Power and Piety:
Church Topography and Episcopal Influence in Northern Iceland 1106-1318 A.D.

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The work with this Master thesis has followed a short, albeit winding path. Short, in the sense that the original idea has only been in my mind since the summer of 2006 when I excavated at Hólar in Northern Iceland. It has been twisted due to several sudden and, sometimes unexpected, changes or additions. At times, when I found myself somewhat astray, my supervisor Lotte Hedeager was there. She has been a tremendous initiator, meeting me frequently and always inspiring me to work. Thank you, Lotte!

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Presentation of Thesis with Background Information

The farm of Hólar is situated in Hjalta Valley in the Skagafjörður region of Northern Iceland. This estate housed one of the two Icelandic episcopal seats from 1106 to 1801 (Figure 1). In 1318, Auðun rauði Þorbergsson (1313-1322), the tenth bishop of Hólar, issued a *máldagi*, or church register, accounting for the churches in his bishopric, which covered the northern quarter of the island. From this document a church topography can be discerned, revealing a curious spatial distribution of what I, in the following, will argue were status churches. None of these churches were situated in the proximity of Hólar Episcopal seat, and they were moreover near absent in the whole Skagafjörður region. In the regions east of where the bishop's seat was located, on the other hand, they appeared frequently.

In this thesis I will consider different reasons for the apparently inconsistent spatial distribution of status churches in Hólar bishopric. Contributing factors to be discussed are the settlement pattern, episcopal power and influence, seen in relation to secular interests, for example economic one. Furthermore, I will consider the absence of a town in Hólar bishopric, as well as Norwegian influence on the Icelandic Church, particularly manifested in church reforms originating from the archbishop in Nidaros. Important when considering several of these elements is the presupposition that social power is achievable through materialisation of ideology, and the control of this. Two ways in which materialisation of ideology can appear are as monuments and ceremonies, both of which can contribute to making ideology an effective source of social power when controlled by a dominant group.

In order to consider the significance of their spatial distribution, the churches will be divided into status categories. The scarcity of archaeological material from medieval church buildings in Iceland necessitates an alternate method of indicating status churches than one based on physical remains. The categorisation will be done based on the number of clerics belonging to each church – information which is found in Bishop Auðun's church register (*Diplomatarium Islandicum II*, no. 240-336. Hereafter abbreviated DI II). The term "major church", as used by Jón Viðar Sigurðsson[1] (2005a), will be essential. The determinant factor of major churches was that they had three or more clerics connected to them. Jón Viðar

[1] When citing Icelandic scholars it is customary to include both first and last names. When repeating the scholars' names in the text, I will usually only state their given names (match the next reference cited), as one would use the surname of non-Icelandic scholars.

(2005a:188) touches on the idea that big distance between the episcopal seat and the closest major churches was likely due to a desire from the bishops to be free from nearby competitors. I believe it is worthwhile to follow this train of thought further. Hence, I will consider this and several others aspects, in order to explain the church topography in Hólar bishopric, and assess the bishops' influence on this.

The thesis spans from 1106 to 1318. Using Bishop Auðun's church register from 1318 as a point of departure facilitates my investigation, as it is a well-preserved and extensive source material. I will still consider elements even from the time of the establishment of the episcopal seat at Hólar in 1106. The church topography in Hólar bishopric, revealed through the church register, indicates an episcopal power having asserted itself. It is possible that the presence of the seat in Skagafjörður contributed to an issuant church topography there, very different compares to that which is apparent in the other parts of the bishopric. Thus, based on the church topography in 1318, and relating the information it provides to what is revealed about the power relations throughout these two hundred years, a secondary consideration to the thesis will be to discern changes in episcopal power and influence through time.

The first bishopric in Iceland, with its seat at Skálholt, was established in 1056 (Figure 1). When, in the beginning of the 12th century, a separate bishopric for the northern part of the country was to be established, the priest Illugi Bjarnarson donated his farm Hólar in Hjaltadal, which remained the main estate of Northern Iceland until the episcopal seat was abolished in 1801 (Jón Jóhannesson 1969:126). From the establishment of Hólar bishopric in 1106, until 1318, there were ten bishops at the Holy See[2]. Even though the Hólar bishops' power must have been influenced by the personalities and motives of these individuals, detailed biographies will not be performed on any of them. Their lives and actions will be relevant only insofar as they affected the church topography or the standing of the Church in a significant way.

Most of Iceland's approximately 330 medieval churches were built during the 11th and 12th centuries – one-third of them in Hólar bishopric. All were built on farms and the so-called *kirkjugoðar*, or chieftain-priests, i.e. secular chieftains who were ordained, were often involved in their establishment (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2005a:187; Magnús Stefánsson 2000:12).

[2] See the appendix for a complete list of the bishops at Hólar from 1106-1318.

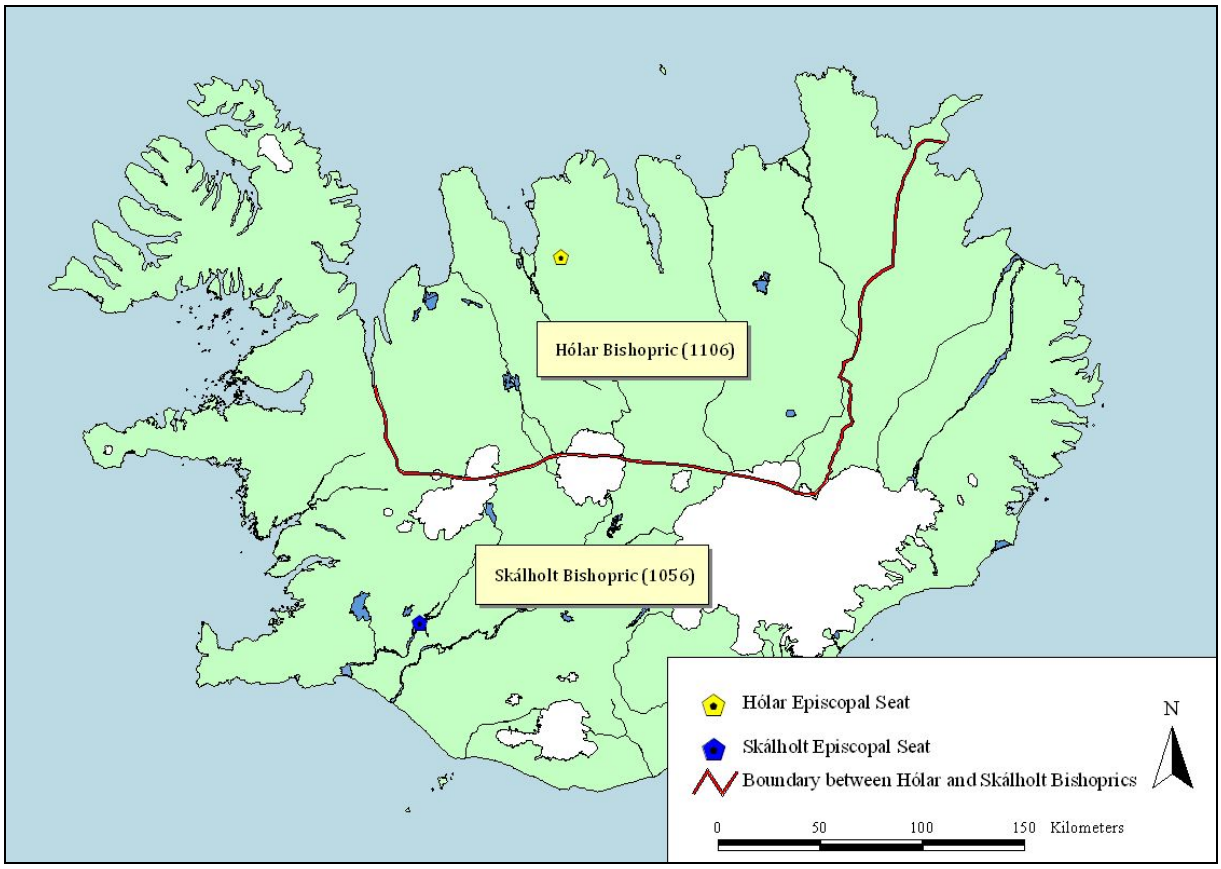

Figure 1: Map of Iceland showing the extent of the two bishoprics, the locations of the episcopal seats, as well as the years of their establishment.

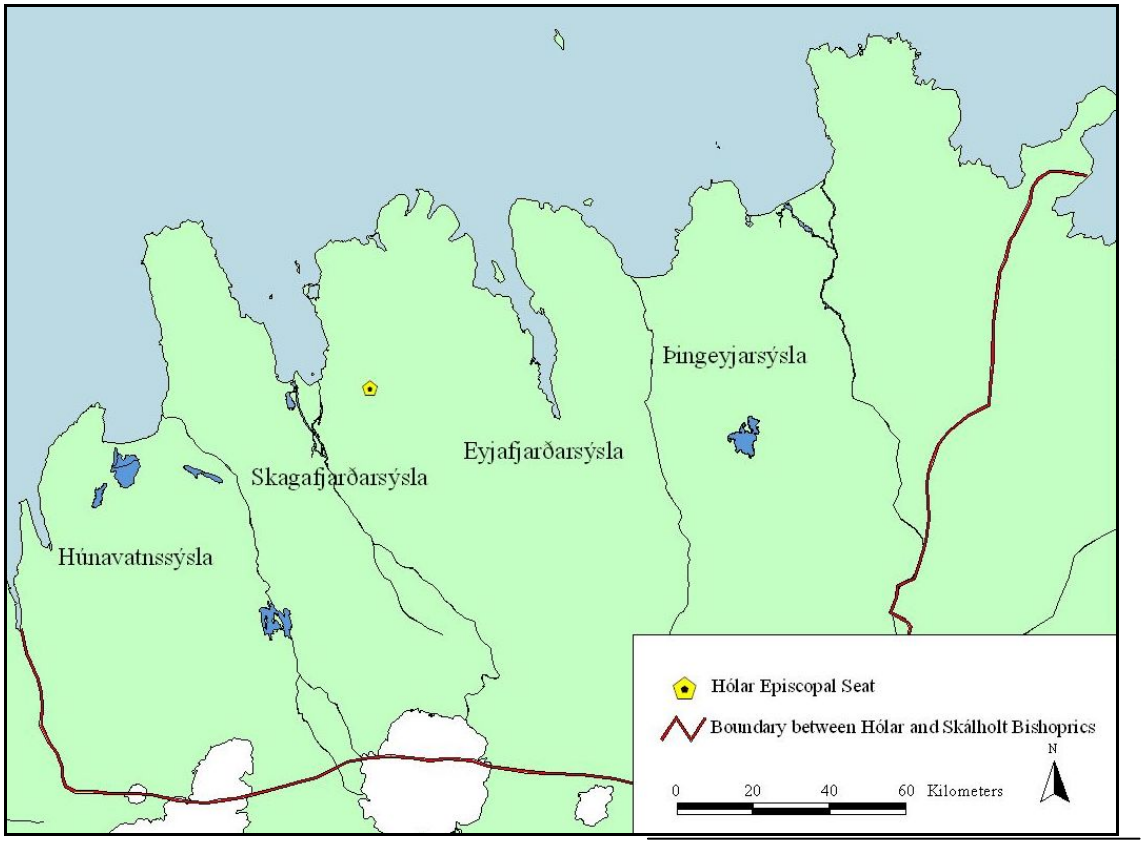

Figure 2: The four sýslar or regions in the northern quarter, corresponding to the area of Hólar bishopric.

The secular-ecclesiastical relationship will hold a central position throughout my investigation, as it is important for understanding the church topography and church organisation as a whole. Another factor of importance is influence from Norway on ecclesiastical institutions in Iceland. After having been under the domain of the archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen until 1104, and then Lund, the two Icelandic bishoprics became part of Nidaros archbishopric in 1152/53. The archiepiscopal seat was located in the town of Nidaros, in Trøndelag (Jón Jóhannesson 1969:134). (Fig. 3)

1.2 Comparison with Trøndelag, Norway

In order to contribute to the understanding of the church topography in Iceland, I will introduce a comparative material from Trøndelag, i.e. the core area of Nidaros archbishopric (Figure 3). Following the establishment of the new archbishopric of Nidaros, it became easier for the archbishops to deal with matters of the Church in Iceland. Whereas this had been difficult due to the distance from the previous archbishops in Hamburg-Bremen and Lund, there were now ships sailing between Norway and Iceland every summer (Jón Jóhannesson 1969:134). Closer and more regular contacts with Nidaros lead to greater exposure to the practices of the international Church, resulting in a gradually growing desire among Icelanders to conform to these standards (Orri Vésteinsson 2005:80). Particularly in the period from ca. 1262/64, when Iceland came under Norwegian rule, to ca. 1350, there were strong connections between the two countries in virtually every area, including politics, trade and religion (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2005b:121).

The spatial distribution of status churches in Trøndelag will be related to the church topography in Hólar bishopric, hopefully creating synergistic effects, opening for new thoughts regarding power relations and episcopal influence in Northern Iceland in the medieval period. The categorisation of the churches in Trøndelag will be done based on building material. Constructing stone churches was something only the elite were able to do, and by doing so they could demonstrate their position in society (Brendalsmo 2006:286).

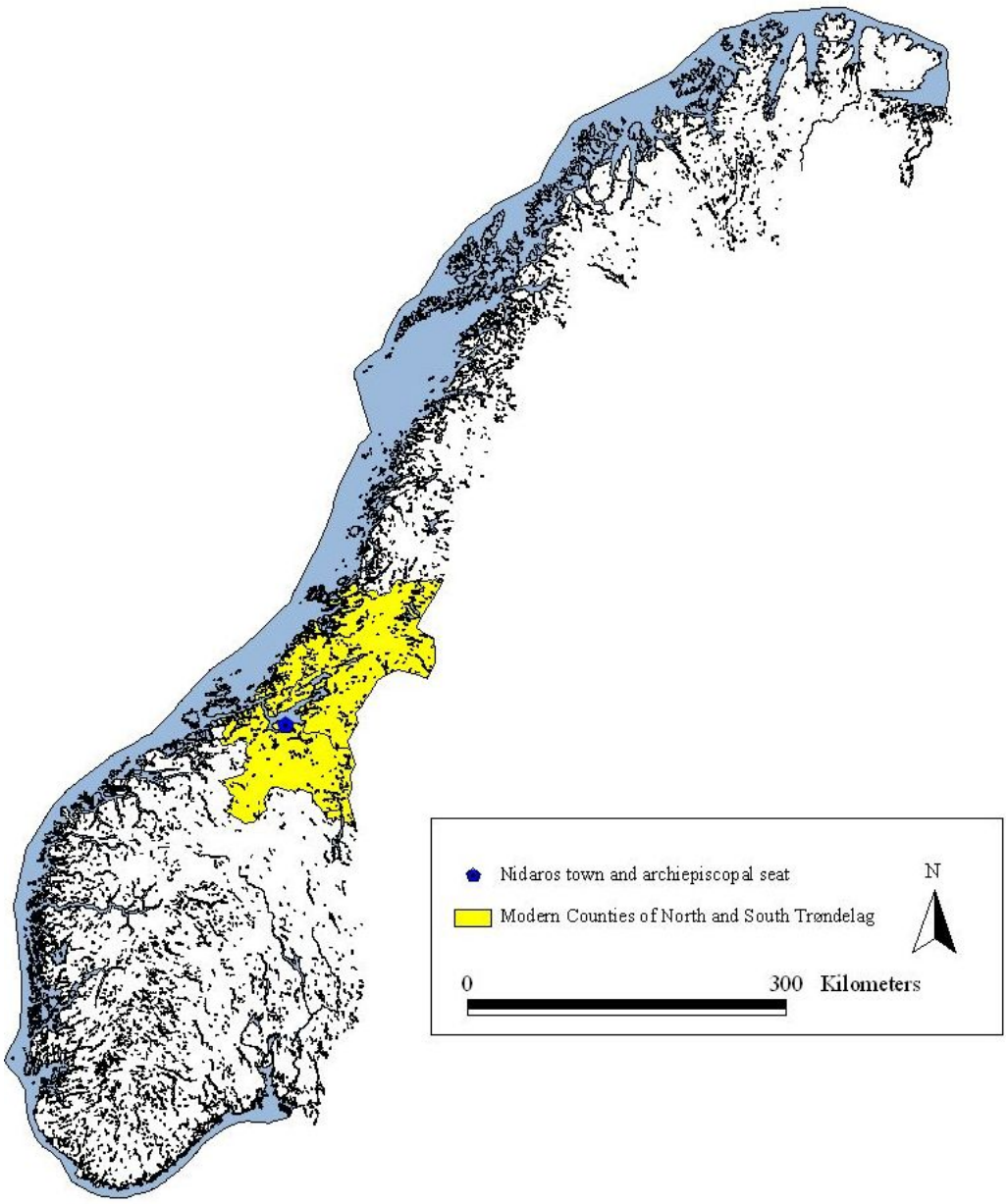

Figure 3: Norway with the present-day counties of Nord- and Sør-Trøndelag indicated in yellow.

In order to maintain synchronism with the comparative material from Trøndelag, I will only make use of churches known from the time period up to the middle of the 14th century. The increased contact between Norway and Iceland in the preceding centenary makes the comparison particularly relevant. The most important factors in this regard were the Church reforms which had already been carried out in Norway, and which were starting to make their effects felt in Iceland.

The thesis will be thoroughly interdisciplinary. Previous research on churches and church organisation, both in Hólar bishopric and Iceland in general, has predominately been based on written sources. This is the research on which I have based my work. More

archaeological material would have been preferable, but due to its unavailability, the introduction of a comparative archaeological material from Trøndelag is a welcome resource. The comparison makes good sense due to the close cultural contacts between the two countries, and because of similar geographical and church organisational elements, all of which will be accounted for as part of the comparison.

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis consists of seven chapters, which make up three main parts. Chapter one to four inclusive constitute the first part, providing the background material to make the analysis possible. Chapter two is dedicated to an account of previous research by scholars whose work is of relevance to my thesis. This includes issues such as changes in Icelandic church organisation with the introduction of the tithe law, and the close connection between the Church and the chieftains in the country. The material providing information about churches and church organisation, both in Iceland and Norway, is accounted for in chapter three. In chapter four the theoretical framework for my approach to explaining the inconsistent spatial distribution of churches is presented. Different ways in which ideology can take material form are considered, and I present arguments connecting control of ideology to another form of social power – the economic.

Part two, consisting of chapters five and six, is where the principal discussion regarding the church topography in Hólar bishopric is carried out. Chapter five initiates the discussion of the spatial distribution of churches, first by categorising them and then by providing an overview of the church topography. The comparative material from Trøndelag is introduced here as well. In this chapter most of my maps are presented. In order to differentiate the categorisation of the churches, I have included a discussion about terms used to describe churches in medieval Iceland and Norway. Chapter six contains my main analysis of the church topography, with a thorough assessment of the relevance of various elements assumed to have affected the spatial distribution of churches. First, I deal with the settlement pattern. This is connected to the distribution of priests throughout the bishopric, evaluating whether this might provide some clue as to understanding why the major churches were distributed in such a peculiar way. Episcopal power and autonomy, and its interconnection with secular powers in the bishopric, is discussed, in order to determine the effect this relationship had on the organisation of the Church. Consequences of the establishment of Hólar bishopric make up an important part of this discussion. Explanations for the distribution

of churches founded in economic interests are also appraised, in relation to both secular and episcopal spheres. An essential comparison between Hólar and Trøndelag is the assessment of the relevance of the presence or absence of a town, concerning the church topography. Norwegian influence on the Church in Iceland, and consequences caused by reforms originating from the archiepiscopal seat, are furthermore considered. The Norwegian comparative material is applied in all of the areas in which it might contribute to a better understanding of the Icelandic situation. Chapter seven is the final part of the thesis and provides a summary of the various elements dealt with, as well as some concluding points.

Following the main text there is an appendix with two tables of churches. The first includes all the churches from the máldagi of Bishop Auðun, and the second shows the churches in Trøndelag. In addition, five lists are provided, containing the names of all bishops and archbishops during my selected time period. All names throughout my thesis, of both places and people, Icelandic and Norwegian, are written in their modern versions.

2 PREVIOUS RESEARCH

No one has ever worked specifically with the relationship between church topography and episcopal power in Icelandic church history. In general, however, Christianity and churches in Iceland have been studied thoroughly (see for example Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1953; Jón Jóhannesson 1969; Sveinn Víkingur 1970; Magnús Stefánsson 1978, 1995, 2000; Byock 1988; Sigurður Nordal 1990; Hjalti Hugason 2000; Orri Vésteinsson 2000, 2005; Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2003b, 2005a; Steinunn Kristjánsdóttir 2004; Helgi Þorláksson 2005; Benedikt Eyþórsson 2005b).

Areas of particular interest in the history of the Icelandic Church have been the Christianisation, the development of the Icelandic Church as an institution, and its relationship with the secular elite (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2005b:127). There has been limited research focused exclusively on Hólar bishopric, but for the country in general much work has been done. In *The Christianization of Iceland. Priests, Power, and Social Change 1000-1300* (2000), Orri Vésteinsson provides a thorough overview of the changes Icelandic society underwent during the first three hundred years after the Christianisation. He holds forth the Church as the dominating power in medieval Iceland, and as an element that thoroughly affected the structure of the simple society which had been established in the country by the 11th century.

Concerning the ecclesiastical institution, Magnús Stefánsson (1975, 2000) has contributed extensively. He made a clear distinction between the *staðir* and the privately owned churches, called *bændakirkjar*, literally "farmers' churches". Earlier, this distinction had not been made. The word *staðir* had for a long time been assumed to mean simply *kirkjustaðir*, i.e. a church place. Now it came to mean a church which owned the whole farm on which it was situated, consequently becoming a self-governing unit (Magnús Stefánsson 1975:76). Orri (2000:3) characterises Magnús as a representative of the traditional view in Icelandic historiography. According to this view, the clergy established ecclesiastical institutions like the *staðir* in the 11th and 12th centuries. Then, in the 13th century, these churches came under the influence of laymen, treating them as private property. The fight for the ownership of these churches is called *staðamál*[3] and the conflict did not end until a compromise was achieved in 1297 (Magnús Stefánsson 2000:216). According to Orri

[3] The word simply means "matters concerning staðir". The staðamál will be dealt with in chapter 6.10. For a full presentation of the conflict, see Magnús Stefánsson 2000.

