élite supporting King Valdemar I, his son Knud VI, and his cousin, Archbishop Absalon of Lund. Many of them had also taken part in, or were associated with, the crusades. Ebbe Skjalmsen's father, Skjalm Hvide (d. 1113), had been a close advisor of King Erik Ejegod, who died on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1103. Skjalm was the foster-father to King Erik's son Knud Lavard, who was killed in 1131 and canonized and translated at Ringsted in 1170. Ebbe Skjalmsen was the brother of Asser Rig, who in turn was the foster-father of Knud Lavard's son Valdemar, and the father of Absalon (d. 1201), bishop of Roskilde and archbishop of Lund. Another son of Asser Rig was Esbern Snare, one of King Valdemar I's closest advisors and the one who instigated the Danish crusade as told in the chronicle *Profectio Danorum* (see Skovgaard-Petersen in this volume). Sune Ebbesen's sons had important offices in the late twelfth century. Anders Sunesen (d. 1228) was the successor to Absalon as Archbishop of Lund, and later went to Estonia. Peder Sunesen (d. 1214) was a student at St Geneviève in Paris, a friend of the important canonist Stephen of Tournai (d. 1203), and from 1191 the bishop of Roskilde. Ebbe Sunesen (d. 1208) was an important landowner and benefactor of the Augustinians at Æbelholt Abbey, as well as of the Cistercian Abbey at Sorø where the family had their mausoleum.

This family and its network that extended not only into the Danish royal family and the Church, but also to European intellectuals, was clearly a part of the round church movement, but even they built churches only half the size of St Olav's in Tønsberg. Chronologically, the round church in Tønsberg was one of the earliest in Scandinavia, and even though the connections between Viken and Denmark were close (albeit complicated) in the 1150s and 1160s (Esbern Snare, for instance, spent some time as a hostage in Tønsberg during the struggles between Erling Skakke and Valdemar I in the 1160s), the ambitions and resources spent on the Tønsberg church could only be matched by the later Kalundborg.

The inspiration must have come from somewhere outside Scandinavia, and the most comparable round church built at around 1160 was the Temple Church in London.

This chronology seems again to point to the most powerful and internationally aspiring man in Norway at the time, the regent and former crusader Erling Skakke. However, we shall explore some alternatives. Jes Wienberg (2017) points out that round churches were not necessarily built to commemorate a visit to the Holy Land, but rather as replacements for a journey to Jerusalem. This might be someone who had intended to – perhaps even taken a vow to – participate in a pilgrimage or crusade, but for some reason had been barred from doing so, and then had spent what it would have cost to take part in such a venture to invest in local devotion to the Holy Land instead. Perhaps some people in their network had gone without them, or they had ancestors whose travels could be commemorated posthumously in this way.

Accordingly, can we find anyone in Tønsberg that could fit this description and at the same time have links to the Temple Church in London? Again, the sources are scarce and often fragmentary, but there are some candidates that stick out. Among them are the members of the most powerful family in Viken, residing at Bratsberg close to the town Skien: According to the sagas, the brothers Vatnorm (or just Orm) Dagsson and Gregorius Dagsson, who were active in Viken and Tønsberg from the late 1130s to the 1150s. Vatnorm and Gregorius, the most famous and powerful of the two until his death in 1161, were the sons of Dag Eilivsson. Dag is depicted in the sagas as one of the bravest warriors in King Magnus Bareleg's fatal expedition to Ireland in 1102–1103. He was married to Ragnhild, daughter of the wealthy Skofte Ogmundsson from Giske in Western Norway. Skofte is the first known crusader from Norway, travelling with his three sons to the Holy Land in 1101; all of them perishing during the journey. Although not explicitly stated in the sources, it is assumed that Dag Eilivsson was one of the followers of King Sigurd Magnusson the Crusader's journey to the Holy Land a few years later. He founded a Benedictine nunnery at Gimsøy, close to Bratsberg, where Dag and Ragnhild's daughter Baugeid was an abbess and where Gregorius was buried in 1161. Dag and Ragnhild were presumably also the patrons of

the church at Kapitelberget in Skien. This church is one of the very few containing a crypt in Norway (the other is the contemporary monastery church of Munkeliv in Bergen, built by King Øystein, brother of Sigurd the Crusader), and might have been inspired by the larger crypt beneath Lund Cathedral, consecrated in 1123.