(2000:3), this traditional view assumes a clear division between the secular and ecclesiastical spheres from the beginning, both of which were conscious of their own separate identities.

Regarding this relationship between the secular and ecclesiastical spheres, which is important for understanding the history of the Icelandic Church, the role of the *goðar* (plural) must be taken into account. A *goði* (singular), hereafter reffered to as chieftain, was the administrator of a *goðorð*, which can be translated to a chieftaincy. It was an inheritable and purchasable unit of power, of which there were 39 in Iceland (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:290). Concerning the system of chieftains in Iceland, Jón Viðar (1999, 2005a) has done important work, discussing the foundation of their power. Their role as religious leaders has also gained much attention. From pre-Christian times they functioned as both religious and secular leaders. The term goði is often translated to chieftain-priest, derived from the Old Norse word *goð*, meaning "god". This probably stems from their early responsibilities in serving as priests and maintaining temples (Byock 1988:58-59). Later, their dominance over religion, and the significance of this role for their position in the Icelandic Commonwealth Period[4], is clearly visible due to their involvement in the election of bishops and ownership of the biggest and wealthiest churches in the country. Furthermore, until around 1200, many of them were ordained as priests (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2005b:129).

The establishment of a parish system is an integrated part of the development of a country's church organisation. Research dealing with ecclesiastical growth, the development of parishes, and relationship between farms and parishes, has been comprehensive in the Nordic countries, with several examples of extensive research (Lindquist 1981; Nyborg 1984; Skre 1988; Anglert 1989, 1995; Brink 1990; Hjalti Hugason 2005), out of which Stefan Brink's (1990) work stands out. He deals with the establishment of parishes and parish names in all the Nordic countries, including Iceland, although mainly in Sweden. In Iceland, research done by Einar Gunnar Pétersson (1986) and Orri (1998) strengthens the view that the motives and political influence of farmers with churches on their land were important in the eventual organisation of the tithe areas (Benedikt Eyþórsson 2005a:32). The adoption of the tithe law in 1096/97 has often been regarded as marking the conclusion of the developmental phase of the ecclesiastical organisation in the country (Benedikt Eyþórsson 2005a:30). In contrast to this view (see Magnús Stefánsson 1975; Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 1989), Orri (2000:71) argues

[4] The Commonwealth Period denotes the time from 930-1262/64, that is, from the Allthing (the general assembly) was established, until Iceland came under the influence of the Norwegian king. The reason for the three year period from 1262 to 1264 was that the chieftains who were not present at the Allthing in 1262 to swear oaths of allegiance to the Norwegian king were forced to do so one of the two consecutive years (Jón R. Hjálmarsson 1993:55).

that the tithe law was only one of the first steps towards an established Church. Whether or not tithe income was a motive for building churches has been discussed (Magnús Stefánsson 1975). This economic explanation has come to be doubted, however (see for instance Orri Vésteinsson 2000:49). In a recent study, Hjalti Hugason (2005) presents five theories about the development of parishes in Iceland. Similarities to other countries, as well as the speed with which the development took place, are some of the issues he deals with. He considers the process to be an important part of the consolidation of Christianity in Iceland (Hjalti Hugason 2005:85).

It is important to be aware of some nationalistic tendencies influencing the historiography of Icelandic church research. Sources describing events in the late 11th and early 12th centuries were written in the beginning of the 13th century, and they regard the period as the golden age of Icelandic Christianity, and furthermore stress the particular Icelandicness of the Church. Orri (2000:3-4) has presented the debate originating from this. Taking an opposite position from the traditional view of Magnús Stefánsson just mentioned, was Sveinbjörn Rafnsson (1975), who pointed out that Icelandic medieval literature was less affected by Icelandic society and more by the supranational Christian culture of medieval Europe. He also stressed that the Church primarily was a vehicle for foreign influence on Iceland, and as such there was nothing particularly Icelandic about it. The Icelandic clergy had to strive to free the Church from secular influence just as in the rest of Europe. Helgi Þorláksson (1982) took the middle ground in this discussion. He saw the Church and the chieftains as being in conflict, but denied the notion of a national Church. He also emphasised the willingness and eagerness of the chieftains to cooperate with the Church for much of the 13th century.

The common denominator for the scholars, who have been active in the discussions just referred, is that they primarily are historians. As a result, Icelandic research history has so far been characterised by the predominance of written sources. The reason for this is not difficult to grasp, however. As Adolf Friðriksson (1994:1) has remarked, most archaeological finds in Iceland date from historical times, when written sources help us to reconstruct events of the past. My main source when dealing with Hólar bishopric in this investigation is a written document, but as a novel element in the discussion concerning churches and power relations, I will utilise a comparative material from Trøndelag, as accounted for above.

This brief review of some scholars' work on Icelandic church history does bring to light a certain ambiguity concerning episcopal power and its relationship with the chieftains.

The question of how influential the office of bishop actually was, at least in the early phase of Icelandic church history, remains unanswered. As the discussion is relatively young, this is understandable (Helgi Þorláksson 2005:35). I hope to contribute to this discussion, focusing on the church topography in 1318, and the development of this. Contributing factors for explaining how the spatial distribution of churches came to be like this needs to be sought further back in time.

3 CHURCH MATERIAL

I will be utilising both written and archaeological sources in this interdisciplinary investigation. In the following it will become clear that not only standing churches or church remains are useful for providing us with information concerning the church topography in Iceland. Though lacking the physical remains of churches, we know from written sources where the churches were located. For Hólar bishopric the church register of Bishop Auðun will be an essential source for locating them. I will still touch on a discussion about the correctness of a document like this. A comparative archaeological material from Trøndelag, in the central part of Norway, will be included, as well as written material originating from the same area.

3.1 Churches in the Written Material

The document *Auðunarmáldagi* (DI II:240-336), so named after Bishop Auðun rauði Þorbergsson of Hólar, was completed in 1318. Of the written material, this will be my main source. It provides me with an alternate way of mapping the church topography and identifying status churches, which is necessary due to the lack of archaeological material in Iceland.

In Old Norse the word *máldagi* means agreement or arrangement, either written or oral (Gunnar F. Guðmundsson 1997:61). Here it is used in the specialised meaning of a record the administrator of a church was required to make. It should contain all of what a church owned, such as landed property, books and church inventory, as well as its income, and rights and obligations connected to this, and furthermore the conditions attached to any gifts received (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2005a:183). Documents like these ensured that those who administered the churches could not sell estates from them, or in any other way diminish their value (Jón Jóhannesson 1969:151). In addition to the elements mentioned above, the Auðunarmáldagi contains information about the number of clerics belonging to each church.

The máldagar (plural) are well-preserved sources. Several still exist in their original versions. Most, however, are preserved as transcripts from 17th century máldagi collections, but comparisons with original fragments indicate that the transcripts are reliable (Gunnar F. Guðmundsson 1997:63). The Auðunarmáldagi, which is the oldest of its kind from Hólar bishopric, is a collection of 97 máldager from the churches in Auðun's diocese anno 1318 (DI

II:240-336). There probably existed máldagar for Hólar bishopric from before Auðun had his collected. A possible reason why none are preserved from the 12th or 13th century is the conflict over the staðir churches which was ended in 1297 (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2005a:184). It seems reasonable that old máldagar would be discarded along with the changes following in the wake of this conflict (see chapter 6.10). After the 13th century the máldagar changed somewhat. They became more extensive, and new elements were included, for instance the names of the saints to whom the churches were dedicated, and more information concerning the management of the churches. The main reason for these changes was probably that the bishops wanted to secure firmer control over the churches after the staðamál conflict (Gunnar F. Guðmundsson 1997:62). For the Hólar bishops it must have been important to obtain a complete overview of the local churches' properties to prevent future disputes over them. In this process the local churches' máldagar might have been discarded (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2005a:184).

In addition to those known from the Auðunarmáldagi, Magnús (2000:320-321) has included several churches in his maps of Hólar bishopric from the time before and around 1300. Why these churches are not mentioned in the document and possible reasons why, will form part of my discussion concerning the church topography in Hólar bishopric. He finds evidence for the existence of these churches in the Diplomatarium Islandicum. From information from these documents he is able to track the existence of some churches throughout the Middle Ages, most of which I will include in my investigation. Certain churches, which have no máldagar preserved until around the beginning of the 15th century, or is not mentioned in any other document, will not be included.

As the status indicator for the churches is dependent on the number of clerics, the availability of clerics for the populace will be a relevant factor. Therefore, I will relate the settlement pattern in Hólar bishopric to the church topography. In this regard, some of the oldest Icelandic land registers will be of importance. However, in order to facilitate the use of them, I will utilise Björn Lárusson's doctoral dissertation *The Old Icelandic Land Registers* (1967). The oldest extensive land registers were recorded during the last two decades of the 17th century. These are compilations of information concerning hired cattle, land rent, and tax value of the farms (Björn Lárusson 1967:9). They also include the number of farms and communes within each *sýsla*, or region (Figure 2), in the country; information which is the primary reason for my use of the land registers. In this way I will get an idea of the distribution of farms throughout my area of investigation. I will also use the *Manntalið*

(census) from 1703, in a database version on *The National Archives of Iceland* website, to contribute to the impression of the settlement pattern of Northern Iceland.

3.2 Churches in the Archaeological Material

In Iceland, few churches have been investigated archaeologically. This has partly to do with conditions of preservation. Most of the smaller churches were made of turf (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2003b:57), and wooden churches in places exposed to harsh weather were often fortified with turf walls. This material has low durability and requires frequent replacement, preventing the churches from having remained until the present. Some important churches were not desirable to dress with turf. In those cases wooden supports could be erected on the outside of the buildings (Hjörleifur Stefánsson 1997:34). The climate in Iceland is so rough, however, that wood in buildings quickly must have started to rot, or decay in other ways. In a country without forests, frequent maintenance or renewal of this material must have been difficult (Hjörleifur Stefánsson 1997:34). I will discuss access to timber for church building in chapter 6.8. Thus, one material aspect of the churches will be considered, even though this is far from sufficient to identify explicit status categories for the churches in the bishopric.

The discovery of skeletal material can be a good indication of a church at a site, provided the burials are oriented according to Christian custom, and that there is an absence of grave finds. Cemeteries that went out of use can be difficult to locate, however. The collection of laws from the Icelandic Commonwealth Period is called *Grágás*. These laws were first assembled in 1122-33 (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:290-291). According to The Old Christian law section in Grágás, if skeletons were to be moved, people should come to the cemetery and dig, searching for bones as thoroughly as if they hoped to discover buried riches: “Þeir skulu hefja gröft upp utarla í kirkjugarði, og leita svo beina sem þeir mundu fjár ef þar væri von í jörðu.” (Grágás:10). Abandoned cemeteries can as a result be near impossible to discover.

Adolf (1994:95) mentions Daniel Bruun (1928) as the one responsible for the first real excavation of a church in Iceland. The church was at the medieval trading site Gásir in Eyjafjörður, east of Skagafjörður (Figure 2 and 18). Another early example is the cathedral at Skálholt (Kristján Eldjárn et al. 1988). However, during the last decade, several surveys and large-scale excavations of farms with churches or monasteries have taken place, for instance at Stöng in Þjórsárdalur (Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson 1996), Neðri-Ás close to Hólar

(Roberts 1998), Reykholt in Reykholtsdalur[5] (ongoing excavation under project manager Guðrún Sveinbjarnardóttir), Þórarinsstaðir in Seyðisfjörður (Steinunn Kristjánsdóttir 2004), Hrísbru in Mosfellsdalur (Byock et al. 2005), Þingeyrar in Sveinsstaðahreppur (Bryndís Zöega et al. 2006), Reynistaður in Reynistaðarhreppur (Guðmundur St. Sigurðarson et al. 2006) and at Hólar itself (ongoing excavation under project manager Ragnheiður Traustadóttir; Hólarannsóknin). There are also cemeteries and stand-alone churches which have been investigated, for instance at Keldudalur (Guðný Zoëga and Ragnheiður Traustadóttir 2007) and, again, at Gásir (Margrét Hermannsdóttir 1987), in Skagafjörður and Eyjafjörður, respectively. Several of these sites predate the time period for my investigation, however.

The church at the farm of Neðri-Ás was just mentioned. This was located approximately eight kilometres northwest of Hólar (Roberts 1998:4), and stands as an example of a church not mentioned in the Auðunarmáldagi, but which is known from archaeological investigations. During excavation in 1998, beneath a semi-ruined modern turf and stone structure, remains of graves and a church structure were found. Historical sources record the presence of a church at the site until as late as the mid-13th century (Roberts 1998:1).

Another example of a church discovered during archaeological investigations, is Hof in Hjaltadal, farther south from Hólar (Gísli Gestsson 1955). In 2001 ^{14}C-datings were performed on skeletal material from the cemetery there, indicating a date no later than the middle of the 13th century (Ragnheiður Traustadóttir 2002). No churches are mentioned on any of these farms in the máldagi from 1318, accordingly it seems like several churches were abandoned or abolished during the 13th century, prior to the recording of the Auðunarmáldagi. Interesting is the notion that this had something to do with policies issued from the episcopal seat at Hólar. Although it is tempting to include churches from which there exist archaeological remains, they are omitted from my maps, as results from the excavations indicate that they were not in existence in 1318.

Presently, a project involving the registration of early churches in Skagafjörður is in the start-up phase. The presumed, or already registered churches, are so far divided into two categories, one which encompasses the period 1000-1300, i.e. churches known from a date before 1318, but which are not mentioned in the register of Auðun. The other category covers the period 1000-1555, and contains a list of churches not mentioned in 1318, but which were

[5] The home of the famous poet and chieftain Snorri Sturlasson (1178-1241).

most probably in existence at that time. These churches are not mentioned in sources after 1550[6]. Additional categories of churches will be added to the project subsequently, based on where and how they are mentioned in the different sources (Guðný Zoëga personal communication March 18th 2008).

It has been proposed that there might have been as many as a thousand or more lesser churches in Iceland during the medieval period (Helgi Skúli Kjartansson 2005:95). Hence, it is difficult to know which ones should be counted among the parish churches at any given time. It is rarely easy to distinguish what is a chapel or a parish church, just from layout and size of building remains. Hence, it is hard to estimate which ones, of the potentially hundreds of church remains to be discovered, that should be expected to have been included or excluded from the máldagi in 1318, as it would not contain records of all lesser churches and chapels.

3.3 Churches in the Comparative Material from Trøndelag, Norway

In the following I will present the comparative material from Trøndelag (Figure 3), which will be included in the discussion about the church topography in Hólar bishopric in order to assess whether a similar spatial distribution of status churches is visible there. However, before including this material, the relationship between the two countries will have to be clarified.

The Icelanders originally came from Norway, or the Norse settlements in the British Isles (Jón Jóhannesson 1974:15). The high degree of importance the Icelanders attached to their relations with Norway becomes apparent in a treaty concerning the rights of Icelanders in Norway and the rights of the king of Norway and his subjects in Iceland[7] (Jón Jóhannesson 1974:109). It is not clear why King Olav Haraldsson granted Icelanders privileges, but a likely motive might be the prospect of increased trade between the two countries. Kinship between Icelanders and Norwegians might also have played a part in it (Jón Jóhannesson 1974:111). According to Jesse Byock (1988:141), many Icelanders retained their family ties with Norwegians.

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[6] 1550 was the year in which Jón Arason, the last Catholic bishop in Iceland, was beheaded, subsequently making the whole country Lutheran.

[7] I will not go into details about the treaty with the Norwegian king. These are accounted for by Jón Jóhannesson (1974:110-114). Not being mentioned by Snorri Sturluson or other writers, we do not know anything about the ratification of the treaty or how it was introduced. The date of the treaty has generally been set to 1022, or a few years before or after, and it was in effect until the end of the Commonwealth Period (Jón Jóhannesson 1974:114). For a definition of the Commonwealth Period, see note 4.

The closer contact with the Church in Norway after the establishment of Nidaros archbishopric in 1152/53 has already been mentioned. Orri (2000:167, 170) accounts for reform policies from the Norwegian archbishops, and how these influenced Iceland. For example, in 1190 Archbishop Eirik sent a letter to the bishops in Iceland about decisions taken at a synod, i.e. church meeting, held in May the same year. Henceforth it was forbidden to ordain chieftains (Jón Jóhannesson 1969:136). Of more consequence for the development of the Icelandic Church, however, was the archbishop's decision to start consecrating Norwegians without consulting the Icelanders, consequently taking more or less control of the episcopal seats in Iceland (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:157).

Another factor necessary to consider when comparing Iceland and Norway is the sizes of the areas in question. The area that constituted Hólar bishopric stretches over an area of approximately 35,000 km^2 (Statoids 2006). In comparison, Trøndelag spans approximately 41,000 km^2 (Brendalsmo 2006:49). Thus, there is a fair correspondence between the sizes of the two areas to be compared, facilitating parallels between them regarding the church topography. The population numbers differ, however, a fact that will constitute an important part of the discussions in chapter six.

In his doctoral thesis from 2001, revised and published in 2006, Jan Brendalsmo discusses who built churches in the countryside of Trøndelag from ca. 1000 to 1600. Trøndelag was the core area of the new archbishopric which Hólar became part of in 1152/53. Brendalsmo (2006:16-17) investigates where churches were built, and whether these locations had earlier been centres of heathen cult. He also looks at changes in the church organisation, as well as making attempts at dating the churches. He operates with three phases of church building, of which the first spans from the Christianisation until around 1200, the second ca. 1200-1350, and the third ca. 1350-1600. I will only include the churches from the first two phases that Brendalsmo deals with in his investigation (from the Christianisation until around 1200 and ca. 1200-1350), enabling me to maintain synchronism between the two countries. Thus, the churches built after 1350 will not be included.

Even though the archaeological material from Trøndelag is much more extensive than that from Hólar, it is not unproblematic. A significant source of error is that 70 percent of the churches from medieval Trøndelag are either in disuse or have been moved. Because of this, Brendalsmo (2006:55) performed surveys to the church sites, resulting in a documentation of 141 certain church places in the countryside of Trøndelag. These churches are confirmed localities with standing church buildings or building remains, and in most cases, also

cemeteries. In addition, these churches are usually accounted for in written sources (Brendalsmo 2006:64).

There are three Christian cemeteries – Hårberg, Hernes and Naust – which Brendalsmo (2006:Figur 7) include in his map over the certain church places, thus making it a total of 144 certain locations. The skeletons in the cemetery at Hårberg have been dated to 1000-1400 on the basis of the way their arms were positioned. The thickness of the overlaying cultural layer, however, indicates a cemetery of old age. It is furthermore not mentioned in written sources from Trøndelag, neither from the medieval period nor later (Brendalsmo 2006:429-430). In the cemetery at Hernes three graves have been carbon-dated, estimating a time of burial to the 11th century. There was a one meter thick cultural layer overlaying the cemetery, indicating that it went out of use around 1200, at the latest. Moreover, there was no evidence of younger graves cutting through older ones (Brendalsmo 2006:572). In the cemetery at Naust, the intermixing of skeletons and settlement finds indicates that it was an old Christian cemetery which went out of use after a relatively short time (Brendalsmo 2006:443). Since all of these three cemeteries probably went out of use a long time before 1350, I will not include them in my investigation.

According to Brendalsmo (2006:259), there is reason to believe that several of the farmyard churches that cannot be dated more precisely than prior to 1432 or 1533, also were built in the 11th or 12th century. The main argument for this is the significant amount of farm churches built in or near the farms' graveyard which are datable to pre-1200. In the last and excluded phase (ca. 1350-1600), 19 new churches can be proven to have been built, none of which will be included in my investigation. These churches were built at twelve fishing places, at three pilgrimage sites, and at four farms. All of them were built of wood, with the exception of the farm church Dolm/Hitra. Logtun/Frosta was substantially rebuilt in this third phase, but since a stone church had been in this location earlier, I choose to include it. The same is the case with Veklem from around 1140, although it was completely rebuilt in the 15th or 16th century (Brendalsmo 2006:287, Brendalsmo personal communication 2008).

In addition to the 141 certain churches just mentioned, Brendalsmo (2006) provides lists of likely and possible church locations, as well as churches known only from tradition. Common for the first two groups is that less evidence is left from the buildings than at the certain church sites, or that just remains of parts of buildings, or church inventory, exist (Brendalsmo 2006:64). There are 18 localities in the likely and possible church categories combined. Not all of them will be included in my investigation, however, as some are

believed to be too young, considering my selected time period. This concerns Kirkholmen, where there was a cemetery with a wooden building, probably established in the 17th or 18th century. Furthermore, Kråkvåg is stated as a Christian cemetery, but it stems from after the Reformation in 1537 (Brendalsmo 2006:66).

There is also a group consisting of churches known only from tradition. They count 68, but since the oldest story is from 1597, I will not consider any of these churches (Brendalsmo 2006:67-68). Thus, there remain 16 of Brendalsmo's likely and possible church places, all of which I will include in my investigation, categorised as wooden churches. Presumably then, the total number of churches from Trøndelag in the period with which I am concerned was 140. Brendalsmo (2006:Figur 7-9) provides good maps, indicating all of the church locations, which I will depend on when creating my own maps.

Because of limited excavations in an area to be investigated, use of analogies – to draw on similar elements from one place to another – is often necessary. I believe the use of the comparative material from Trøndelag will contribute to the image we get of Iceland, where research primarily has been based on written sources. Recently, there have been several attempts at correlating elements of the development of church organisation in Iceland with those in other countries (Magnús Stefánsson 2005; Haki Antonsson 2005; Sigríður Júlíusdóttir 2005; Brink 2005). However, it is not always easy to assess the relevance of models from other countries for a study of the ecclesiastical organisation in Iceland, as Haki (2005:182-183) remarks. He has worked with the "Minster Hypothesis" in England, and its relevance for Scandinavia and Iceland. He stresses that comparisons like this should not be pushed too far. Concerning a comparison between Norway and Iceland, this is easier to justify, however, as the Icelanders came from Norway, thus bringing with them culture and customs. In addition, as I have briefly mentioned, both the Norwegian king and the archbishop in Nidaros had interests and influence in Iceland. Additionally, the similar sizes of the areas facilitate the comparison.

I use the area of present-day Trøndelag as the geographical boundary, quite simply because this is the area which Brendalsmo deals with in his investigation. He considers the area large enough to allow general conclusions. Moreover, the fact that ecological, and thus economic factors, are sufficiently varied, provides a representative image of the churches in the countryside (Brendalsmo 2006:36-37). The name Trøndelag is today used as a generic term for the two counties of Nord- and Sør-Trøndelag. This is without historical accuracy,

however. In the medieval period, Trøndelag was limited to the rural districts around the Trondheimsfjord and did not include areas like Fosen or Namdalen (Sandnes 1993:105).

Due to continuous changes in the church topography (Anglert 1995:59), the actual number of churches at specific times through history is difficult to get at. However, according to the investigation done by Brendalsmo (2006:285-287), there was little apparent change in the church topography in Trøndelag after the 12th century. The flexibility in the church topography was probably greatest before stone churches were being built (Anglert 1995:17).

In order to consider the settlement pattern in medieval Trøndelag in relation to the distribution of churches and the need for priestly services, I will be making use of *Trondhjems Reformats* (hereafter abbreviated Thr.R.) from 1589. The primary cause of this document was to evaluate whether the populace in the diocese of Trondhjem had access to the necessary priestly services, which was their right as tithe payers (Hamre 1983:19-20). It contains the information which the commission agents recorded during their inspections concerning churches and clerics in the diocese, as well as notes describing the reforms they deemed necessary (Hamre 1983:2). Considering the time of origin of this document, an evaluation of whether it can be applied on the period with which I deal, is essential. After the Black Death in the middle of the 14th century, the Norwegian population was halved from a peak of approximately 44,000 individuals. It is generally accepted that the same number was restored in the 17th century (Brendalsmo 2006:51), not very long after the recording of Thr.R. The population number in Trøndelag is discussed by Jørn Sandnes (1971:59-64), among others. I will not go into this discussion, however, but rather use the commonly accepted number of 44,000 for the population in Trøndelag in the High Medieval Period. Considering this presupposition, the information in Thr.R. should have relevance for the time period with which I am concerned, as the population number was fairly similar.

Thr.R. does not contain a complete account for all churches in Trøndelag, due to the fact that the mandate of the commission only was to consider parish churches. Thus, three categories of religious buildings are omitted. This concerns certain churches on farms belonging to the secular elite, like Austrått, which remained in private use, chapels in the fishing places, which were rarely served by priests, and finally a group of simple wooden prayer houses. Since few changes have been traced in the church organisation and its economy in Trøndelag, the document's administrative partition probably reflects the circumstances further back in time (Brendalsmo 2006:60; Bjørkvik 1961:707).

3.4 Church Material: Summary

In this chapter I have presented the church material from Hólar bishopric and Trøndelag, assessing which churches to include and exclude, for in this way to achieve synchronism between the two areas. In Iceland, where archaeology as a scholarly discipline is still young, written sources must often be the starting point for historical research. Future excavations will undoubtedly challenge work done in the present, however. Using the Auðunarmáldagi to map the churches and count the clerics at the different churches, and combing this with the settlement information found in the land registers, will provide me with ample opportunities to discern the distribution of clerics in relation to the populace. Maps from Magnus's (2000:Kartsett IIIa-IIIe) book *Staðir og staðamál* will furthermore be of great use when creating my maps. Comparing my maps with those found in his book, reveals some discrepancies, however. The reasons for my omissions have already been accounted for, but the issue of churches missing from the máldagi will be addressed further in chapter six. On present-day maps of Iceland old church places are often indicated by a cross, which is of good help for locating them. I have also utilised Margaret Cormack's database *The Saints in Iceland: Mapping the Icelandic Church*. Using these tools, I have created my own maps in ArcView GIS 3.3.

My comparative material from Trøndelag will mainly be based on the results achieved by Brendalsmo. As this is my secondary material used for comparisons, I will not be able to enter into the many possible discussions related to different source critical problems. I have based my own maps of the distribution of churches in the maps used by Brendalsmo (2006:Figur 7-8). I have applied the church locations to a digital map of Norway, utilising data files containing geographical information related to this specific map scale (n1000). One file, containing place names, was important in order to find the exact locations of the churches. I discovered that some of the points have erroneous coordinates, however, obvious by indicated locations in bodies of water. In those cases I simply moved the point closest possible to what was discernable from Brendalsmo's maps. In this way an accurate placing of the churches was achieved. In some cases, in which churches were positioned too close to each other on the map to be able to distinguish them from one another, I chose to separate them somewhat, making the maps easier to interpret.

4 MATERIALISATION OF IDEOLOGY

In order to approach the consideration of ecclesiastical power in Hólar bishopric I will apply a theory of materialisation of ideology. In the article "Ideology, Materialization, and Power Strategies" (1996), Elizabeth DeMarrais[8] and her co-writers attempt to understand ideology as a source of social power. They consider social power to be "the capacity to control and manage labour and activities of a group to gain access to benefits of a social action." (DeMarrais et al. 1996:15). I understand this to entail that being influential in an aspect of society, in this case ideology, and retaining control of this domain, was a strategy to achieve both status and wealth. DeMarrais et al. (1996) investigate how ideology becomes an essential part of social power when it is given material form and controlled by a dominant group, able to exploit its functionality (see also Mann 1986:23)

Their starting point is Michael Mann and his work of historical sociology, called *The Sources of Social Power* (1986), in which he identifies the four principal sources of power as being control over economic, political, military and ideological resources. Leaders of societies can make use of one or more of these sources to achieve specific goals (DeMarrais et al. 1996:15; Mann 1986:22-28). The kind of ideological power which I will be dealing with in this thesis is, according to Mann's (1986:6-8) terms, a kind of *distributive* power. It is unequally distributed, as those who hold supervisory or coordinating positions are able to assert great organisational superiority over others. The power here concerned is furthermore *intensive*, as it contains the ability to command a high level of mobilisation and commitment from people, in a small area or over a greater distance. Finally, the kind of ideological power considered here can be said to be *authoritative*, since it is willed by both groups of people and institutions, and include explicit commands and conscious obedience.

Ideology is an integrated element in any culture, forming an essential part of human interaction. It is also important in the power strategies which influence socio-political systems (DeMarrais et al. 1996:15). As an archaeologist, there is a tremendous limitation in theoretical approaches that view ideology simply as ideas and beliefs, and consequently not preserved in the archaeological material. Ideology is just as much the material means to communicate and manipulate ideas, as it is the ideas themselves. Hence, there is a clear material component to ideology, in addition to the symbolic. From material objects containing this symbolism, which

[8] The archaeologists Elizabeth DeMarrais and Timothy Earle both worked at Hólar in 2001, test trenching in the area of the excavations presently being carried out by Hólarannsóknin.

are preserved in the archaeological record, archaeologists can obtain information about unequal access to symbols of status or authority (DeMarrais et al. 1996:16).

Materialisation of ideology can appear in several forms. DeMarrais et al. (1996:16) point out four, which are ceremonies, symbolic objects, monuments, and writing systems, all of which can contribute to making ideology an effective source of social power. By actively making use of these forms of materialisation of ideology, elites are able to communicate their power to the population of a larger area than their immediate surroundings. Thus, the element of distance is inherent in the idea of control of ideological power.

The process of materialisation is an ongoing arena of competition, control of meaning, and negotiation of power relationships (DeMarrais et al. 1996:16). Since materialisation of ideology confers social power, elites possessing the available resources are able to assert their influence at the expense of groups lacking these resources. Consequently, the costs involved make ideology dependent on economy. An ideology rooted in a material medium can be controlled in much the same way as other goods may be owned, restricted, or transferred. If this is not possible, for instance due to freely accessible resources, its effects on the restructuring of power relationships would be limited (DeMarrais et al. 1996:17).

Due to the demand in the Christian religion for special consecrated buildings for the performance of the cult, the religion offers good opportunities for materialisation of ideology in monuments. The stone churches in Trøndelag stand as good examples of this; not least the cathedral in Nidaros (Figure 4). Through monuments like these, elites were able to strengthen and legitimatise their ideological control (DeMarrais et al. 1996:16). Specialists, i.e. priests, are also required to perform the cult (Brendalsmo 1997:71), and these ceremonies integrate and define large groups of people (DeMarrais 1996:17). The Christian sacraments, for instance, were some of the most important events in people's lives, both socially and economically (Brendalsmo 1997:89). Hence, control of these religious ceremonies would be an important path to social power.

Certain objects, for instance religious paraphernalia, ritual attire, icons or emblems, are also ways in which ideology can materialise. These objects can often form essential parts of religious ceremonies. The last form of materialised ideology is writing systems. Written documents can communicate political messages or propaganda. Writing requires education and training, so if overall literacy rates in a society are low, this may represent knowledge exclusive to elites or religious personnel, which will be able to manipulate it (DeMarrais et al.

1996:18-19). These last two forms of materialised ideology will not play any important part in this investigation, however.

There are certainly other ways in which to manifest one's power than through ideology (see Mann 1986). However, since my aim is to deal with episcopal power, the focus on ideology is justified. I will discuss power relationships in Hólar bishopric based on materialisation of ideology; discernable from the church topography through the number of clerics at each church. The competition between secular and ecclesiastical powers over churches will in this regard have clear relevance.

Figure 4: The present cathedral in Trondheim stands as a good example of materialisation of ideology (Photo: Jonas Dalheim).

Because of the aforementioned dependence on funding the costs involved in the process of materialising ideology, economic power and control will be dealt with. This will include income from tithes and religious services, as well as trade. A church, just as much as being an expression of the ideological system itself, demonstrates economic bounty enjoyed by the owner of the church building. Both monuments and religious ceremonies require a certain

amount of resources. If this had not been the case there would have been little use in applying them as part of a strategy towards gaining social power.

5 CHURCH CATEGORIES AND CHURCH TOPOGRAPHY

In this chapter I will lay the foundation for the way in which my maps are organised, and I will present the church topography in Hólar bishopric. The comparative church topography in Trøndelag will be included subsequently. With the inclusion of this I will, in this chapter, as well as the following, be able to assess to what degree the church topographies in the two countries correspond or diverge. Lists of the churches in the Auðunarmáldagi and Trøndelag are provided in the appendix. The church categories, as well as my use of them, will be discussed thoroughly. Regarding the church topography, however, the present chapter will simply be descriptive. Possible explanations for the issues concerning the church topography, made apparent in this chapter, will be discussed in chapter six.

In order to make the spatial distribution of churches provide information about power relations and episcopal influence, I first have to categorise the churches. In this way I should get an impression of how ideological power was distributed throughout the two areas. Due to the fundamentally different source materials providing information about the churches, I will have to use different criteria to categorise them. In Norway the difference in building materials, i.e. wood and stone, will stand as an indicator of the status of the churches. Since there were no stone churches in Iceland[9], I need to consider different qualities of the churches there, which can be used in comparison to the stone churches in Trøndelag. Considering the theory of materialisation of ideology and the possibility for elites to use ideology to their benefit, I find it unlikely that there were no churches in Hólar bishopric which would distinguish themselves from the rest.

To categorise the churches from Hólar I will be using the number of clerics connected to them. This, like the building material of the Norwegian churches, provides information about the status of the churches. Thus, the difference in criteria for categorising the churches is less problematic than first assumed. Essential is how the status churches were distributed across the countryside, in relation to the episcopal seats, thus allowing me to consider the Icelandic bishop's and the Norwegian archbishop's influence on the church topography in the two areas. Two essential considerations are whether they allowed the presence of status churches close to their seats, and to what degree they could prevent this, if they so desired.

[9] There are one or two exceptions, which will be mentioned in chapter 6.8.

5.1 Categories of Churches and Church Topography in Hólar Bishopric

Here I will account for the different status categories which I will apply in order to construct a hierarchy of the churches in Hólar bishopric. Using entries in the *Auðunarmáldagi* (DI II:240-336) Jón Viðar (2005a:183) has collected information about the number of clerics connected to the churches in Hólar bishopric. After having gone through the same source material, I have identified only nine out of the 97 church entries that do not include the number of clerics. Using the number of clerics as a measure, Jón Viðar Sigurðsson has coined the term *storkirke*, hereafter referred to as 'major church', i.e. a church with three or more clerics connected to it. He employs this term to discuss the political situation in Iceland in the 12th-13th centuries (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2005a).

As the term 'major church' is a modern construction, it is doubtful that it would fit into the contemporary medieval vocabulary concerning churches. The alternative, of operating with terms of the past might have provided me with different options of analyses. However, the number of clerics provides a definite set of data, something I consider more informative concerning the status of the churches than contemporary medieval terms concerning ownership, such as *staðir* or *bændakirkja* (see chapter two). Magnús (2000:143) states that the Auðunarmáldagi lacks information about ownership, but since ownership of the churches is of secondary concern for my investigation this is not a big issue. Even though the majority of the major churches were staðir churches, there does not seem to be a clear correspondence between these two types of churches (see Table 1). Bændakirkjar could be of similar stature as the staðir churches (Benedikt Eyþórsson 2005b:115).

For Hólar, the term *storkirke*, i.e. major church, as used by Jón Viðar (2005a), will thus be a defining element. The division between churches classified as major churches, and those which are not, will be essential. Further categorising will also be done on the basis of the number of clerics, dividing the churches into categories of one cleric and two clerics. In 1318 there were approximately 110 church sites (Figure 5): Hólar cathedral, 4 monasteries, 9 major churches, 25 churches with two clerics, 54 churches with one cleric, 8 churches with an unknown number of clerics, and in addition at least 9 churches which were not mentioned in the máldagi, but which still will form a part of my investigation.

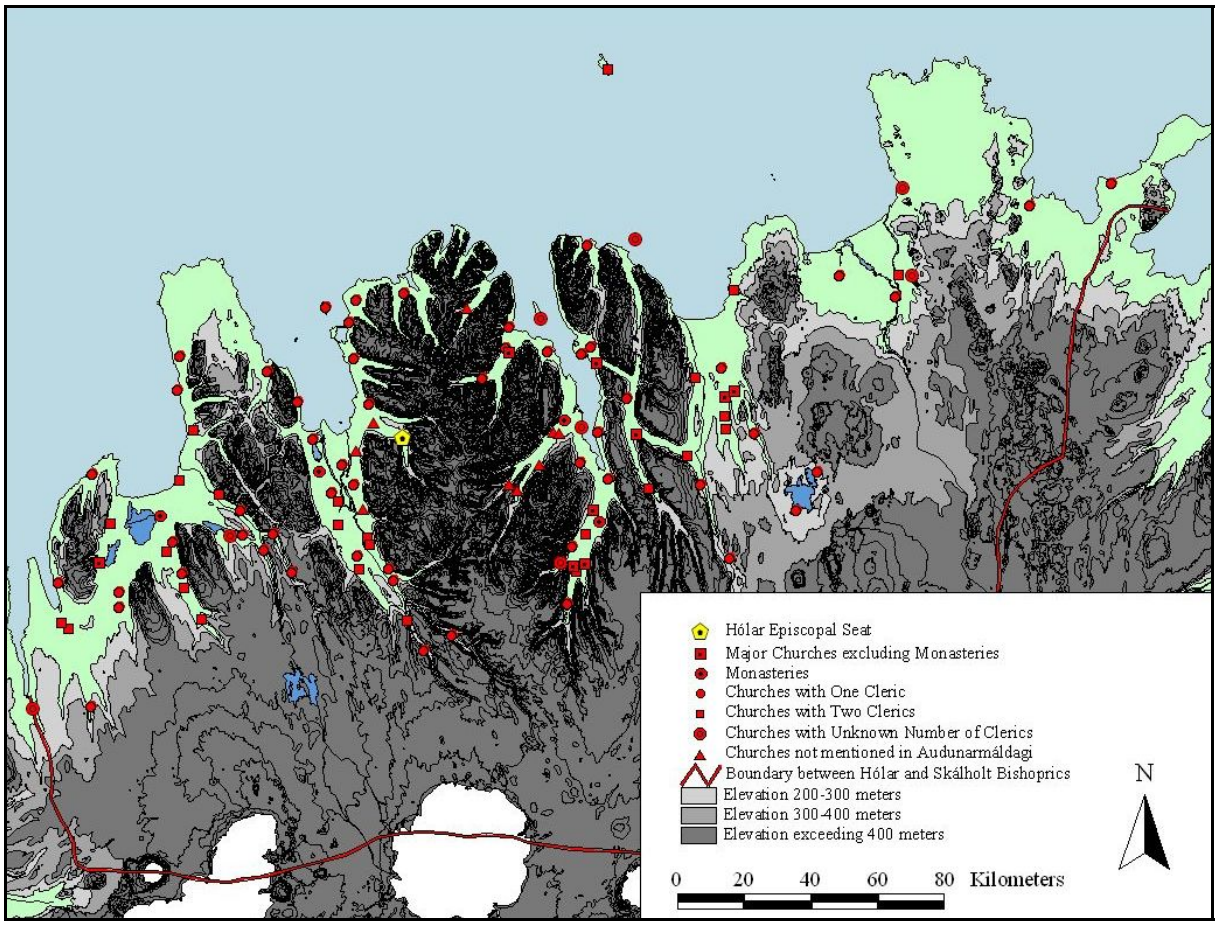

Figure 5: All 110 churches in Hólar bishopric anno 1318.

There might have been a thousand or more churches in Iceland not recorded in any church register. The reason was probably that they were lesser churches and chapels without clerics. As a result, it is difficult to speculate on a total number of churches in each bishopric. Moreover, the high number of churches without ministries in the 14th century makes it unsafe to assume anything about the proportion of churches with ministries in the earlier centuries (Helgi Skúli Kjartansson 2005:100; Orri Vésteinsson 2000:93).

The Icelandic churches are known to have been divided in a hierarchy based on the frequency of masses celebrated. There was a system of full churches, half churches, quarter churches and chapels (*bænhús*). All parish churches were full churches. At full churches priests were obligated to celebrate mass every holy day (Hjörleifur Stefánsson 1997:40). The half churches are mentioned for the first time in the máldagi from 1318, and might represent a category created in order to rectify a weakness in the parish system. A farmer had to be quite wealthy to establish a half church, as he would have to provide the dowry for it, as well as secure its income. Whenever a church was to be consecrated, the bishop would first ask the

builder how large a dowry he would grant the church. If the dowry was considered satisfactory, the consecration would take place. The dowry was usually a part of the farm on which the church stood (Magnús Stefánsson 2000:197, 205). By the 14th century both parish churches and dependent churches owned some amount of land. This was a requirement to ensure the priests' payment (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:112).

At these churches mass should be celebrated every second holy day. Priestly services to quarter churches had to be procured from the nearest full church, and mass were to be celebrated on one-fourth of the year's holy days. Furthest down the ladder were the chapels, where mass was celebrated only once a month. The owner of chapels had no income from them, and furthermore had to pay both candle toll, as well as tithe to the parish church (Hjörleifur Stefánsson 1997:40). All the churches in the Auðunarmáldagi were probably full churches, as they had resident clergy (Jón Jóhannesson 1969:139; Helgi Skúli Kjartansson 2005:98). Hence, this hierarchy will be superfluous for my categorisation.

Clerics were required to celebrate mass. For 24 of the churches in the Auðunarmáldagi, the number of clerics consists of priests and deacons combined. There were differences between these two types of clergy, however. According to a late medieval ordination rule, deacons could conduct baptisms, as well as preach, and they were to serve by the altar, of which the latter function was the most important. Hence, they had primarily liturgical tasks, which could also be performed by a full priest. Deacons were one step of ordination on the way to the office of priest. A subdeacon's functions were the same as a deacon's, but this office was never regarded as divine (Pirinen 1958:51; Dahlerup 1958:52). Deacons could celebrate mass, but they could not conduct marriage rituals or burial ceremonies (Sigríður Sigurðardóttir 2007:16). However, since mass was the most frequent Christian ceremony, and the one that all parishioners had to receive regularly, I believe it is justifiable to use the total number of clerics at the churches mentioned in the Auðunarmáldagi, and not distinguish between the types of clergy and the effects this might have had for the status of the churches. Furthermore, all clerics required the same amount of food and lodging. This must have been an economic burden for the church owners, in addition to the payment for their services. Moreover, the church owner would have to finance study trips abroad for priests (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:78), as long as he was not ordained and thus able to provide this education himself. The number of clerics is therefore a statistically significant material, constituting a clear data to be used in deciding the status of churches.

Having a large parish was not a significant trait of the major churches. Neither were the major churches older than other churches (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2005a:190). It is difficult to estimate precisely when the major churches were established, however. Jón Viðar (2005a:187-188) assumes that most of them were established in the first half of the 12th century, simply based on the likely fact that most of Iceland's churches were built in the 11th and 12th centuries. Over two-thirds of the major churches in Iceland can be connected to chieftain families (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2005a:188). The major churches provided income, but were also important symbols of rule that stood testimony over the church builders and their families, and their good standing with God and the saints (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2005a:188).

By using the major churches to discuss the political situation in the 12th century, Jón Viðar (2005a) is extrapolating the number of clerics in the máldagi from 1318 two hundred years back in time. This use of the Auðunarmáldagi makes evident the necessity of considering the stability of the number of clerics in the bishopric, as this might have fluctuated through time. However, the number of clerics is often given on the formula "Þar skal vera prestur" (DI II:258), or a similar phrasing. Consequently, the máldagi states how many clerics there *should* be at each church. This allows for an assumption that the number was fairly stable; otherwise it would have been of little use including it in the church register in 1318. In the appendix, in the table of the churches in the Auðunarmáldagi, I have first recorded the total number of clerics, and then, in parenthesis, the number of deacons or other lesser clerics. In those cases where there should be *either* two priests, or one priest including one deacon, I have recorded two priests, just to facilitate the categorising of the churches.