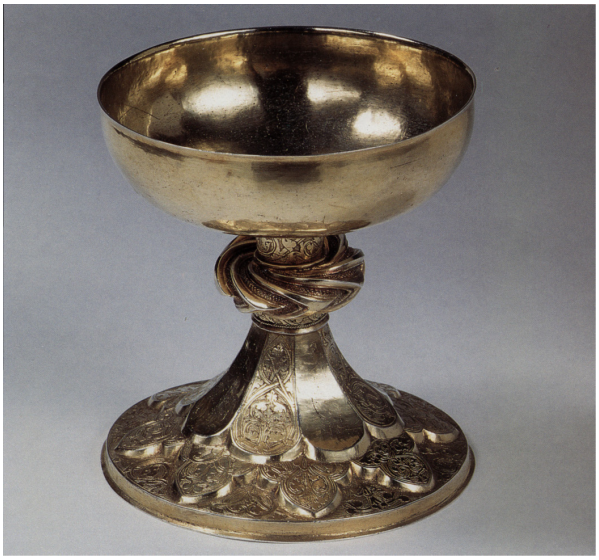

Figure 9. Chalice from Dragsmark Abbey, Bohuslän. The chalice shows affinities to the work of Nicholas of Hereford, a German working in England, from the first half of the thirteenth century. It might have been a gift from the founder of the abbey, King Håkon IV Håkonsson (*r.* 1217–1263). Photo: B. Andersson/Bohusläns museum.

According to the kings' sagas, Vatnorm was a royal magistrate in Tønsberg from the late 1130s, leading its defence and making certain that the townspeople prepared ships and crew for maritime warfare (Snorri, *Heimskringla: Haraldssona saga*, ch. 5). Vatnorm is hardly depicted as a valiant warrior in the sagas, while his brother Gregorius is said to have been a bit too heroic; acting on impulse and notions of glorious honour rather than on the basis of strategic thinking (Ciklamini 1978). Gregorius was, along with his later opponent Erling Skakke, an important advisor and leader in the retinue of King Inge Haraldsson during the 1150s and is said to have often dwelled in Tønsberg, where he and his family were substantial property owners. Ragnhild, Skofte Ogmundsson's daughter,

herself owned a great deal of property in Tønsberg after becoming a widow when Dag Eilivsson died.

The brothers tick several of the boxes for a person we might expect to build the round church: great wealth, members of a respected and ambitious family with a strong position in Viken, associated to royal power, substantial property in Tønsberg, associated with the foundation of monastic communities, and potentially devoted to the memory of family members who had previously participated in expeditions to the Holy Land, or who wished to compensate for not going themselves. Moreover, they could be motivated by a wish to overshadow their rival Erling Skakke, who had actually gone on a crusade in the early 1150s. However, the brothers had no obvious link to England, and both were dead before the Temple Church was erected and would have made any impact on the local architecture. The brothers are not known to have had any children who might have erected the church to their memory. On the other hand, their sister Abbess Baugeid and their mother Ragnhild, in the lack of any immediate descendants, may have used their wealth to make a monument of the family in Tønsberg, although this must remain a vague possibility.[32]

Another candidate, a contemporary of the Bratsberg family, is Solmund Sigurdsson, the *gjaldker* (stewart) in Tønsberg in the early and mid-twelfth century. Solmund's family was an important and wealthy one, based in Agder in the southern part of Norway. His father had served King Magnus Bareleg on his expeditions to the British Isles until he was killed during a campaign at Anglesey in 1099. Solmund was a relative of Kale Kolsson, whose father was from Agder and mother was closely related to the earls of Orkney. In the 1120s and early 1130s, Kale is said to have traded in England, especially in Grimsby, almost every summer while spending the winter with Solmund (*Orkneyinga saga*, ch. 58; also Johnsen 1929: 83). In 1135 Solmund joined Kale, now having changed his name to Ragnvald, to the Orkneys and also supported Ragnvald's successful battle for winning the earldom. Later, Solmund is said to be among

32 Most of the family perished during the struggle against Håkon Herdebrei in the years around 1160, although a sister of Baugeid and Gregorius was married to the important Austrått family near Trondheim and had many descendants. The rich family farm Bratsberg became the property of Gimsøy Abbey.

the most important men in Viken, although few details about his family and marriage can be found in the sources. During Ragnvald's campaigns on his way to the Holy Land in the early 1150s, Ragnvald recalled the yule-feasts with Solmund and contrasts these to the fighting he takes part in on this venture (*Orkneyinga saga*, ch. 87).

Solmund is also interesting for another reason: he has been identified as being identical with a man named Salomon (plausibly a Latinized version of Solmund) mentioned in a letter from the sister of Abbot Ernis (*aka* Hervé/Ervis) of St Victor in Paris. This letter was written in Norway during the years 1161–1172 (when Ernis was in office) and implies that she had married a Norwegian nobleman.[33] Ernis's sister names herself only as 'G.' (although a copyist of the letter in the seventeenth century, Jean de Thoulouse, named her Germunda), and she clearly had at least one adult son, named Geirmund (or Germundus) when writing the letter. Thus, she most likely had married a Norwegian in the late 1130s or early 1140s. In her letter she offers Ernis greetings from Salomon, who wants to thank Ernis for all his help, presumably during his travels abroad. The purpose of the letter was twofold. First, in exchange for the gifts brought by the messenger, skin from a polar bear, the tooth of a narwhale, and two gilded silver spoons, she asked to have cinnamon and carnation in return. Second, she had heard that there were many Norwegians who said they had been sent to St Victor by her husband, and who requested Ernis's hospitality, but she maintained that she and her husband had sent only two, Salomon and John. For the future, G. would like to agree on a secret sign that those men genuinely sent from her and her husband could show to Ernis.[34]

In another letter, probably written after the previously mentioned letter of G., her son Geirmund writes to his uncle Ernis. He confirms that he has arrived safely back in Norway and expresses his longing to be back in Paris. However, there was so much pillaging and so many killings in Norway at the time that he hesitated to set out for a long journey.[35]

33 Ernis's last years, however, were deeply troubled; see Duggan 1994. This is not reflected in the letters, so a tentative dating of the Norwegian letters would be at least before 1170.

34 The letter is edited in Johnsen 1939: 105–106, but this will be superseded in the forthcoming vol. 20 of *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*.

35 Johnsen 1939: 106; see also the excerpt from St Victor's obituary where the canon with the rare name Germundus is included, something that indicates that Ernis's nephew came to Paris after all.

This situation fits the period of the most intense rivalry between Erling Skakke and Valdemar, the uprising of Olav Ugjæva in 1165–69, and the killing of the bishop of Oslo.

These letters indicate not only that Ernis had familial relations in Norway, but also that the traffic back and forth to St Victor was extensive. We know from other letters that Eystein of Nidaros visited the abbey at least once, in 1160/61, and from a letter of Thomas Becket we learn that Eystein's envoys to Rome were welcomed there in 1169.[36]

If indeed Salomon was the Norwegian husband of G. and father of Geirmund, as has been suggested, the only person featuring in the written sources with a similar name that fits the profile is Solmund, the steward in Tønsberg.[37] The close contact Ernis seems to have established with Solmund is in any case interesting for our discussion, since Ernis was most likely an Englishman. Although he had become a student at St Victor at least from 1139, he may have met Solmund in England during the latter's visit to Grimsby and Lincolnshire in 1135, where the important – at least in a Norwegian context, since it was associated with the foundation of Halsnøy Abbey in 1163 – Wellow Abbey was situated.

Furthermore, Ernis was most likely a relative of Lawrence of Westminster; at least this is indicated in how he addresses Lawrence in his letters.[38] Lawrence had also been a student at St Victor and had even transcribed some of Hugh of St Victor's sermons. From 1158, however, he moved back to England and was Abbot of Westminster until his death between 1173 and 1175 (Münster-Swendsen 2014a: 43–47). Lawrence was

36 See Johnsen 1939; Gunnes 1996; DN XIX 46. At least two successors of Archbishop Eystein, Eirik and Tore, studied in St Victor at this time. Archbishop Eskil of Lund was part of the network of Ernis, but they had a fallout when a huge deposit Eskil had made in St Victor turned out to have vanished when he reclaimed it; see the valuable study by Münster-Swendsen 2014b. It could be added to her study that Archbishop Eystein – or some of the Norwegian students – seems to have deposited books at the abbey, which between 1161 and 1168 were pawned at the request of Abbot Roger of St Euverte in Orléans to buy supplies, seemingly without Archbishop Eystein's knowledge. This did not scare off Norwegian clerics and bishops from using St Victor as a financial intermediator; e.g. Archbishop Guttorm of Nidaros deposited papal taxes in St Victor in 1220; see Johnsen 1939: 107.