Several church entries in the máldagi require special mentioning in relation to the number of clerics I use in my analysis. First of all, there are nine churches which do not have the number of clerics stated. In only one of these cases there is a clear reason why this information has been omitted. This concerns Stóridalur/Djúpidalur in Saurbæjarhreppur. For this máldagi the transcribers of the Diplomatarium Islandicum were unable to interpret the text (DI II:275). Rípur at Hegranes (DI II:306) is another special case in the máldagi as it is listed with the following entry: "Þar er prestz skylld onn[u]r hour missere." This means that there should be a priest at the church every second year. The reason for this is unclear, and I will thus treat it as having one cleric. I find support for this decision from Jón (1969:139) who states that the máldagi included churches that were required to have their own priest. Hence, any church in the Auðunarmáldagi should have had at least one cleric. The same statement

could be used to treat the churches which do not have the number of clerics given as having at least one cleric. Yet, I will not count these churches when considering the number of clerics in the bishopric. The monasteries, which do not have the number of brothers or sisters stated, must have had more than one. The same assumption cannot be made for the churches which are not mentioned in the máldagi.

Grenjaðarstaðir in Aðaldalur (DI II:251) is another case that stands out in the máldagi. This is the church with the greatest number of clerics recorded, but this is only one of the reasons why it receives special mentioning. A second reason is that the church is registered with a variation in the number of clerics. This is due to a consideration that there should be one extra priest if the church at "reykia" was included in the parish. Since this case is mentioned, I will treat it as included. There is also mentioned "ij. adrer klerkar", i.e. two other clerics at the church. These were probably not full priests; otherwise they would have been stated as such. The total number of clerics was thus seven. The use of six or seven clerics will have no impact on Grenjaðarstaðir as a major church. Nevertheless, I choose to mention it in order to justify the total number of clerics which I use for the church, which again will have consequences for the total number of clerics for the bishopric.

Four of the major churches identified by Jón Viðar were in fact monasteries in 1318. A fifth monastery was established already around 1200 on the farm of Saurbær in Saurbæjarhreppur, but was short-lived (Byock 1988:153). Saurbær is stated as a monastery by Jón Viðar (2005a:187), even though it became a staðir after the abolishment of the monastic order in 1212 (DI II:274; Byock 1988:153; Magnús Stefánsson 2000:266, 320). Consequently, I will treat it as a major church, not as a monastery. The monasteries will furthermore be separated from the major churches in my analysis of the church topography, and rather be dealt with as a separate category. Still, according to Jón Viðar (2005a:185-186), there is good reason to believe that these farms housed major churches before the monastic orders were established there.

The four monasteries in Hólar bishopric throughout the medieval period were at Þingeyrar, Munkaþverá, Reynistaður and Möðruvellir (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2005a:186). It appears that the number of monks and nuns at the Icelandic monasteries was quite low, not exceeding the number of clerics at the largest major churches (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2005a:186). Einar Ól. Sveinsson (1953:112) estimates a monastic population of between five and ten members per religious house. Still, no information exists indicating a monastic population of more than five monks at any Icelandic monastery before 1300. Byock

(1988:153) believes that few Icelandic monasteries could be considered rich and that these tiny communities had great difficulties maintaining their work. Considering that the monasteries established in the time before 1300 became important producers of literature, this seems unlikely, at least in this later time period. Jón Viðar (2005a:194) stresses the close relationship between the chieftains and the monasteries. First and foremost, chieftains were in some of the cases responsible for their establishment. Furthermore, as already mentioned, most of the Icelandic monasteries were probably established on farms that housed major churches. The abbots were often connected to the chieftain families and were to a large extent recruited according to the political situation around the monasteries (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2005a:186, 194).

The first monastery to be established was that of Þingeyrar in Húnavatnssýsla, west of Skagafjörður (Figure 2). The year of establishment was either 1112 or 1133/34, depending on which source is to be trusted (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:133). This monastery was granted a portion of Hólar's tithes by the first bishop, Jón Ögmundarson (1106-1121). Munkathverá was the second monastery to be founded, in 1155 (Byock 1988:152-153). The last two monasteries, Reynistaður and at Möðruvellir, were founded much later and will be dealt with in chapter 6.10, in relation to the changes occurring around that time.

The distribution of status churches demarcated significantly among the different regions of Hólar bishopric, particularly visible between the two central fjords (Figure 6 and 7). Jón Viðar (2005a:188) argues that if there had been a plan behind the establishment of the major churches, the bishops would have made sure there was a better geographical distribution of them. Yet, this does not eliminate the possibility that the Hólar bishops affected the church topography after the episcopal seat was established. Helgi (2005:9), however, claims that even though the bishops certainly tried to have their say, and sometimes achieved to have some impact on the development of the church organisation, they could probably not carry out any exact plans for the whole area. Perhaps the uneven spatial distribution of status churches can be seen as a sign of power struggles that affected the church topography in ways that were not always practical considering religious observance, and which were outside of the bishops' control. These are considerations to which I will return in chapter six.

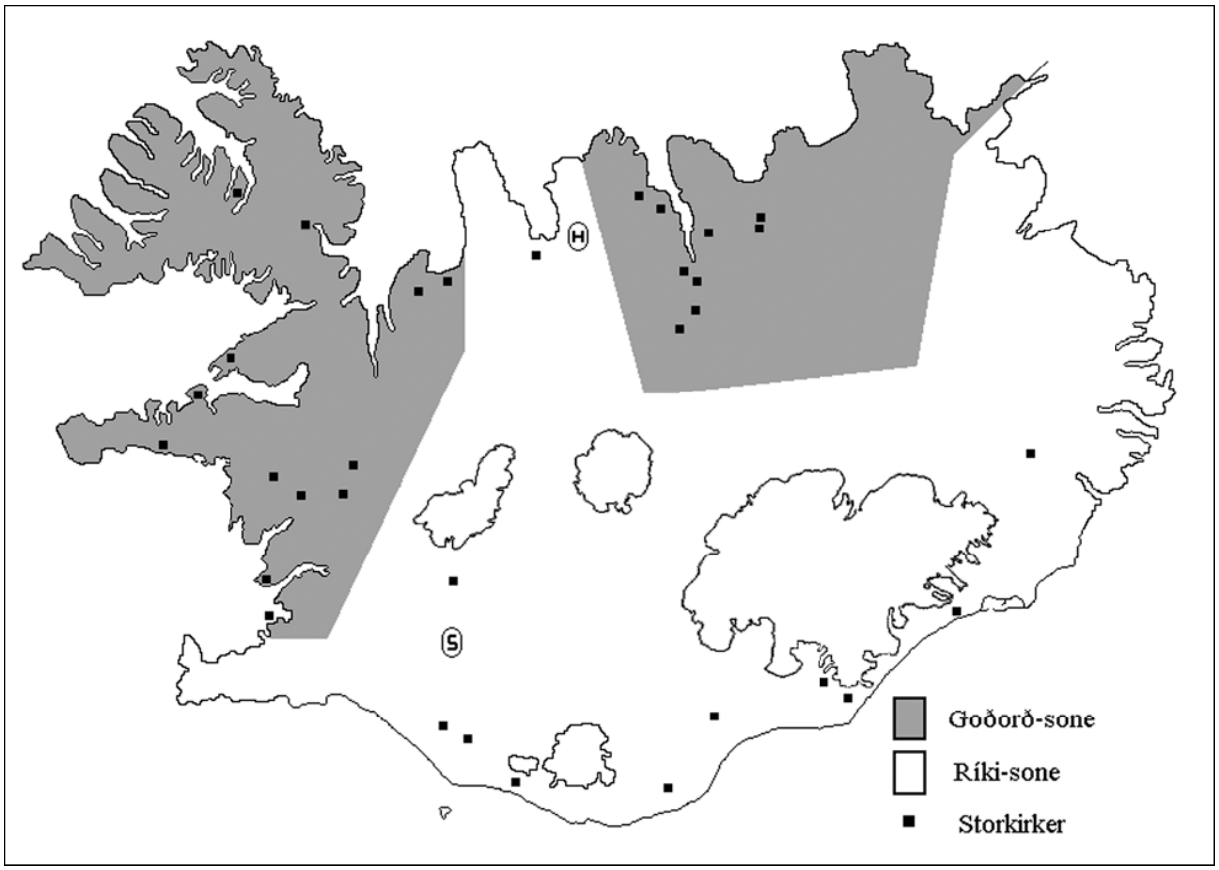

Figure 6: Major Churches ("Storkirker") in Iceland as used by Jón Viðar (2005a:Figur 1) to discuss the political situation in Iceland in 12th and 13th centuries.

Of the twelve major churches Jón Viðar identifies (Table 1, Figure 6), he counts six in Eyjafjarðarsýsla, whereas only one in Skagafjarðarsýsla, where Hólar Episcopal seat was located. He locates three major churches in Þingeyjarsýsla. I have, however, discovered one more major church in this region. In the Auðunarmáldagi (DI II:268) the church at Laufás in Grýtubakkahreppur is registered with the following entry: "Þar er. ij. Presta skylld og diakns." Translated, this means that there were two priests and one deacon at Laufás (match Figure 6 with Figure 7 where Laufás is located along the eastern shore halfway into Eyjafjörður). The last two major churches were located west of Skagafjarðarsýsla, in Húnavatnssýsla.

For my investigation I need to make four changes in relation to the count of major churches in Table 1. First of all, the church at Laufás will need to be included. Secondly, Möðruvellir in Hvammshreppur will be changed to a monastery, as this was established in 1296 and was still in existence in 1318. Thirdly, Saurbær in Saurbæjarhreppur will be changed from a monastery to a staðir, as the monastery there was abolished in 1212 (Byock 1988:153). Finally, as I treat the monasteries as a separate category, these are not counted

among the regular major churches. Consequently, a somewhat different distribution of status churches is revealed in the map in Figure 7 than in Jón Viðar Sigurðsson's map (Figure 6).

In contrast to the major churches, the churches with one cleric were evenly distributed throughout the bishopric, both inland and along the coast, with no clusters of note (Figure 8). The churches with two clerics were also evenly spread, although less densely, due to a smaller total number. Few of these churches were situated along the coast (Figure 9). All, except one, of the major churches were located inland. Thus, there seems to be a general distribution of higher status churches farther inland. The four monasteries were situated in the three westernmost regions of the bishopric, with two of them in Eyjafjarðarsýsla (see Figure 7). The churches lacking information about the number of clerics were evenly distributed in the bishopric (Figure 10), while the churches not mentioned in the Auðunarmáldagi were clustered in the vicinity of Hólar Episcopal seat (Figure 11).

Major churches in Hólar bishopric	**Type of church**	**Number of clerics**
Grenjaðarstaðir in Reykjadalshreppur	Staðir	6/7
Múli in Reykjadalshreppur	Staðir	4
Háls in Fnjóskadalshreppur	Staðir	3
Munkaþverá in Öngulsstaðahreppur	Monastery	?
Möðruvellir in Saurbæjarhreppur	Bændakirkja	3
Saurbær in Saurbæjarhreppur	Monastery	3
Hrafnagil in Hrafnagilshreppur	Bændakirkja	4
Möðruvellir in Hvammshreppur	Staðir	?
Vellir in Svarfaðardalshreppur	Staðir	3
Staður in Reynistaðarhreppur	Monastery	?
Þingeyrar in Neðri Vatnsdalshreppur	Monastery	?
Breiðabólstaður in Vesturhópshreppur	Staðir	4

Table 1: From Jón Viðar (2005a:Tabell 1). Major churches in Hólar bishopric anno 1318. The major church at Laufás in Grýtubakkahreppur is not included in the table.

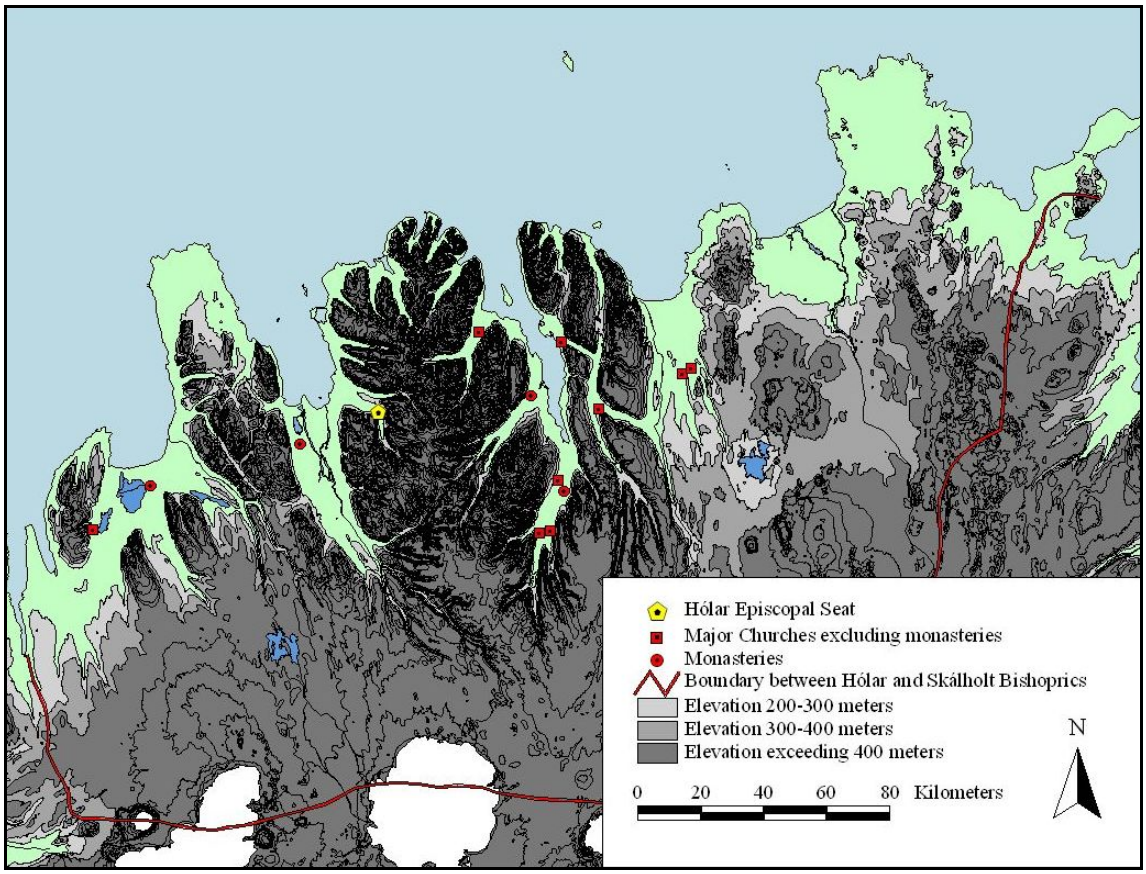

Figure 7: Major churches with monasteries as a separate category in Hólar bishopric anno 1318.

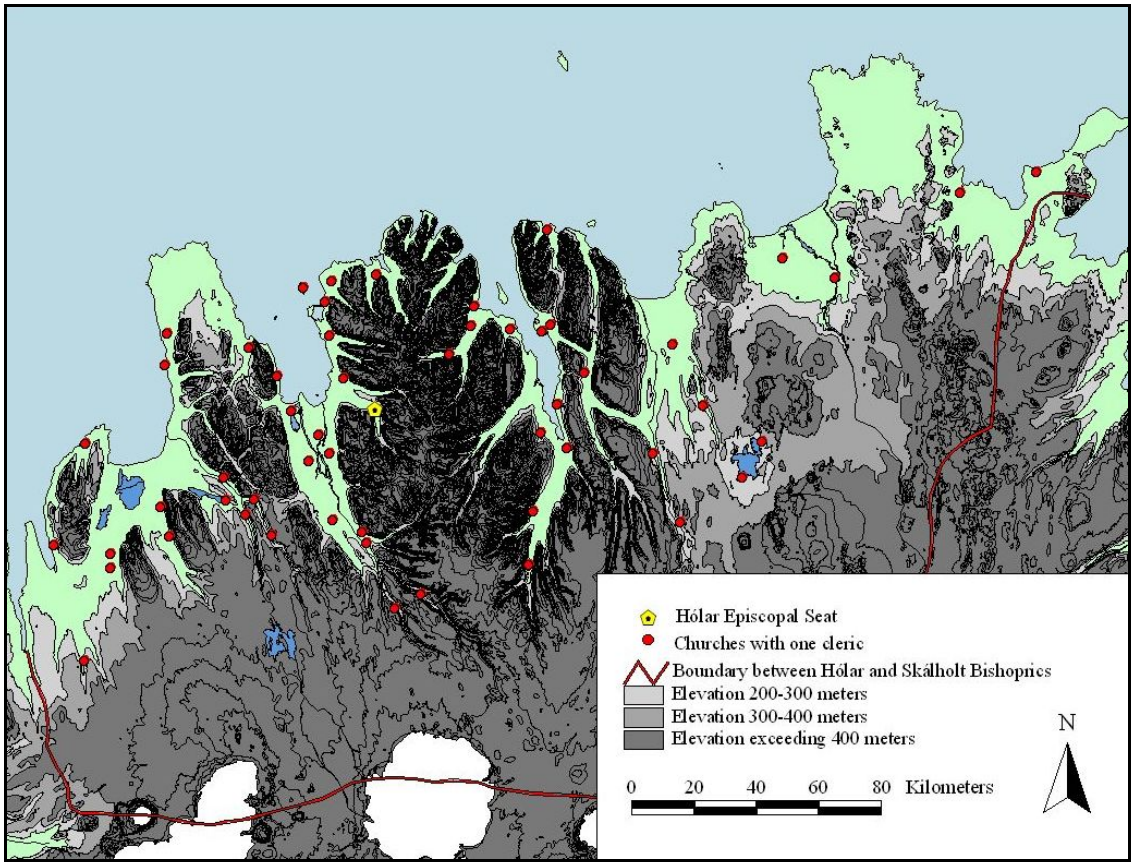

Figure 8: Churches with one cleric in Hólar bishopric anno 1318.

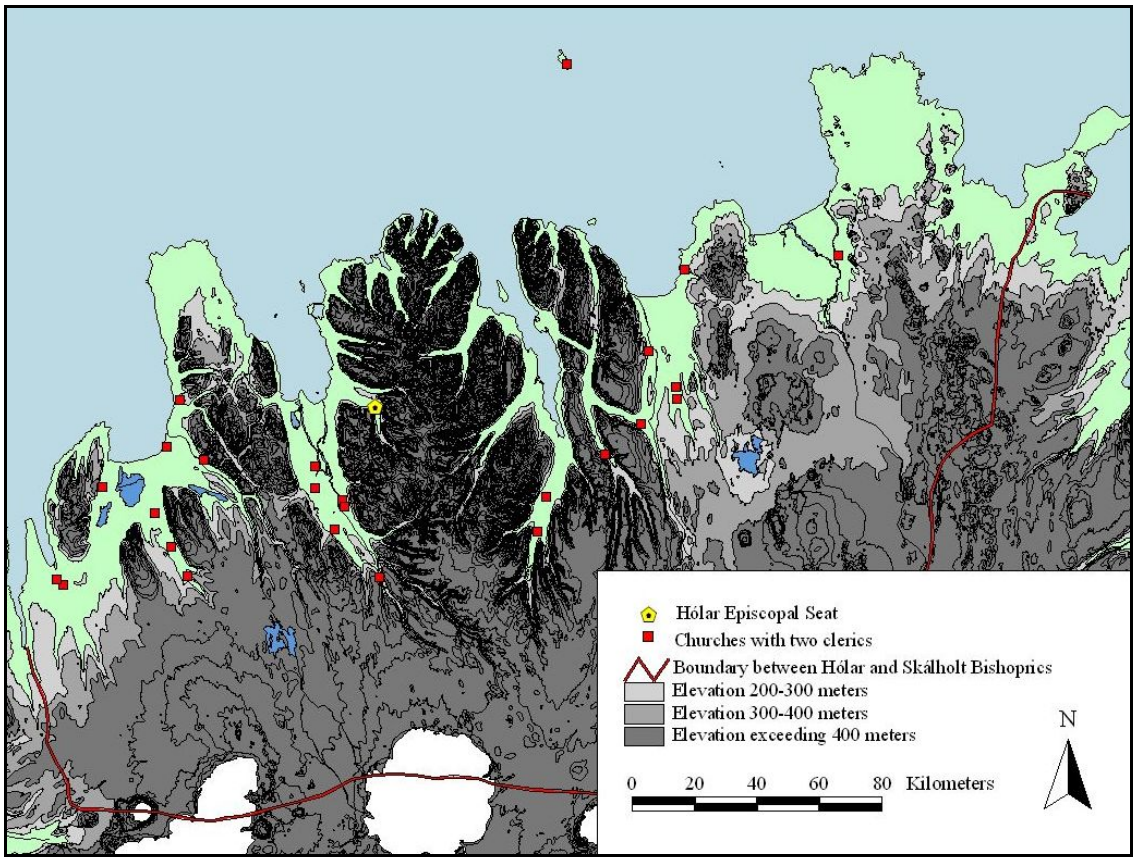

Figure 9: Churches with two clerics in Hólar bishopric anno 1318.