37 See the note in Johnsen 1996: 56. I am grateful to Synnøve Myking who made me aware of this passage.

38 Münster-Swendsen 2014b: 91, n 2. Duggan 1994: 664–665, n 8, also points to this relationship, but suggests that both Ernis and Lawrence were from Normandy and thus French-speaking.

an essential force behind the canonization of Edward the Confessor, and he is said to have procured the translation on 13th October 1163. The Cistercian Aelred of Rievaulx was also present and presented a new *vita* of the royal saint. Aelred stated in his preface that he had been asked to write this work by his relative Lawrence of Westminster.[39] Also present in Westminster was Achard, either an Englishman or a Norman, who was the second abbot of St Victor from 1155 until he resigned in 1161. It was Achard with whom Archbishop Eystein had made acquaintance during his visit in 1160/61. Achard remained active after his resignation; he was elected bishop of Avranches in 1161, was the godfather of Henry II's daughter Eleanor, born in 1162, and founded the Premonstratensian Abbey of La Lucerne in 1164. This church was where he was buried in 1172, rather than in the Cathedral of Avranches, where Henry II had made his penance for the murder of Thomas Becket shortly before Achard's death.

Lawrence of Westminster had no formal role in the foundation of the Temple Church. The patron of the New Temple was Robert de Beaumont, Earl of Leicester, the justiciar of Henry II and the regent during the king's absence from London. Robert de Beaumont regularly presided over the Exchequer in Westminster Hall, and was bound to have visited the neighbouring Abbey on occasions. Thus, it is plausible to assume that Lawrence was somehow involved in the planning and execution of the round church of the Templars in London (Wilson 2010: 23; Crouch 1986: 91).

This familial, intellectual and economical network of St Victor – Westminster – Tønsberg is only alluded to in the sources, and much remains uncertain. However, there were Norwegian envoys to Henry II in 1163, possibly in association with the consecration of the Temple Church. There are also the handicraft and artisan networks traceable in architecture: workshops and materials that connected northern France, London and Norway. The piers of the Temple Church, for instance, point to the influence from the Premonstratensian abbey church of Dommartin near Amiens, built 1153 to 1163, while its capitals probably came from, or were heavily influenced by, Tournai workshops. There are similarities to the

39 Scholz 1961. The familial relationship between Lawrence and Aelred is also mentioned by the latter's biographer Walter Daniel, although perhaps based on the preface in the *vita*.

new east arm added to York Minster around 1160, the waterleaf in the decoration of capitals is reminiscent of those found at Ripon Minster, as well as the Augustine Priory of Bridlington, east of York. Achard of St Victor is associated with the latter site, while the works made at Nidaros cathedral under Archbishop Eystein show a relationship to Tournai, York and Ripon.[40]

There is also ample evidence of the numerous visits by Norwegian envoys to Henry II during these years, explicitly mentioned in 1155–56, 1158–59, and in 1162–63 (DN XIX 33, 34, 36, 40). Equally relevant in the case of Solmund and G., are the extensive trade relations between England and Norway at the time. Henry II regulated the apparently extensive trade centred on Grimsby, a town also Solmund knew well from his visits. The records of trade at this time, however, are restricted to luxury items, especially hawks and gyrfalcons (e.g. DN XIX 32, 37, 41, 42). The gifts of G. to her brother at St Victor did not include birds for hunting, but other luxury items from the Arctic areas. This is the kind of trade Solmund of Tønsberg and G. most likely were involved in, and these were items they could invest in building networks and prestige with the continent.

This makes the patronage of G. and her husband, who, as we have seen, was possibly Solmund Sigurdsson, of the round church at least plausible. They had the connections, and as G. was not only the sister of Ernis of St Victor but also related to Lawrence of Westminster (and thus also of Aelred of Rievaulx) she was a focal point in the communication between important nodes of intellectual, economic and political exchange in northern Europe. However, the question remains as to whether G. and her husband were able to finance such an ambitious task. For this purpose, the support of the Bratsberg family and not least of Erling Skakke may have been necessary to make the project a reality. With the rotunda of Nidaros being built at about the same time, the architectural know-how of circular churches must have been available in Norway.

40 King 2008; Wilson 2010. To this can be added a reference to an English father and son going to Norway to seek work in Reginald of Durham 1847: 349–350. Their line of work is not specified, but the demand for experienced workers who could build in stone must have been very high during the twelfth century.

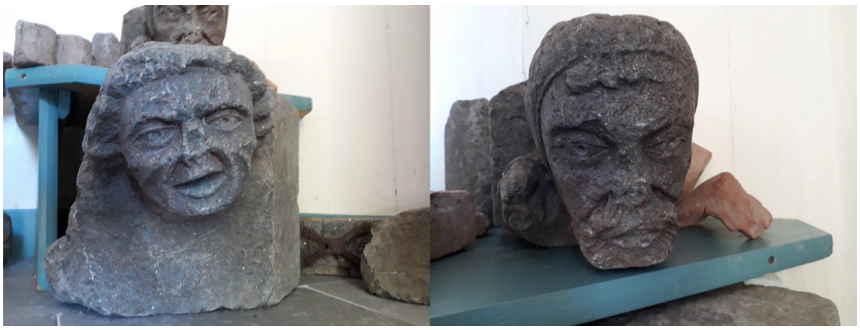

Figure 10. Two stone faces from Dragsmark Abbey Church. Photo: Kristina Lindholm/Bohusläns museum.

Concluding remarks

Although we will probably never know who the patron of the round church and the abbey was, at least the acquisitions of the Premonstratensian Abbey point to a royal donor. The most likely dating is shortly after 1170, which makes it likely that it was associated with the better-known endowment by King Valdemar I to the Premonstratensian abbey at Vä in eastern Scania. In Denmark, this can be linked to the foundation of the Hospitallers at Antvorskov and the royal support of the guilds of Knud Lavard, both of which initiatives are associated with the expansion of Valdemar I into the Baltic Sea region. At the meeting in Ringsted in 1170, Erling Skakke made a pledge of allegiance to King Valdemar, and held Viken as a fief under Danish rule, although the control of Valdemar and his sons over this region continued to be fragile during the internal struggles in Norway. The initiative to found an abbey in Tønsberg may, however, have started already in the late 1160s by Bishop Helge of Oslo. His involvement in the uprising of Olav Ugjæva at the time, supported in Denmark and especially in northern Jutland near the mother house Børglum, could be the explanation for it becoming a Premonstratensian, and not an Augustinian, abbey.

The round church points in a slightly different direction. Besides the Holy Sepulchre, the Temple Church in London may have been a more likely model for the St Olav Church in Tønsberg, rather the smaller round churches in Denmark and Sweden. If the suggested dating of the

(pre-abbey) church to the 1160s, the regent Erling Skakke is again a likely candidate, having been to the Holy Land himself. His wife, Kristin, daughter of Sigurd the Crusader, had no less an interest in commemorating the importance of Jerusalem in a Norwegian context, especially since she is one of the candidates of having commissioned the painting of St Olav on a column of the Church of Nativity in Bethlehem. However, Jes Wienberg has pointed out that round churches may rather have been built by people who did not go to the Holy Land, but who brought Jerusalem back to their home region. In that case, it is striking that there were several candidates that would have had the motives and means to support this impressive architectural feat in Tønsberg. Both Vatnorm Dagsson of Bratsberg and his family, and G. (Germunda?), the sister of Ernis of St Victor and related to both Lawrence of Westminster and Aelred of Rievalux, and possibly married to Solmund Sigurdsson, a close friend of the crusader Ragnvald Kale of Orkney, would most likely have been interested in making the church a reality. However, considering the rich property of St Olav's Abbey and its financial support from the St Michael's Church in the royal fortress of Slottsfjellet, the regent of Norway in the 1160s could have used this opportunity to rival and even surpass the foundations of Archbishop Eskil and King Valdemar I in Denmark.

By the end of the twelfth century, the round church was certainly part of the Premonstratensian abbey. The excavated ruins that are visible to us today are a reminder of the various ways Christians in western Europe shaped the presence of the Holy Land within architecture and landscape during the twelfth century. In this way, Premonstratensian canons would situate Tønsberg not only within a larger network of trade and politics, but also within the larger intellectual framework of preaching the ideals of the crusades, and within the military framework of participating in (or compensating for not participating in) these military ventures.[41]

41 Relevant here is also the participation of Norwegian in the Fifth Crusade, see Svenungsen 2017. The sources mention that townspeople financed one of the ships sent to the eastern Mediterranean, but do not specify which town. From the context, I am inclined to think they came from Tønsberg, and not Nidaros as assumed by Svenungsen.

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