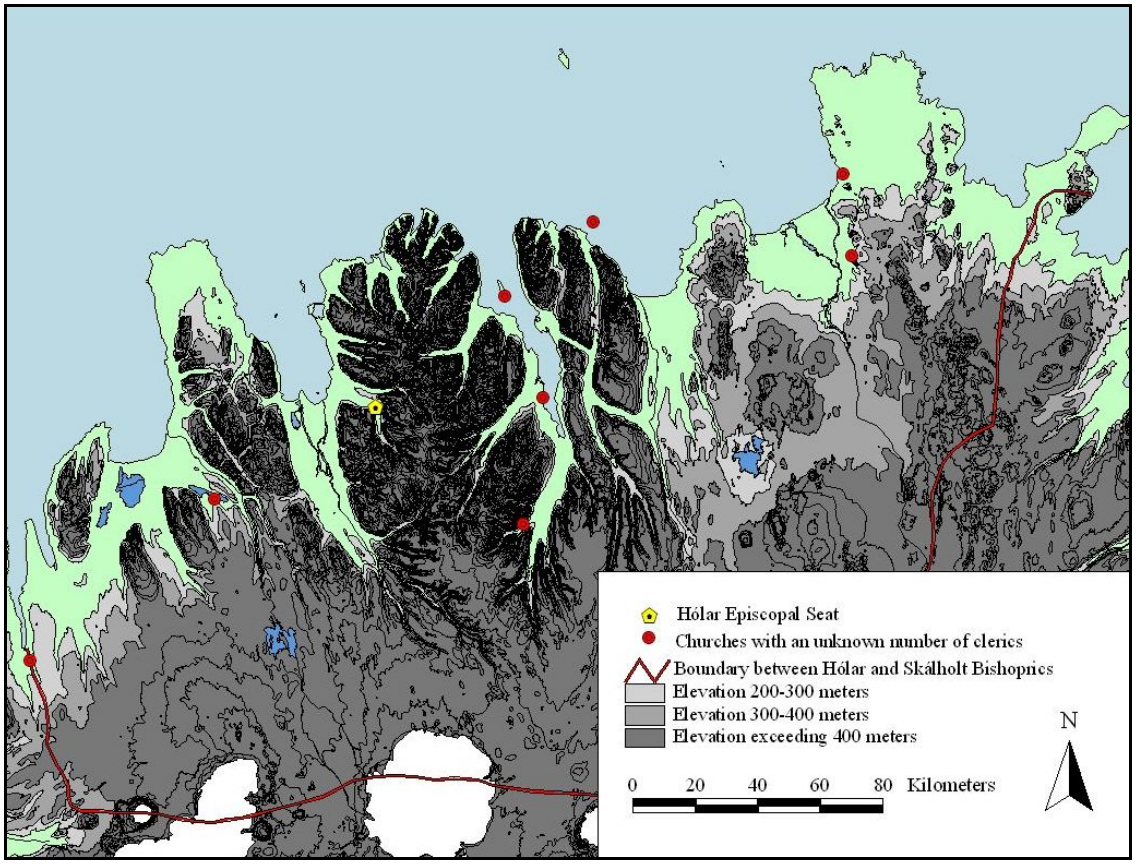

Figure 10: Churches with an unknown number of clerics in Hólar bishopric anno 1318.

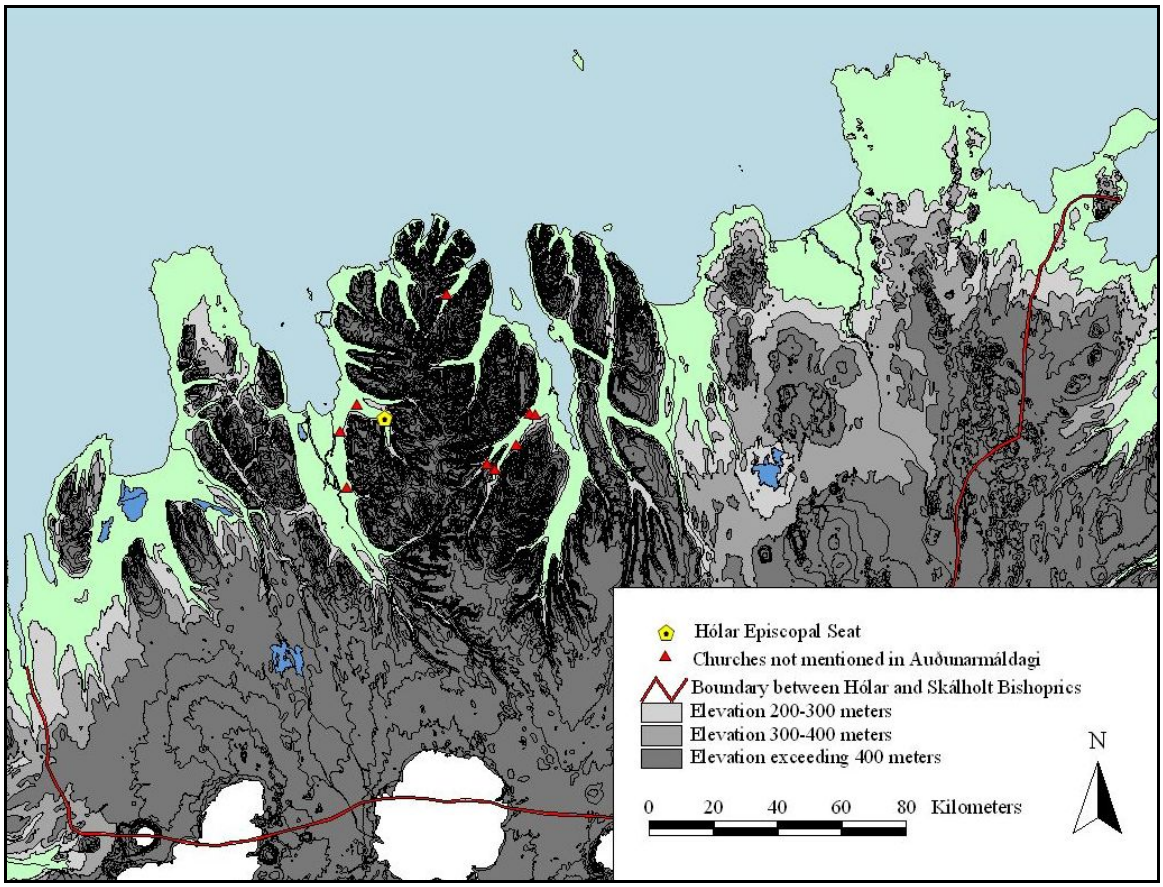

Figure 11: Churches not mentioned in the Auðunarmáldagi, assumed to exist in Hólar bishopric anno 1318.

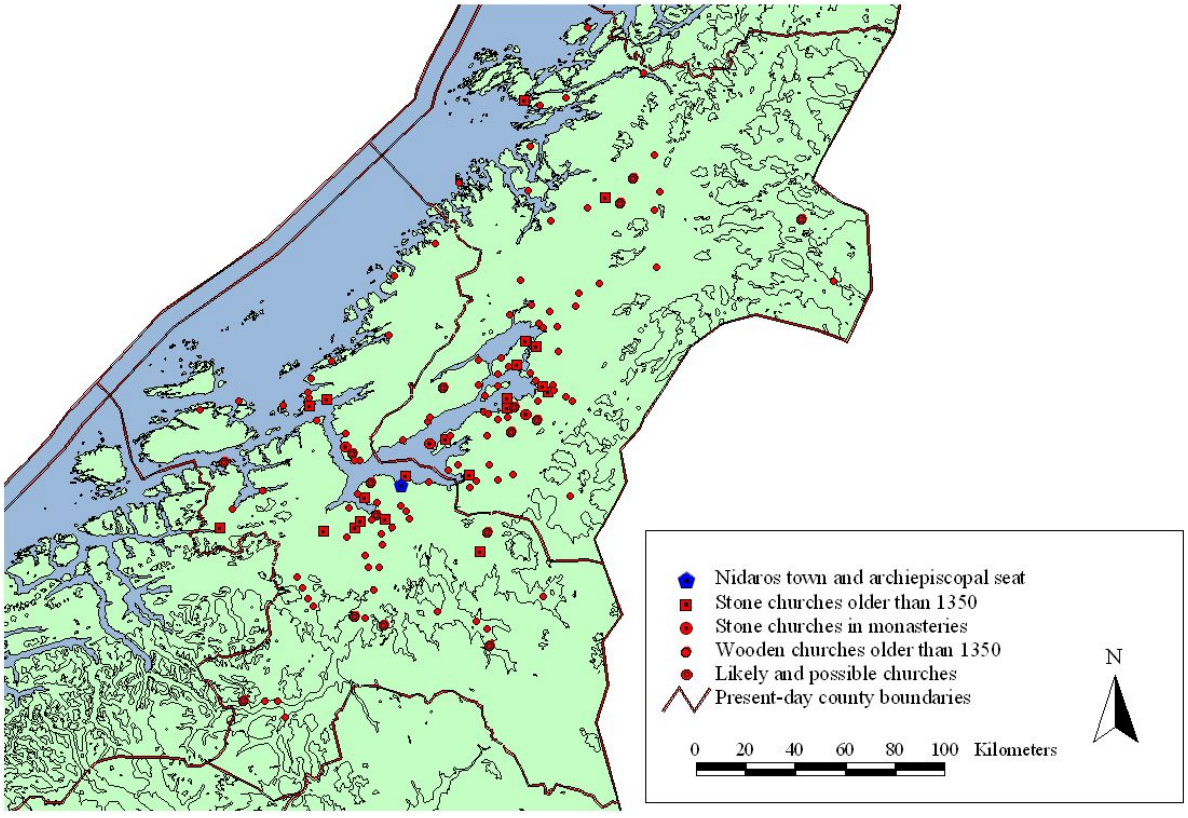

Figure 12: All churches in Trøndelag until 1350.

5.2 Categories of Churches and Church Topography in Trøndelag, Norway

After having dealt with the church categories and briefly presented the church topography in Hólar bishopric, I now turn to Trøndelag, in the central part of Norway (Figure 3), from where my comparative material originates. I will apply this material in order to shed new light on the anomalous church topography in Hólar bishopric.

The categories of churches in Trøndelag will exclusively be based on building material. Accordingly, I will divide them into stone and wooden churches. I find it inconsistent to divide the churches into more categories in order to compare them to the categories used for Hólar bishopric. It would not make good sense to use a specific number of clerics, and comparing it with a certain number of square meters in the ground plan of a stone church, for instance. It is true that the number of priests and assisting priests at a church in some case might actually provide indications of the size and shape of a church, in particular the chancel (Anglert 1995:73). This probably belongs to the exceptions, however. Moreover, it would not be possible to use the sizes of the wooden churches, as information concerning the exact sizes for most of them is lacking. This information exists for the stone churches, but as they will be compared to major churches in Hólar bishopric, it would be inconsistent to divide the stone churches, i.e. status churches, into more categories based on size, to compare with the non-major churches with categories of one and two clerics, which were lesser status churches. The comparison which I advocate proposes a similarity between stone churches and major churches, both of which are argued were status churches.

In Trøndelag, in the two first phases that Brendalsmo operates with, there were 140 churches in the countryside, including the certain and probable/possible churches (Figure 12). Of these there were 24 stone churches and 116 wooden churches. In addition there were a number of churches in the town of Nidaros. All of the church builders in Trøndelag in these two phases belonged to the upper strata of society. The largest group was probably the big farmers (*hauld*), followed by the aristocrats, the king, the archbishop and one of the monastic orders. The general population only participated in the building of churches when forced to (Brendalsmo 2006:285).

During the consideration of the different criteria for defining status churches an unforeseen and interesting element was revealed. This is the ratio of status churches in relation to the total number of churches in the two countries. In Hólar bishopric there were 13 major churches of a total of approximately 110 churches, i.e. 11.8 percent. In Trøndelag,

where there were 24 stone churches, the percentage of status churches, using the 140 church locations from phase 1 and 2, was 17.1 (match with Table 2).

Hólar bishopric		**Trøndelag**	
Churches:	110	**Churches:**	140
Major churches:	13	**Stone churches:**	24
Percentage:	11,80 %	**Percentage:**	17,10 %

Table 2: Percentages of status churches in Hólar bishopric and Trøndelag.

If not necessarily corresponding perfectly, these numbers indicate that both the major churches and the stone churches constituted distinctive parts of the bulk of the churches, distinguishable from specific economic qualities. It is intriguing to consider this to be more than a coincidence, and rather an indication of corresponding hierarchies of churches, visible in different ways, due to country-specific premises.

Operating with the presupposed number of churches that I do, another remarkable correspondence appears between the two areas. In the 35,316 km^2 big Hólar bishopric there were approximately 110 churches which makes it an average area of 321 km^2 per church. In the 41,260 km^2 big Trøndelag there were 140 churches, making it 295 km^2 per church. The two observations just mentioned both contribute to strengthen my argument that a comparison between Hólar and Trøndelag makes good sense.

Even though the division between stone and wooden churches probably was more readily comprehensible for the medieval populace than a term such as ‘major churches’, I will mention some of the contemporary terms in medieval Trøndelag. Part II of the Law of Frosta contains one of two Christian Law Sections (abbreviated F II). This mentions two types of churches: *fylkeskyrkjer* (county churches) and *høgendeskyrkjer* (privately owned churches) (F II:7, 13). In most of the old counties in Trøndelag it is possible to single out one church as primary in rank, which most likely was the county church (Sandnes 1969:117). As far as we can tell, these churches stood on farms that in the Middle Ages belonged to the king. The translation of “høgendeskirke” is perhaps not very precise. According to Hagland and Sandnes (1994:233), it was an annex church or privately owned church, or a church built for the convenience of a small part of a congregation. The building of county churches was regulated by law, while the building of private churches was not (Brendalsmo 2006:153). There was a clear difference between these churches (Brendalsmo 1997:87), but a private church owner could still be punished, should he neglect a damaged church (F II:13).

The law of Frosta makes it clear that county churches could be built of either stone or wood (F II:7), although stone was the preferred material. Of the selection of county churches proposed by Brendalsmo, only one – Meldal – was built of wood. The county churches came to be an expression of royal power, while the privately owned churches represented the power of the aristocracy (Brendalsmo 1997:86-87, 2006:162, 166, 455-456). If the amount of landed property is used as a measure for the status of the churches, like Sandnes (1969) does, the churches claimed to be county churches cannot be those of highest rank (Brendalsmo 2006:157). The demands regarding the county churches' desirable material (see F II:7) and appearance can rather be explained with the builders' needs of making visible their social and economic power (Brendalsmo 2006:160-161). I will not pursue the discussion about which churches were county churches. I will deal with the stone churches as a single group, in order to be able to perform a comparison with Hólar bishopric.

In the medieval period, in the area that today constitutes the two Trøndelag counties, there were, according to Sandnes (1993:109-110), approximately 110 parishes. He regards the counties as the oldest 'parishes'. The second group of parishes consisted of the so-called half counties. Brendalsmo (2006:157) questions whether there at all was something called half county churches in the Middle Ages. Besides, it is uncertain whether these were actually called parishes. When churches were built all over the countryside, from the middle of the 12th century until around 1350, new parishes developed around these privately owned churches, probably for practical reasons. Thus, a system of approximately 110 parishes evolved. What I find particularly interesting in relation to this number of parishes is that it corresponds perfectly with the generally accepted number of churches in Hólar bishopric. It is not certain that all of these churches were parish churches, but nevertheless, they were full churches with resident clergy (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:93; Helgi Skúli Kjartansson 2005:98).

Size and building material must have been highly relevant factors for the status of the churches in Trøndelag. Building in stone was something only representatives of the elite were able to do. The bigger and more magnificent the construction, the more the builder signalled that he belonged to the upper strata of society (Brendalsmo 2006:286). In order to maintain a leading position in society, new technology had to be utilised. Social relations were decisive for access to a scarce resource like technology, and it would first and foremost be the elite who had access to it, and could afford to make use of it (Brendalsmo 2006:25). Building a stone church was a major undertaking. In Norway, most of the knowledge about erecting buildings of stone was unknown in the 11th and 12th centuries, so services of architects and

different craftsmen had to be acquired from abroad. The raw materials needed, such as stone, chalk, timber, iron ore, as well as labour, the economy, and desire to build were all available in Norway, however. A wooden church did not demand a comparative gathering of competence. Yet, it did require specialists in building techniques and for decoration (Brendalsmo 1997:84).

Even the process before the actual construction of a stone church was costly, considering the time and resources involved. This would for instance include quarrying, transport and working of the stone (Brendalsmo 2003:245). Most of the churches in medieval Trøndelag were built on farms (Brendalsmo 2006:85). This fact is important to Brendalsmo as he applies the ideas of sociologist and economist Thorstein Veblen (1899) to explain the motives for building churches in Trøndelag. He believes that the motives of the wealthy individuals who chose to erect churches of stone were first of all to show that they had the resources to do so, and secondly to demonstrate their position in society by the conspicuous consumption it was to build in stone (Brendalsmo 2006:286). Veblen (1899:294) states that: "economic standards or canons of valuation are […] influenced by extra-economic standards of value." Hence, it is often worthwhile to look for explanations that are not necessarily statistically significant, i.e. that people make choices based on religious or political considerations (Brendalsmo 1997:90).

There cannot be proposed an absolute connection between liturgy and architecture in the early churches in Norway. There were no official, liturgical demands for churches being built of stone (Brendalsmo 2006:159), as no specific aesthetic conditions are inherent in the liturgy of the mass. The liturgy simply had to be adjusted to the physical surroundings, although the building roughly had to be built to be suitable for its uses (Jensenius 1995:98).

As for Hólar bishopric, I will briefly mention monasteries in Trøndelag, of which eight are known, established in the 12th or 13th century. Five of them belonged to the town of Nidaros and will not be dealt with. Outside the town were the monasteries of Tautra at Frosta, established in 1207, Munkeby further east, which probably lost importance after the establishment of Tautra, and finally the convent at Rein, established ca. 1230 (Lunde 1977:216; Sandnes 1993:111).

The chapel is a category that might cause problems if trying to distinguish church buildings from their contemporary function. The distinction of chapels from other churches cannot easily be made neither from the shape of the building, its building material, nor its inventory. To add to this, the use of the term chapel, and the functions related to it, can in

itself be unclear (Brendalsmo 2006:184). The designation of ecclesiastical institutions might also have been susceptible to change through time, for instance as parish sizes changed, or new churches were erected or torn down.

Now I will make a brief overview of the comparative church material from Trøndelag, assessing to what degree there was a similar distribution of status churches as in Hólar bishopric, that is, whether the churches were distributed in a similar way around the archbishop's seat and throughout the landscape.

The first that leaps to the eye when looking at a map of the stone churches is their different distribution, compared to that of major churches in Hólar bishopric (match Figure 13 with Figure 7). This might at first glance suggest that comparing the two types of churches is unsound. However, the ratios of the status churches in relation to the church bulks (Table 2) justify an attempt at comparison, as will further arguments presented in chapter six. There was a clustering of stone churches around the fjord in Trøndelag, thus they were closer to the town where the archiepiscopal seat was located, than the major churches in Hólar bishopric were to the episcopal seat. Many of them were situated close to the coastline, so in consequence few of them were inland.

The wooden churches in Trøndelag were, like the non-major churches in Hólar bishopric, distributed more evenly throughout the area (Figure 14). They were, however, concentrated in the central part of Trøndelag, and many more on the southern and eastern side of the Trondheimsfjord than on the northern and western.

5.3 Church Categories and Church Topography: Summary

When categorising the medieval churches I have chosen not to focus on contemporary terms, such as county churches, full or half churches. The reason for this is two-fold. The primary reason is that these contemporary denotations might have changed through time, something that is not always distinguishable from the material, especially not the archaeological. Especially among smaller churches there might have been continuous changes in status (Anglert 1995:64). Coupled with the lack of archaeological material (or perhaps *because* of this) the church buildings in Iceland have never been studied typologically, making the possibilities for identifying different categories of churches based solely on form and layout practically non-existent (Adolf Friðriksson 1994:97). The second reason why I disregard contemporary terms is the problem of deciding which categories of churches in the two countries here concerned that might be regarded as similar.

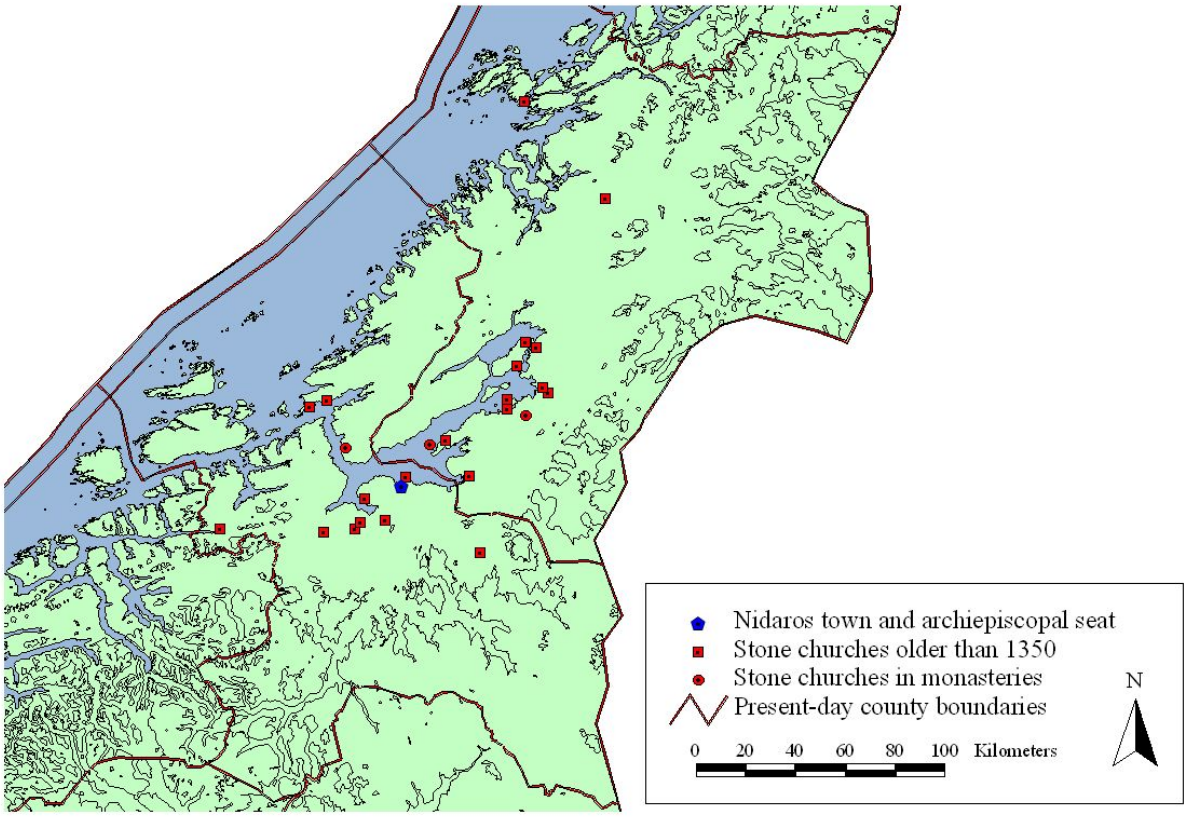

Figure 13: Stone churches in Trøndelag until 1350.

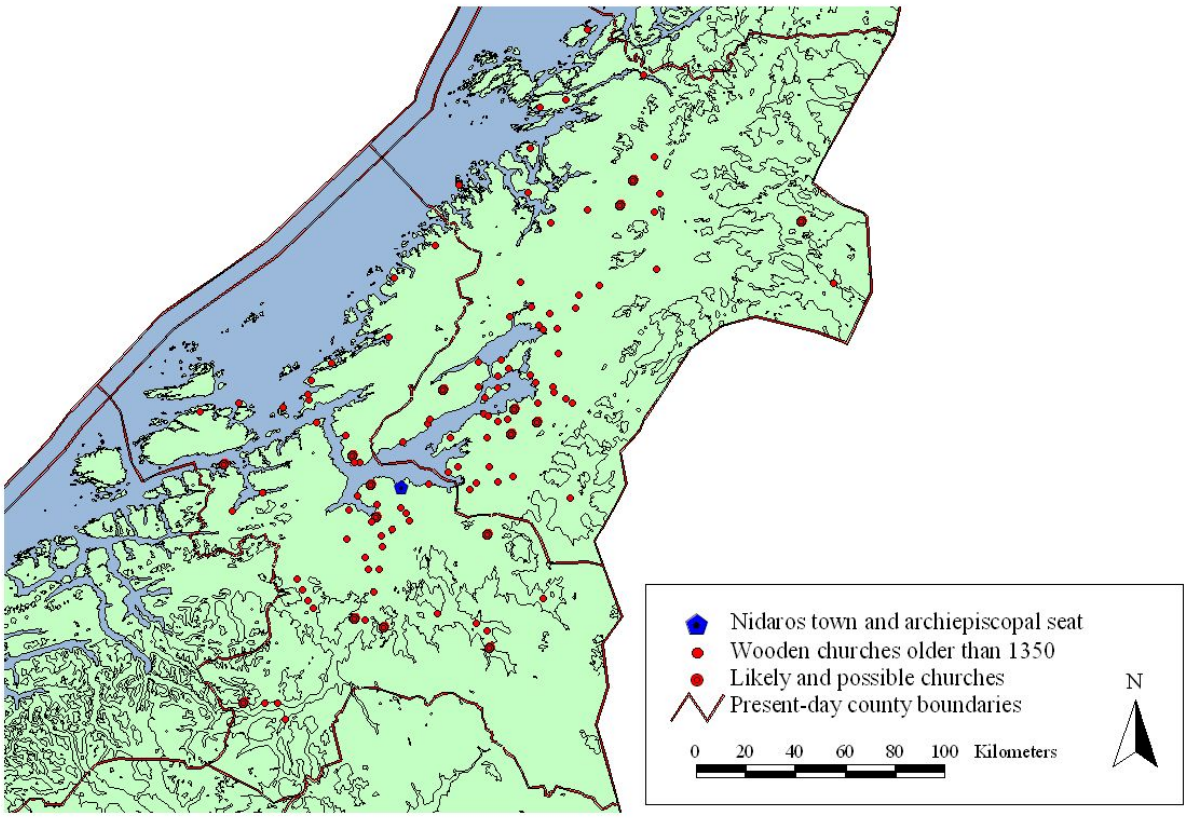

Figure 14: Wooden churches in Trøndelag until 1350.

Hence, the problem of comparing categories would be just as accentuated by using contemporary terms, as by applying unequal empirical information, which I have chosen to do.

I have sought other methods of comparison, and as such the status indicator in Hólar bishopric is the number of clerics. Although this probably changed somewhat through time, a fair stability has been argued and needs to be presupposed. In Trøndelag the status indicator is the building material, which was decided at the time of the church being built, and remained so, unless unforeseen and destructive events, such as fires, occurred. However, there were also deliberate changes being made to the stone churches. As size and shape of a church were important elements in struggles between representatives of the social elite (Brendalsmo 2006:235), most stone churches can be regarded as works in progress. Each stage was completed separately, and the final result might not always have corresponded with what the builder first had in mind, as he would have to adjust the building plans in order to continue the negotiation of power relationships with other representatives of the elite. An essential consequence of this way of perceiving the buildings' history is that no church can be said to have been built and completed at the point in time indicated by the youngest visible style piece (Brendalsmo 2006:235-236). As a result from the considerations presented here, the possible fluctuation of the number of clerics in the churches in Hólar bishopric might correspond to changes made during the prolonged construction phase of the stone churches in Trøndelag.

Even though it is likely that the number of clerics was fairly stable over time, as I have just argued, I believe it is a more reliable use of the Auðunarmáldagi to isolate the year 1318, instead of proclaiming a church topography for the whole time period, from the establishment of the episcopal seat. To the extent that I will stretch my investigation backwards in time, it will essentially be with the church topography anno 1318 in mind, assessing how different elements during the two previous centuries contributed to the situation at Bishop Auðun's time.

When considering Brendalsmo's (2006) work with the division of the churches in Trøndelag into three phases, it is important to keep in mind the possibility that some of the wooden churches were not in existence at the point in time on which I focus. There might also have been more churches, indicated by the locations known from tradition. Discerning exactly when churches were in existence is next to impossible without extensive archaeological

excavations or reliable written sources. Consequently, I will omit this consideration and treat them all as existing in this time period.

Both major churches and stone churches can arguably be called ideological status symbols. The ideological power inherent in them materialises in different ways, however. We do not know whether the major churches were bigger or more richly decorated than other churches, although there might be reason to believe so. Nevertheless, control of the clergy, and thus religious ceremonies, was another likely way in which Icelandic church owners could achieve status from their churches. This is comparable to the church magnates in Trøndelag, whose ideological power materialised in stone monuments, that is, the churches.

I propose that a higher number of clerics were comparable way in which the church owner or administrator in Hólar bishopric could demonstrate his conspicuous consumption and ideological power, in relation to those in Trøndelag, who could use the stone churches to achieve the same. The comparison of churches with different qualities thus makes good sense. The ratio of status churches compared to the bulk of churches in the two countries correspond fairly well, and, more importantly, the two kinds of status indicators of the churches are different ways in which materialisation of ideology manifested in the two countries, conditioned by circumstances involving elements such as the availability of building material, and the church organisation in the respective countries.

After having taken the different categories of churches into consideration, one important assumption needs emphasising. This is that the elements I use to distinguish the status churches were susceptible to the personal preferences of the church builders or administrators. This applies to both countries, not only the number of clerics in Hólar bishopric. This element of choice is presumed when I apply the theory of materialisation of ideology, as this could be a way in which affluent individuals were able to make use of this source of social to assert their influence in an area larger than their immediate surroundings (DeMarrais et al. 1996:16). After this discussion of church categories and the presentation of the church topographies in the two countries, I will address possible aspects affecting the distribution of status churches.

6 POSSIBLE ASPECTS AFFECTING THE CHURCH TOPOGRAPHY

In this chapter I will thoroughly discuss the church topography in Hólar bishopric, assessing the impact of various aspects assumed to affect the distribution of major churches. Different elements of the relationship between the Icelandic chieftains and the episcopal power, some of which were briefly mentioned in chapter two, will receive much attention in the following, in order to evaluate whether there was an episcopal power to speak of, and whether this power was increasing or decreasing throughout the time period from 1106 to 1318.

Where there are Christians, there must be churches, so when looking for reasons for the curious distribution of status churches in Hólar bishopric, the straightforward explanation should be sought first. Thus, as a first approach, I will consider settlement pattern and population number.

6.1 Settlement and Population in Hólar Bishopric

Iceland's northern quarter, corresponding with the area of Hólar bishopric, is almost entirely a valley environment, and was also the most densely populated quarter in the medieval period. The population was divided into four main fjord-valley regions cut off from each other by mountain ranges (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:12). In a fjord environment a farm would normally only have shared boundaries with the settlements on either side of it. Farms were few and far apart, and each normally had access to all basic resources within its own boundaries, albeit little available lowland, necessitating a large area for each farm to sustain itself. This meant that social interaction, and thus possible areas of friction, would have been limited in the fjords, both because of the physical barriers to communication, but also because the economic needs for frequent contact with others were slight. Thus, people had fewer opportunities to get on each other's nerves, as Orri (2000:13) so eloquently puts it.

In a valley environment each farm would have had boundaries with at least three other settlements, on either side and across the river. Within its boundaries, each farmstead would have had access to most of the important resources, except the marine ones. The most important difference between the fjord and valley environments, however, seems to have been that density of settlement was much greater in the valleys. According to Orri (2000:14), conflict would conceivably arise more easily in valley environments, due to the proximity and close contact of its inhabitants. Enough people and material riches existed in order to produce

a need for strong third parties to settle disputes. In the Icelandic society, with its system of arbitration, it was possible for some people to accumulate power in a relatively easy way. There were still limits to how much their power could grow, obvious from the physical barriers between each of the four northern settlement areas, visible in most of the maps of Hólar bishopric presented here. The concentration of major churches inside Eyjafjörður can be an indication of the competition going on within this valley region. None of the northern valleys became dominated by a single chieftain or family until around or after 1200, though (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:14-15).

Both Skagafjarðarsýsla and Eyjafjarðarsýsla are similar landscapes, although Skagafjarðarsýsla has a larger area of lowland. Jón Viðar's map (Figure 6) of the major churches displays a curious distribution. When including the topographic features of the area, the image becomes more understandable, however (Figure 15). The concentration of major churches in certain areas is evidently decided by the lowland in between the mountains, available for settlement.

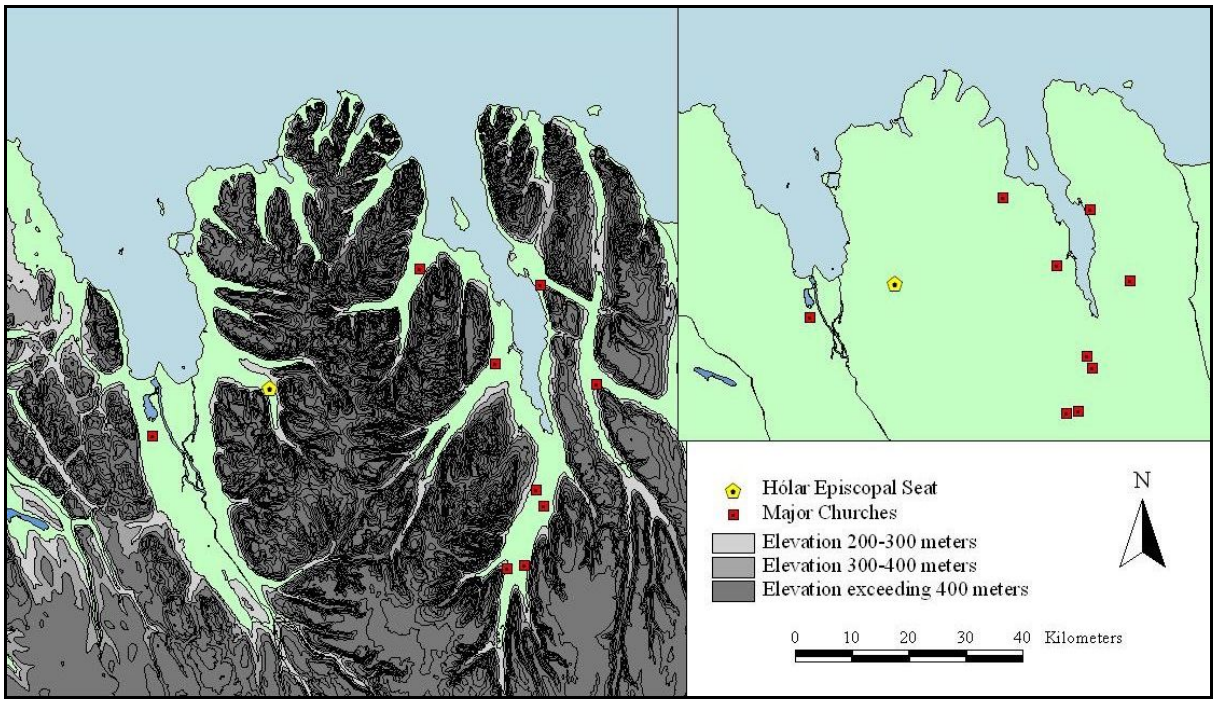

Figure 15: Distribution of major churches in Hólar bishopric anno 1318, with and without topographic features.

Still, the differences in topography in Skagafjarðarsýsla and Eyjafjarðarsýsla are not great enough to solely account for why the distribution of major churches was so different from one area to the other. Furthermore, despite having the greatest population density, the difference

in total population number in Skagafjarðarsýsla, compared to Eyjafjarðarsýsla and the other regions, is insignificant (see Table 4).

There has been a long discussion concerning population number in medieval Iceland (see for instance Steffensen 1968:390-392; Jón Viðar 2000:47-50). The numbers have varied between 33,000 and 80,000. The oldest reliable source is the *manntalið* (census) from 1703 (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2000:44), stating a population of 50,358 (Statoids 2006). It has been argued that the population in earlier times has not been much greater, considering that the country's climate and economic sustainability remained the same. In 1097 the number of assembly-tax-paying householders, i.e. householders who owned a minimum amount of property, was approximately 4,500. These took turns in following their chieftain to the Alþing, with those staying at home paying for the travel expenses for those who went (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:296). Relating this number with results from archaeological excavations of farms from the 11th century, the average household has been estimated to 15-16 people. This amounts to a total population of around 70,000. In the 13th century the population was probably stationary, although fluctuating – a tendency continuing in the 14th century (Steffensen 1968:391-392).

I will not go further into this discussion here, and, even though this previous reasoning seems convincing, I choose to use the number that Orri (2000:55) and Jón Viðar (2000:44) adhere to, which is estimated to approximately 50,000 in the 14th and 15th centuries. This number corresponds with the 1703-census, as a result facilitating my analysis combining church topography and settlement pattern in Hólar bishopric in 1318. Moreover, due to the stability in climate and economic sustainability just mentioned, I will apply the same settlement distribution as is provided in this source. In the northern quarter, in what constituted Hólar bishopric, the estimated population was 11,777 in 1703 AD, and I will use the same number for my time period (The National Archives of Iceland).

Region	**Number of hreppar**	**Number of farms**
Húnavatnssýsla	12	335
Skagafjarðarsýsla	12	340
Eyjafjarðarsýsla	10	334
Þingeyjarsýsla	12	322

Table 3: Regions/sýslar in Hólar bishopric with numbers of hreppar and farms, derived from the Old Icelandic land registers (Björn Lárusson 1967:243, 265, 285, 307).

The number of *hreppar*, or communes, is unknown from the Commonwealth Period, but from the beginning of the 18th century the land registers provide complete accounts for this. It is generally assumed that the number of hreppar was stable from the high medieval period (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson et al. 2005:155-156). Hólar bishopric consisted of four *sýslar* or regions, divided into 46 hreppar, or communes, as indicated in Table 3 (see also Figure 2).

The distribution of the population might provide clues to understanding the uneven distribution of major churches with several clerics in Hólar bishopric. However, as seen in Table 3, the four sýslar in the north each had from 322 to 334 farms (Björn Lárusson 1967:243, 265, 285, 307), thus there was an even distribution of settlement. Yet, that there were two less hreppar in Eyjafjarðarsýsla means that some of these were somewhat larger. Still, there is no clear correspondence between the number of farms in a region or hreppar and the number of major churches. (See Table 5 for a complete overview of churches and clerics.)

Húnavatnssýsla (12)	**Farms**	**Population**
Hrútafjarðarhreppur	13	115
Miðfjarðarhreppur	46	407
Vatnsneshreppur	30	266
Vestara-Hópshreppur	32	283
Víðidalshreppur	18	159
Neðri-Vatnsdalshreppur	20	177
Fremri-Vatnsdalshreppur	20	177
Torfalækjarhreppur	19	168
SvínavatnsÞingsókn	26	230
Bólstaðarhlíðarhreppur	34	301
Engihlíðarhreppur	25	221
Vindhælishreppur	52	460
Total:	**335**	**2964**

Skagafjarðarsýsla (12)	**Farms**	**Population**
Skefilsstaðahreppur	27	239
Sauðárhreppur	19	168
Rípurhreppur	13	115
Reynistaðarhreppur	19	168
Seyluhreppur	26	230
Lýtingsstaðahreppur	38	336
Akraþingssókn	47	416
Viðvíkurhreppur	18	159
Hólahreppur	21	186
Höfðastrandarhreppur	40	354
Sléttuhlíð	18	160
Fljótahreppur	54	478
Total:	**340**	**3009**

Eyjafjarðarsýsla (10)	**Farms**	**Population**
Siglufjörður	14	124
Ólafsfjörður	21	186
Svarfaðardalshreppur	81	717
Hvammshreppur	25	221
SkriðuÞingssókn	44	389
Glæsibæjarhreppur	37	327
Hrafnagilshreppur	25	221
Saurbæjarhreppur	46	407
Öngulsstaðahreppur	31	274
Grímsey	10	89
Total:	**334**	**2955**

Þingeyjarsýsla (12)	**Farms**	**Population**
Svalbarðaströnd	14	124
Grýtubakkahreppur	34	301
Fnjóskadalshreppur	43	381
Ljósavatnshreppur	43	381
Reykjadalshreppur	64	566
Mývatan	21	186
Tjörnes	23	203
Kelduhverfi	18	159
Axarfjörður	20	177
Presthólahreppur	18	159
Þistilfjörður	13	115
Langanes	11	97
Total:	**322**	**2849**

Table 4: The four regions of Hólar bishopric (W to E) with the number of hreppar in parenthesis. Total population in the bishopric: 11,777. Total number of farms in the bishopric: 1331. Average population per farm: 8.85 (Björn Lárusson 1967:243, 265, 285, 307; The National Archives of Iceland).

Region/sýsla	Types of churches in the for sýslar with number of clerics in parenthesis			Clerics and population		
	Churches with one cleric	Churches with two clerics	Major churches	Total	Population	Per cleric
Hunavátnsýsla	14 (14)	9 (18)	1 (4)	24 (36)	2,964	82
Skagafjörður	17 (17)	6 (12)	0	23 (29)	3,009	104
Eyjafjörður	8 (8)	3 (6)	4 (13)	15 (27)	2,955	109
Þingeyjarsýsla	15 (15)	7 (14)	4 (17)	26 (46)	2,849	62
Hólar bishopric	*54 (54)*	*25 (50)*	*9 (34)*	*88 (138)*	*11,777*	*85*

Region/sýsla	Churches not included in the above calculations		
	Monasteries	Unknown number of clerics	Not in Audunarmáldagi
Hunavátnsýsla	1	2	
Skagafjörður	1		3
Eyjafjörður	2	3	6
Þingeyjarsýsla		3	
Hólar bishopric	*4*	*8*	*9*

Table 5: Complete overview of churches and clerics in the four regions/sýslar constituting Hólar bishopric anno 1318. Only churches with definite numbers of clerics known are included in the calculations (DI II: no. 240-336; Björn Lárusson 1967:243, 265, 285, 307; The National Archives of Iceland).

The sizes of the hreppar varied, and can be used to seek an explanation for a greater need for clerics in some areas. There was one really large hreppur in Eyjafjarðarsýsla – Svarfaðardalshreppur – with 81 farms. This was significantly greater than the average-size hreppur in Eyjafjarðarsýsla, which had 33 farms. However, there were not any more major churches, or churches altogether, in this hreppur than in any other. There was one major church there, however – Vellir. There were exceptionally small hreppar as well, the smallest one being Grímsey with only ten farms. However, being an island situated far from land, this can be considered natural. Some small hreppar even contained major churches, for instance Hrafnagil in Hrafnagilshreppur, which had a mere 25 farms. In Þingeyjarsýsla, however, the two easternmost major churches were located in Reykjadalshreppur, a hreppur with significantly more farms (64) than the other hreppar in the area; the two second largest had 43 farms each. This region was clearly more sparsely populated, as all the other hreppar except the three mentioned contained a much lower number of farms. Thus, the distribution of major churches in this region corresponded to the settlement.

Concerning the distribution of major churches between Þingeyjarsýsla and Eyjafjarðarsýsla, it is interesting to note that Grýtubakkahreppur, wherein the major church at Laufás was situated, was in Þingeyjarsýsla (Björn Lárusson 1967:307). Thus, the two regions were divided by Eyjafjörður. When looking at the map in Figure 15, either with or without the topographic features, a natural assumption would be to consider Laufás to belong to Eyjafjarðarsýsla. That this was not the case, as least not in 1703, might indicate the significance of the body of water separating one side of the fjord from the other.

6.2 Comparison with Settlement and Population in Trøndelag, Norway

In Trøndelag the landscape in the western part is dominated by valleys orientated east-west, all of which end in fjords. The areas suitable for settlement might have varied from Trøndelag to Northern Iceland, but looking at a map of the maximum spread of the population in Trøndelag (Figure 16), and correlating this with the amount of lowland in Hólar bishopric, a comparison does not seem improbable. In Trøndelag the Trondheimsfjord was a hub in the landscape, making the coastline the key to political and economic power (Brendalsmo 2006:39, 49). This is where most of the stone churches were situated.

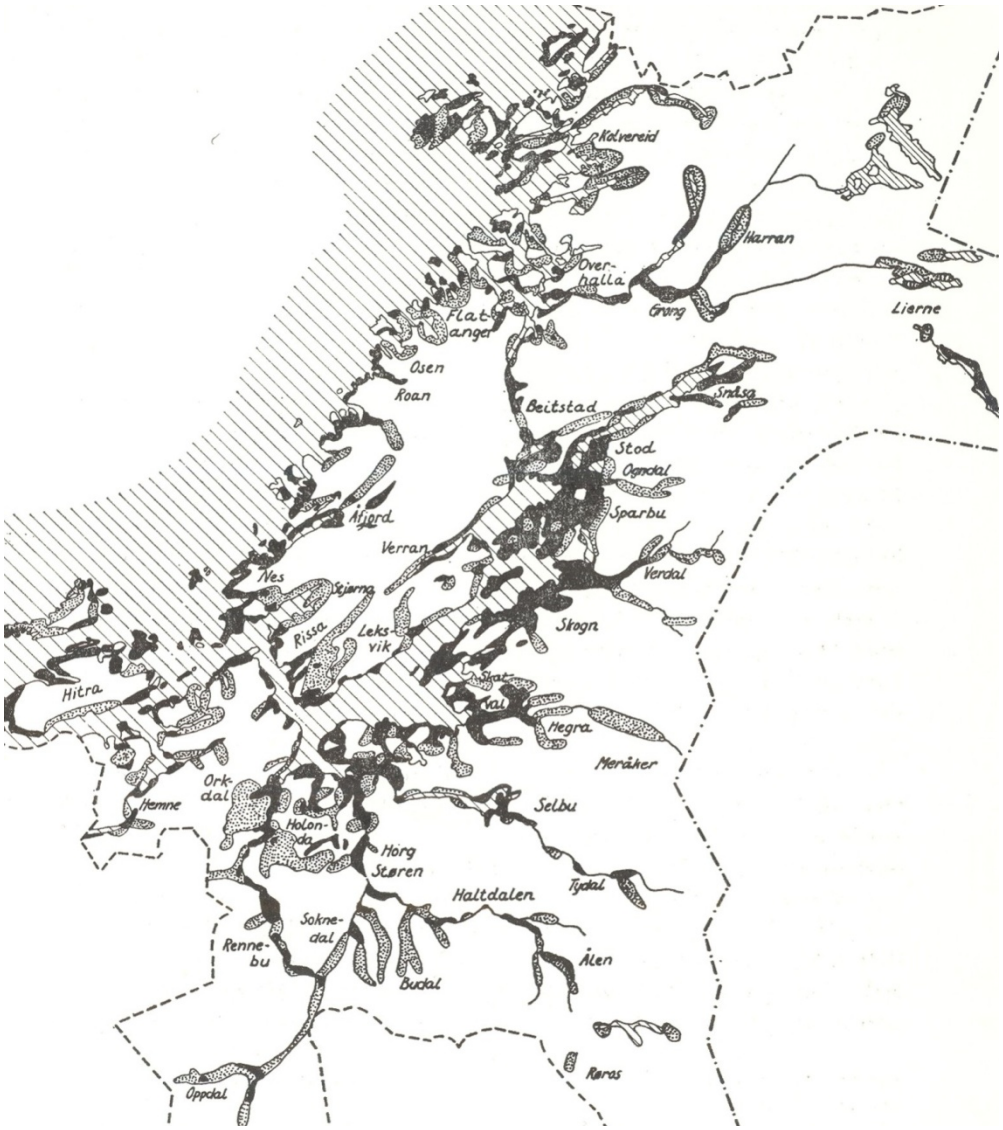

Figure 16: From Sandnes (1971:Figur 10). Maximum spread of population in medieval Trøndelag.

Many of the stone churches were probably county churches (see chapter 5.2). These were important for the Church since they could guarantee the whole population access to the sacraments and mass, something the steadily increasing number of privately owned churches with their unschooled and dependent clergy could not (Brendalsmo 2006:162). The assurance for the availability of religious services can explain the even distribution of the county churches along the Trondheimsfjord (Figure 17), where the population density was greatest (see Figure 16). According to Gerhard Schøning (1910:104), the county churches in all parts of the country were built of stone, while the remaining churches were built of wood.

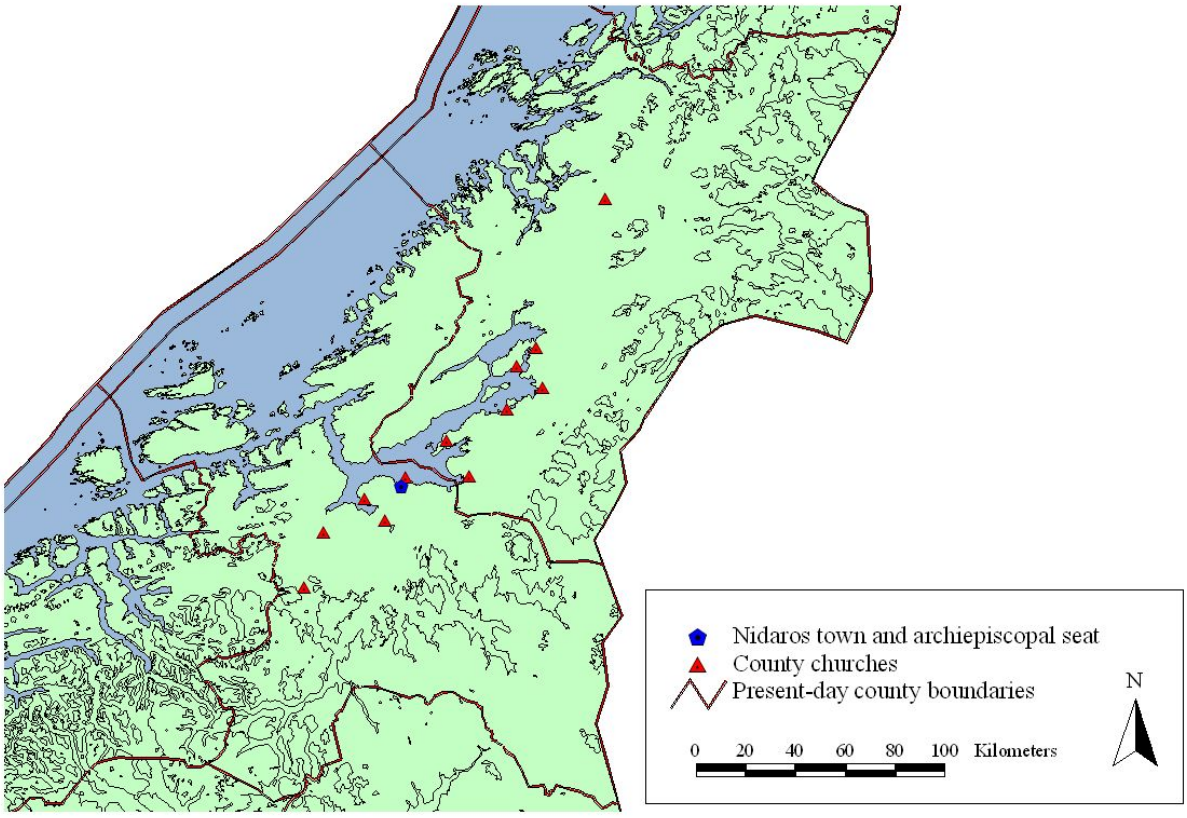

Figure 17: County churches in Trøndelag. All were stone churches, except Grøtte/Meldal (the southernmost church) which was wooden (Brendalsmo 2006:455-456).

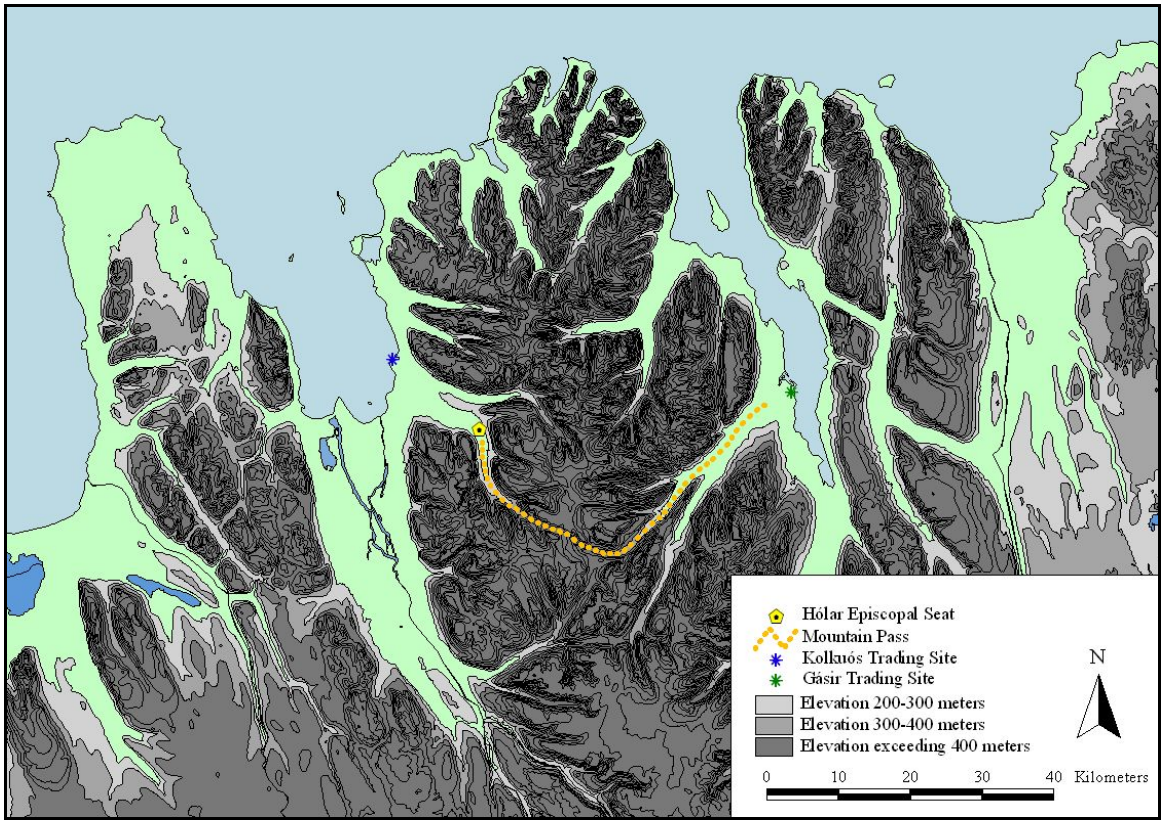

Figure 18: The mountain pass connecting Skagafjörður and Eyjafjörður. The two northern trading sites at Gásir and Kolkuós are included in order to display another factor indicating the centrality of the episcopal seat at Hólar.

The distribution of status churches along the coastline poses the question why a similar distribution of status churches does not reveal itself in the maps from Hólar bishopric (see Figure 7). The answer might be connected to the importance of the coastline. Whereas control of the coastline was important in Trøndelag, as pointed out by Brendalsmo (2006:39, 49), the same does not seem to have been the case in Hólar bishopric. There the distribution of major churches favoured the inland, and almost without exception, it was the churches with one cleric that were situated close to the coast (Figure 8). In contrast to Trøndelag, perhaps other methods of control of the landscape were preferred in Northern Iceland. The deforestation of the country might contribute to an understanding of why there was not as much focus on controlling the coastline, as ships were no longer being built (Smith 1995:336). This factor will be addressed in more detail in chapter 6.8.

The document *Trondhjems Reformats* (Thr.R.) provides information about the parish structure in Trøndelag. It includes, among other things, the names of the churches belonging to each parish, and additionally the number of "farmers" belonging to each church. These "farmers" were in fact the number of tithe payers, of which 4,157 are recorded from the areas that make up present-day Trøndelag. These tithe-paying farmers were probably just the main users of the farms in Trøndelag (Sandnes 1971:269). The total population around 1330, in the area that now constitutes Trøndelag, was probably close to 44,000 (Brendalsmo 2006:49). Relating this to the information from Thr.R, the average household size in Trøndelag would have been 10-11 people. The comparative number for Hólar bishopric is 8-9 (see Table 4).

Five of the stone churches in Trøndelag did not have parishes in 1589. For the rest that did have parishes, the general picture is that these churches had more parishioners than the wooden churches. Although there are several wooden churches with a high number of tithe-paying farmers, only stone churches have a hundred or more, albeit with one exception – Vang.

Considering that the two countries were culturally close connected, and the similarities in the number of churches over roughly the same area, but taking into account the great variation in population number, it would be reasonable to assume that the number of clerics per inhabitant would be comparatively lower in Hólar bishopric. Quite the opposite is the case, however. In Th.R. there are only 44 clerics mentioned. If these were all of the clerics in the area, each of the 44 clerics would have had to have an average of 1,000 parishioners each, in order to be able to serve the total population of 44,000 in Trøndelag. In the

Auðunarmáldagi 138 clerics are mentioned. Thus, almost three times as many making clerics were available to serve the presumed total population of 11,777 in Hólar bishopric. The number of parishioners for each priest to serve was then 85. Compared to Trøndelag this number is sensationally low. Even if just including the number of full priests, thus excluding the deacons or other lesser clerics, the number is quite convincing. The number of Christians to be served by every priest would then be 107. This is still only ten percent of what was the case in Trøndelag. Possible reasons should be sought for this discrepancy.

	Hólar	**Trøndelag**		
Population	11,777	44,000	44,000	44,000
Clerics	138	44	53	71
Population per cleric	85	1,000	830	620

Table 6: Population per cleric in Hólar and Trøndelag.

One possibility is that there were more clerics in Trøndelag than those recorded in Thr.R, perhaps belonging to the categories of churches not mentioned in the document (Brendelsmo 2006:60) (see chapter 3.3). There might also have been deacons or other lesser clerics at the parish churches not deemed necessary to mention. In the Auðunarmáldagi there are 27 deacons or other lesser clerics recorded. Should a similar percentage of lesser clerics be proposed for Trøndelag, the total number of clerics would be 53. The number of parishioners per cleric would then be 830, thus still significantly lower. Furthermore, distinctions are made in Thr.R. concerning the clerics serving the parish churches. Two parishes in the county of Fosen, and three parishes in the county of Nummedal, were to be served either by a *cappellan*, a *sacellano*, a *domistico sacellano*, or a *domestic comministro*. Thus, it seems that the distinction of the type of clergy was not insignificant. Still, it is worth observing that these two parishes were the only ones in which different kinds of clerics were distinguished, something that might indicate that the information from the different areas in Thr.R. was collected by different people, with varying standards of recording (Thr.R:69-73).

Another possible reason for the low number of clerics in Trøndelag is that the number recorded was not stable from the middle ages until 1589. It might have decreased significantly. However, since the population number was fairly similar, there is reason to believe that a similar distribution of clerics was needed for the religious observance of the populace. It is worth considering that there are 27 of the medieval churches from phase 1 and 2, not accounted for in Thr.R. (see table of churches from Trøndelag in the appendix). As a

consequence these churches do not have a parish stated in the table. If all of these churches were served by one cleric the total number of clerics for Trøndelag would be 71. Even though the number of parishioners per priest would still be approximately 620, this is the most convincing argument so far. From a perspective focusing on social power and ideological authority, it does seem probable that more churches would have had resident clerics, considering the significance of being able to control religious leaders, and thus the sacraments (Brendalsmo 1997:89). (See Table 6.)

A satisfactory explanation for the distribution of major churches cannot be proposed from having analysed the settlement pattern and correlating this with the number of clerics. Due to the comparatively high number of clerics in Hólar bishopric when considering the situation in Trøndelag in relation to it, some inherent importance in the high number of clerics must be assumed. This issue will be further addressed in chapter 6.7, but prior to this I need to consider the actors in society who had influence of the religion. First, I will turn to consequences following in the wake of the establishment of the episcopal seat at Hólar, assessing their effects on the church topography.

6.3 Establishment of the Episcopal Seat at Hólar

It is possible that the earliest factor contributing to the issuant church topography in Hólar bishopric was the establishment of the episcopal seat in Skagafjörður. The circumstances surrounding the establishment are important to consider. The northerners wanted their own bishop due to the long distance to the seat at Skálholt and because the north was the most populous quarter. In addition, with the establishment of the permanent seat at Skálholt in 1056, there was no longer any chance that the bishop of Iceland might reside in the north from time to time, a practice that was commonplace until 1056 (*Landnåmsboken*:171; Jón Jóhannesson 1974:151). There was some doubt as to where the seat should be located, however. There seems to have been a dispute among the northern chieftains on the subject. It had to be situated on a big farm and, preferably, central in the new bishopric, but no one seems to have wanted to offer up their land (Jón Jóhannesson 1969:126). There were no pre-existing centres where it was natural to place the bishop's seat. Moreover, none of the chieftains seems to have been interested in a direct association with this new religious institution, despite the benefits which undoubtedly could be achieved from this (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:34, 2006:312).

If the office of bishop was as powerful as some scholars argue (Jón Jóhannesson 1974:174, Hjalti Hugason 2000:281) the reluctance among the chieftains in the northern quarter to relinquish one of their farms for the new seat is intriguing. The prospect of being able to influence the decisions issued from the episcopal seat, by having it situated in or close to their area of influence, would conceivably be something the elite would have been interested in. It is of course possible that none of the northern chieftains at this time were influential enough to achieve control of the seat (Orri Vésteinsson 2006:312), and that the choice of bishop for the north was guided by the bishop and the chieftains of the south. The Norwegian archbishop could not be expected to consecrate a bishop to a new See against the wishes of the Skálholt bishop, whose bishopric was being diminished by more than one-fourth (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:146).

Arguments posed by Helgi Þorlákson (1977:162-163) might suggest that the establishment of the seat at Hólar had little impact on the neighbouring lands as he has characterised Hólar as being far from a natural centre, with an out-of-the-way location in Skagafjörður. He advocated this by arguing that it explains why Bishop Jón Ögmundarsson demanded that every man in the bishopric had to visit the Epsicopal seat every year. However, considering Hólar's location between Skagafjörður and Eyjafjörður, with easy access to both areas through a mountain pass, I regard Hólar as being quite centrally placed (Figure 18). Moreover, Skagafjörður seems to be a natural place for the new episcopal seat to have been established, taking into account its centrality in the northern region, coupled with the largest area of uninterrupted settlement, and ample access to resources (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:16).

The establishment of the two bishoprics contributed to a changing political situation in Iceland. Jón Viðar (2005b:109) presents Árni Pálsson as the first to propose a theory about the political development in the Commonwealth Period (930-1262/64). In lectures held at Háskóli Íslands[10] during the 1930s and 1940s, Árni Pálsson maintained that the concentration of the chieftains' power started in the vicinity of the bishoprics in order to withstand the strong position of the bishops. Jón (1974) developed this theory by claiming that the introduction of the tithe led to increased episcopal power, at the chieftains' expense. In order to counter this, the chieftains close to the episcopal seats donated their chieftaincies to more powerful chieftains. Then, in neighbouring areas the same happened, not only to stand against the bishops, but also the increasingly powerful chieftains, consolidating their power. Thus, the

[10] University of Iceland.

establishment of the episcopal power in Iceland seems to have initiated a consolidation of power.

This tendency probably manifested in the distribution of major churches as well. The bishops not only might have wanted to remove competition from the vicinity of their seat, as Jón Viðar (2005a:188) argues; they were also liable to have done an effort to actively demonstrate their own power by dominating the religious scene in the neighbouring lands. Perhaps the Hólar bishops organised the whole of Skagafjörður in an effort to remove competition from their immediate surroundings. The church topography in the whole area was probably affected by the proximity of the seat, apparent from the big distance between the epsicopal seat and the closest major churches. Greater distance from the seat might have been the reason why another pattern, i.e. a much greater number of major churches, emerged in Eyjafjörður. The church topography in this area might also point to a different, and conceivably less stable, local political situation (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2005a:188), with chieftains vying for ideological power.

6.4 Episcopal Influence on the Church Topography

As just argued, the presence of the episcopal seat at Hólar contributed to political changes in the area, probably affecting the church topography as well. Nonetheless, the significance of the episcopal power, and to what degree the bishops influenced the church topography, needs further discussing. Scholars disagree as to how powerful the Icelandic bishops were. Nevertheless, as part of their office, after their consecration, they acquired certain powers, for instance the option of imposing interdict or excommunication on disobedient subjects. Whereas interdict excluded people from participation in religious services, excommunication prohibited any further association with the Christian community. Neither punishment is mentioned in Grágás, although bishops are known to have used both quite unsparingly (Jón Jóhannesson 1974:164). Some bishops even blatantly misused excommunication, thus blunting the weapon's effect (Jón Johannesson 1974:204-205).

According to Jón Viðar (2005a:188), the spatial distribution of major churches was mainly determined by the power relations in the country in the first half of the 12th century. However, he believes that the chieftains were too powerful for the bishops to have much influence on the establishment of these churches. Still, being the only one who could consecrate churches and approve of their máldagar, granted the bishops a certain power and leverage.

Hjalti (2000:281) is of the opinion that the Icelandic bishops for a long time had limited powers within the Church, and thus had strong competitors from local chieftains. At the same time the bishops were practically independent of foreign church leaders. Thus, compared to contemporary bishops in areas where Christianity had existed for a longer time, the political power of the Icelandic bishops seems to have been greater. Due to the strong influence on religion enjoyed by the chieftains, the bishops' power in ecclesiastical affairs was lesser, however, (Hjalti Hugason 2000:281). Since the bishops held greater political authority, they were probably forced to compete for power on more or less equal terms with the chieftains in the bishopric. Both bishops even sat in the *lögrétta*, i.e. the legislature of the general assembly (Orri Vésteinsson 2006:311), where they enjoyed full voting rights. Due to these factors they might have been perceived by the common Icelander almost as a regular chieftain.

Jón (1974:190) claims that the bishops and the chieftains became increasingly divided in the latter part of the 12th century. Helgi (2005:34), on the other hand, links the power of the bishops directly to the power of families who monopolised the episcopal elections. Thus, he argues, at the same time as the bishops were exploited by the secular powers, they were sheltered under this connection, allowing their own power to grow. As long as the bishops were Icelanders, i.e. until 1238, when Norwegian bishops entered the scene, most of them were members of well-established and influential families, and could therefore count on the support from their kinsmen. In Jón's (1974:165) belief, this must have increased their power, making them among the most influential men in the country. The sources describing the episcopal power in the 12th century, i.e. both narrative accounts and the Christian Laws Section, indicate that it was considerable (Benedikt Eyþórsson 2005a:30). Conversely, when it comes to documents issued by the bishops it is quite possible that the rhetoric was affected by a policy of acquiring control over church property (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:131).

When considering the power and influence of the bishops, it is essential to keep in mind that the Icelandic Church was not a legal person as such. Instead it consisted of the people that, through their ordination, acquired certain rights and duties, governing their relationship with laymen and other clergymen (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:73). Thus, the Icelandic clergy did not form a uniform religious group; and should perhaps even not be denominated with a capital C. Among the lesser clerics, some were loyal followers of their bishop, while others participated as self-interested actors in society (Byock 1988:162). The powers of these individuals were furthermore not always directly connected to the office they held. As there were no political entities with executive powers in the Icelandic society, disputes were settled

by introducing third parties as arbitrators. Social power could be achieved if a person was renowned for his ability to arbitrate (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:12-13). According to Jón Viðar (2005a:182), the bishops could perform a function in this system of arbitration, as it was important for chieftains involved in conflicts to have an arbitrator that was equally or more powerful than themselves. This could be another chieftain or a bishop. Byock (1988:155) holds forth Bishop Brandur Sæmundarson of Hólar (1163-1201) as a popular arbitrator. This indicates a certain amount of episcopal power.

It is difficult to distinguish changes in the power of the bishops through time. Helgi (2005:35) remarks that the discussion about power and influence of the Icelandic bishops in the early 12th century has yet to arrive at a conclusion. Since I approach this question using source material from 1318, applying the distribution of status churches as a measure of episcopal power and influence, this is easier to get at. Hopefully, the results achieved can be used to extrapolate backwards in time to shed light on episcopal power in the time leading up to 1318 as well.

Having mentioned the absence of major churches close to Hólar Episcopal seat, the second issue I will address regarding the church topography is the churches not mentioned in the Auðundarmáldagi. These provide an interesting picture that might indicate increased episcopal influence at the end of the 13th and beginning of the 14th centuries. Looking at the map in Figure 11 a question which leaps to mind is why so many of these churches were surrounding Hólar Episcopal seat. First of all, as an explanation for why the churches are not mentioned, it can be proposed that they had all gone out of use at the time of the collection of the church register, probably like the church at Neðri-Ás had. That this applies for all of the churches is unlikely, however. Another, more credible explanation, is that these churches had their parishes abolished and were incorporated into the episcopal seat at some time prior to 1318. This would indicate a strong episcopal power, as several clerics would have to be connected to Hólar in order to be able to serve all the incorporated churches. Incorporation entailed that a parish church with *beneficium* was transferred to a monastery, an episcopal seat or a chapter.[11] *Beneficium* denotes the estates and income which priests at local churches received as compensation for their *officium*, i.e. the performance of the duties of their office. The parish function of a church was transferred to the incorporating institution as well

[11] In Iceland there were no chapters, at least not until the 15th century, so incorporations usually favoured one of the episcopal seats (Magnus Stefansson 2000:151). According to Helgi (1977:174) and Byock (1988:157) there might have been a chapter established by Bishop Jörundur in 1267. Byock believes that the Icelandic bishops were handicapped by not having cathedral chapters, and suggests that the reason for their non-existence was the bishops' lacking economic means to support them.

(Magnús Stefánsson 2000:15, 149). Considering the transfers, it was no longer necessary to state the churches' properties in separate máldagar. Still, three incorporated churches are mentioned in the Auðunarmáldagi (DI II:292, 303, 306). It is worthwhile asking why just these three incorporated churches are mentioned, when the other churches believed to be in existence and probably incorporated as well, were not recorded in the máldagi.

Viðvík in Viðvíkurhreppur, close to Hólar, is mentioned in the saga of Guðmundur Arason in 1189 and also in the Diplomatarium Islandicum in 1461 (Sigríður Sigurðardóttir 2007:54). This means that the church must have been in existence in 1318. It is then of interest to consider why it is not recorded in the máldagi. That it was already incorporated in the episcopal estate would explain why no máldagi is preserved. Hofsstaðir in Viðvíkurhreppur is a similar case, and Magnús (2000:154) suggests that both of them were owned by the episcopal seat in 1318. These two churches are indicated on the map in Figure 11, just west of Hólar. An alternative possibility is that the churches not mentioned in Auðunarmáldagi were half or quarter churches, or even chapels. The church building at Neðri-Ás, for instance, was according to the excavator in 1998, known locally as "Bænhúsið", meaning "The Chapel" (Roberts 1998:1). Perhaps it was built as such, or perhaps it had lost status due to the presence of the seat at Hólar.

Some caution is required when utilising source material like the máldagar, considering the bishops' possible involvement in manipulation of them. Steinunn Kristjánsdóttir (2004:151) points out deficiencies in Skálholt's bishop Páll Jónsson's (1195-1211) church register from the beginning of the 13th century. Results from archaeological excavations have revealed that there were more churches in Skálholt diocese than those recorded in the register, for example at Þórarinsstaðir, Stöng and Skeljastaðir. Those at Þórarinsstaðir and Stöng might already have gone out of use at the time of the register, but Skeljastaðir had not. Worth considering is whether the bishop's register was an attempt to organise the Church, as only the approximately 220 churches characterised as parish churches were included. The register might thus have functioned as a catalogue of preferred churches (Steinunn Kristjánsdóttir 1999:44-45, 2004:151). Similar problems with missing churches should also be considered when dealing with the material from Hólar bishopric, keeping in mind that churches that had gone out of use, or in some other way lost status prior to the issuing of the máldagi, should perhaps not have been included.

Möðruvellir in Hörgárdalur can stand as an example of this problem as it is not mentioned in the máldagi from 1318. However, the monastery established there in 1296 has

been presented as an explanation for its omission (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2005a:185-186). Still, the monastery of Munkaþverá in Öngulsstaðahreppur (DI II:336) is mentioned in the document. That Möðruvellir is not mentioned might indicate that the credibility of the máldagar should not always be swallowed uncritically. There is another possibility that can provide an explanation for why it was not included. This concerns Bishop Jörundur Þorsteinsson's (1267-1313) involvement in the establishment of the monastery, something to which I will return in chapter 6.10.

Bishop Guðmundur Arason (1203-1237) is interesting to consider as a case regarding how specific bishops could affect the church organisation. His story begins with the Ásbirningar family, who enjoyed great authority in the north for much of the 12th century. With the turn of the 13th century they controlled most of Skagafjörður, and aspired to increase their influence from mostly secular-political issues, to include religious control as well. This would be achieved through alliance with the politically waning family of the priest Guðmundur Arason, and his installation at the seat in 1203. His naivety and assumed lack of statesmanlike abilities must have been why the Ásbirningar appointed him as bishop, as this would make him easy to control, and as a result provide them with influence over the diocese's finances (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:155, 159-160, 174).

Guðmundur was not to be an obedient tool, however (Helgi Þorláksson 1977:164). Through uncompromising charity, which made him exceptionally popular among the crowd of beggars and vagabonds which continuously surrounded him, he squandered the Sees' finances (Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1953:115; Orri Vésteinsson 2000:175). The great majority of the chieftains and many laymen were hostile towards him. Even the clergy failed him; priests ignored his frequent excommunications and held services against his command. Bishop Páll of Skálholt – even after orders from the archbishop to support Guðmundur – was at most trying to bring about reconciliation (Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1953:115). Since the priests in Hólar bishopric had stronger ties to their chieftains, Guðmundur lost their support (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson et al. 2005:177). The leader of the Ásbirningar banned all trade with Hólar in 1206, and after the Battle of Hólar in 1209, until 1240, the family practically controlled the bishop seat's economy (Helgi Þorláksson 1977:164), eliminating much of the episcopal power in the north.

Bishop Guðmundur Arason (1203-1237) has been discussed extensively regarding the Icelandic bishops' influence on the relationship between Norway and Iceland. One question is to what degree he was responsible for the increased authority of the Norwegian king in

Iceland (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:174). Byock (1988:162) is one of the adherents to the idea that Guðmundur's actions provided the archbishop, and later the Norwegian king, with their first belated opportunity to intervene in Icelandic affairs. However, the main consequence of Bishop Guðmundur's actions was that, despite his efforts at Church reform, the development of the episcopal power in Iceland was put on hold for thirty years or more. It was not until Norwegian bishops arrived at both sees in 1238 that real changes began to be implemented (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:178). These were better suited to lay the ground for reforms originating from the pope and archbishop.

6.5 Chieftains' Involvement in the Episcopal Power

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, episcopal and secular powers were thoroughly intertwined. Here I will consider additional aspects of the secular power. The chieftains in Iceland were important actors in the development of the church organisation. There were 39 chieftaincies (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2005b:107), and they were some of the most powerful men in the country (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2000:45). From the geographical spread of chieftaincies, the country can be divided into two zones, according to the sizes of the areas that the chieftain families influenced (Figure 6). The political situation in the first half of the 12th century can probably contribute to explaining the distribution of the major churches (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2005a:188). Regarding the political development until the end of the Commonwealth Period, the prevailing view is that the power concentration started in the beginning of the 12th century. This concentration of power resulted in a situation where the country was controlled by five or six family domains by the first half of the 13th century (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2005b:111). This development can be seen in relation to the ideas of power consolidation proposed and developed by Árni Pálsson and Jón Jóhannesson, mentioned in the previous chapter, as weaker chieftains submitted to stronger ones. It was important for the chieftains in the 12th and 13th centuries to seize authority over all chieftaincies in their areas of influence. In this struggle control of economic resources was essential. Only the families able to secure a considerable economic foundation for themselves were able to endure (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2005b:111). In this endeavour the Church was an important factor (Orri Véstainsson 2000).

Eventually, two of what Jón Viðar calls domains developed in the Northern Quarter. He defines a domain as "an area with more or less fixed boundaries that involved authority

over at least three chieftaincies and one spring assembly."[12] (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 1999:64). One of these domains was centred on Skagafjörður at the end of the 11th century, while the other had its nucleus in Eyjafjörður around the year 1200. The creation of a domain in Eyjafjörður started in the 1180s and around 1200 only three chieftains were mentioned there (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 1999:66). After 1220 almost all the domains had taken shape, and conflicts concerning these sources of power made it necessary for chieftains to apply new methods of governing and new instruments of government. The use of trusted men and followers, as well as oaths of allegiance was important (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 1999:82). It is conceivable that the Church was another path to social power, as is shown in the south of the country. Orri (2000:15-16) argues that the chieftains of the south, by associating themselves with the Church, built up power bases that would survive independently of the personalities of individual family members. The benefits to be achieved from this religious involvement must have been appreciated by chieftain families in the northern part of the country as well. The process of power consolidation was more or less completed by the end of the Commonwealth Period in 1262/64, when five families controlled most of the chieftaincies in the country.

There is a somewhat ambiguous situation arising concerning the chieftains' involvement in the episcopal power. It is not always easy to discern whose interests were being enforced. Having one's protégée as bishop, or even being bishops themselves, might have provided chieftains with increased authority to lead people spiritually, as well as politically. To be able to influence, or better yet, control the episcopal office, must have been important in the power struggles in the bishopric. The ideal situation would be to have a bishop who could be relied on for support when this was needed, but who was unable to make any threatening claims, of financial or other kinds. This attitude towards the episcopal power would explain why many of the ordained chieftains in the 12th century did not aspire to become bishops, but instead remained as chieftain-priests involved in the power struggles in their respective regions, while promoting poor, but respectable men to the office of bishop (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:145-146).

The elections of bishops rarely seem to have been sources of controversy, and almost never led to feuds or violence. Had the office of bishop been one of significant power, Byock (1988:155-156) argues, the choice of a new office-holder should have led to a fierce

[12] Spring assemblies, or *vorþing*, were held in May in each region of the country. In theory there were three chieftains presiding over each one, summoning their followers, i.e. the householders of the region (see chapter 6.1 about assembly-tax-paying householders). The main function of the spring assemblies was to settle disputes among the inhabitants in the region (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:295).

contention among the leading families, ever on the lookout for more authority. Even from the election of the first bishop in Iceland in 1056, the connection between the ecclesiastical office and the powerful chieftain families was visible. Interpreted to the extreme, this connection would have made the bishop some kind of representative for the current chieftain family within the Church (Steinunn Kristjánsdóttir 1999:43). From the establishment of the Icelandic bishoprics until 1238 five chieftain families dominated the elections for both seats in Iceland. Having a relative or friend as bishop could also provide economic benefits, as the office-holder could distribute church land to his supporters. The office also brought respect to the family who were related to the new bishop (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson et al. 2005:195).

The choice of successor to the See of Hólar always seems to have been influenced by familial or discipular relationships, or both (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:144). Apart from the first bishop, Jón Ögmundarson (1106-1121), all the bishops of Hólar were selected by the northerners. Although they may have shown deference to their southern counterparts and the bishop of Skálholt, in allowing them to take part in the decision-making process, the *de facto* decision seems to have been in the hands of the northern chieftains (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:158). That different chieftain families alternated having their representatives at Hólar suggests that there was no single family in Skagafjörður with absolute control in the region. The Hólar bishops seem to have been selected because they were the best candidates from families who were influential, but still unlikely to use their influence of the See to menace others (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:159-160).

Until the election of Bishop Guðmundur Arason (1203-1237), all the Hólar bishops were of chieftains' rank, if they did not hold chieftaincies themselves, and all except one, Bishop Björn Gilsson (1147-1162), had families (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:159). Bishop Brandur (1162-1201) is an example of a bishop with close family connections with some of the most powerful people in the Skagafjörður, making him a man of considerable local importance. He not only took an active part in politics, but seems to have used his position to further the interests of his family and its influence in Skagafjörður (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:152). It was clearly not uncommon for the bishops to side with their families in conflicts, but they were probably also expected to advocate peaceful settlements. In this respect they were no different from chieftains who had absolute control of their areas (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:163-164).

Thus, as argued in chapter 6.4, and just repeated, the Hólar bishops might have held political powers comparable to those of a chieftain and were perhaps perceived by

contemporary Icelanders as holding a similar office. The strong episcopal power in 1318, made probable when looking at the distribution of status churches in Skagafjörður, was conceivably still in competition with secular chieftains wanting to affirm their ideological power. This is visible in the higher number of status churches in Eyjafjörður. It is conceivable that the chieftains had difficulties relinquishing the ideological authority inherent in their office even from before the Christianisation of the country.

6.6 The Tithe Law

In Iceland the tithe law was introduced in 1096/97, ten years prior to the establishment of Hólar bishopric. I will see this law in relation to the economic power of the bishops versus the chieftains. I will also consider the income as an incentive to build churches, and achieving parish status, consequently affecting the church topography. Control of local churches with their properties, coupled with income from other properties, formed the basis of the chieftains' power and influence. There was significant income to be received from farms with large parish churches[13], in consequence making topical a discussion about economic motives for erecting churches on one's own farm. Political power was connected to the continued acquisition and control of these farms, and they must have been a significant source of wealth, in consequence contributing to the further political development in the 12th and 13th centuries (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 1999:117).

If most of the Icelandic churches were built in the first half of the 12th century (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2005a:187-188), the assumption that economic motives were prominent is made probable, since this was after the introduction of the tithe law. According to Helgi (2005:9), a conflict arose between the bishops and the chieftains, to establish large churches and secure considerable tithes for themselves.

Orri (2000:49) is nevertheless sceptical to the importance of the tithe system in relation to motives for church building. Instead he points out three alternative motives for erecting churches. It first of all affirmed or increased a man's power and influence. Secondly, it provided consecrated ground for burying of the dead. A third motive was that it could

[13] There was a difference between a parish and a ministry. The parish consisted of the people that attended the same church. A ministry, on the other hand, was the land area which a church served, more specifically the farms (Benedikt Eyþórsson 2005a:57). I will not distinguish between these terms and simply use the more commonly known term parish. However, from the way that I deal with ideological power in Hólar bishopric it follows that the 'parish' term has more relevance, due to its dependence on people connected to certain churches who are able to perceive the ideological power of the administrators of the churches.

provide sanctuary in times of trouble (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:54; Magnús Már Lárusson 1960:464).

According to Jón (1974:149), the tithe law made the Church financially independent and laid the foundation for its wealth. The bishops were supposedly in charge of deciding which farms should pay tithe to which churches, consequently defining the parishes. Orri (2000:73), on the other hand, doubts that the bishops had the authority to organise the tithe areas for the whole country. When discussing the parish system in English medieval history, Norman J.G. Pounds (2000:4) argues that the parish had secular overtones from the start, and that many, perhaps most, early parishes conformed with lay estates and as such were the religious expression of the manor.

Regarding the consequences of the introduction of the tithe law an important consideration is to what degree it was possible to enforce it (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:69). Orri's (2000:73) scepticism to earlier assumptions about the system of the tithe again shines through when he questions how much power the Church, i.e. church officials, actually had over the collection of the tithes. The initiative of the chieftains to establish large churches and practically annex large tithe areas for themselves may not always have coincided with what the bishops saw fit. If the bishops had the power to decide which churches would receive tithes, they would also – to a large extent – decide which churches would survive. The tithe gathered at a few churches which became wealthy; even more so the more farms they received tithes from. Others, on the other hand, were abolished (Steinunn Kristjánsdóttir 1999:44). Abolishment often led to the incorporation of a church with all its income and resources into a monastery, an episcopal seat or a cathedral chapter. Only the bishop could perform incorporations (Magnús Stefánsson 2000:149), however. Perhaps the distribution of presumably incorporated churches (Figure 11) in the vicinity of the seat was conditioned by a *limited* episcopal power, not far-reaching enough for incorporations in other parts of the bishopric.

The tithe was divided into four parts. One fourth fell to the poor in the community, another to the bishop and the last two parts to the local churches and as payment to the priests. The last two-fourths were paid to the farmers administering the churches. The priests did not receive their part of the tithes directly and were thus heavily dependent on the church owners (Jón Jóhannessen 1969:143-144). According to Jón (1974:174), the bishops' part of the tithe brought about such a thorough change in their social status that they came to be counted among the most powerful men in the country.

The fact that churches in Iceland were built on farms on the initiative of the local farmer, conceivably led to influence from the system of tithes on the church topography. Tithe income as a motive for building churches has been discussed (Magnús Stefánsson 1975). In addition to controlling half the tithe, the administrator of the church received fees for funerals. Surplus production from the farmland belonging to the church also befell the church administrator, as well as land rent from the farms owned by the church (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2000:51). The tithe, which benefited the church patron, came to be an almost profane taxation of the congregation (Brink 1990:112-113). As the church farmers were exempted from paying tithe (Helgi Þorlákson 1977:163), the economic incentive to erect churches must have been made even greater. Church owners probably competed for the tithe from as many farmsteads as possible. It is possible that these circumstances led to some of the curious parishes in Iceland, consisting of a single farm with parish boundary identical to the farm boundary, with the household paying the tithe to their own church (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2003b:76-77). If the number of clerics at a church would influence the decision of the bishops concerning the granting of parish status to a church, the incentive to keep several clerics would conceivably be great. Steinunn (1999:43-44), on the other hand, regards the introduction of the tithe law as a method to try to stop the uncontrolled building of private churches on farms. This might seem like a contradiction, however, considering the tithe law as an *incentive* to erect churches.

6.7 Control of Priests and Religious Ceremonies

Control of religious ceremonies has been established as an important path to social power through the materialisation and control of ideology. Chieftains could benefit from building churches and offering services to their neighbours (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:15). A church building was in most cases necessary to perform the sacraments. Authority over churches and religious specialists thus offered control over the sacraments which were some of the most important cultic actions and also significant social and economic events in people's lives (Brendalsmo 1997:89). As I have already shown, materialisation of ideology could appear as monuments or through religious ceremonies. Thus, by having several clerics at one's church, a chieftain could offer religious services, and as a result strengthen his influence over ideology. Consequently, administrating a church with a great number of clerics was a way of increasing one's social power. This fits the image derived from the analysis of the settlement pattern in relation to the number of clerics in the bishopric.

The church owner or householder of the land was required to provide ten or thirteen masses annually. The discrepancy in the number of masses is due to an inconsistency in the relationship between church owner and householder. In most cases these were probably the same person, but if not, the owner should provide ten masses and the householder three masses (Helgi Skúli Kjartansson 2005:98). The masses did not have to be held regularly, so a priest could spend some time in one area, celebrating the required number of masses before moving on (Helgi Skúli Kjartansson 2005:99). It is conceivable that clerics connected to a church spent much of their time travelling between farms, consequently providing the church owner with both income and respect, in this way allowing him to "gain access to benefits of a social action" (DeMarrais et al. 1996:15).

According to Grágás:44, priests could sell their services. Nonetheless, a priest could not conduct mass more than two times a day. One priest could hence serve two full churches a day (Helgi Skúli Kjartansson 2005:96, 99-100). Some of the provisions in Grágás might have been outdated in 1318, however. The number of clerics in the bishopric indicates that lack of priestly services was far from pressing. Still, the distribution of clerics provides an interesting image as, according to Helgi Skúli Kjartansson (2005:100), there were not many priests needed for a full coverage of religious services in Iceland. On this background it is worthwhile to consider whether there was a need for all the clerics mentioned in the Auðunarmáldagi. In Norway it would seem like the focus lay more on the monumental part of materialising ideology, while in Iceland it was more important controlling religious ceremonies. It must also have been important to have access to the sacraments at one's own farm. Another motive for the large amount of clerics at certain churches could be economic, as the prospect of being able to provide priestly services for the surrounding areas could provide significant income for the church owner.

Jón (1974:166) states that the owner of a church did not have to hire the services of a priest. Another possibility was to make a contract with a young man or his legal guardian, agreeing that the church owner would provide a priest-to-be with tuition, board and lodging until he had qualified for the priesthood. In return the priest would be obliged to serve at the church where he was educated (Helgi Skúli Kjartansson 2005:102).

Considering the ten or thirteen required masses, Helgi Skúli (2005:100) states that the 330 churches in Iceland required the services of no more than twenty to twenty-five priests. This is assuming no service at all was provided for the lesser churches and chapels, which could have been more than a thousand all together. The 110 churches in Hólar

bishopric were full churches with resident clergy (Helgi Skúli Kjartansson 2005:98). Thus, the number of clergy in the bishopric was far greater than the number that was actually needed to secure the minimum of religious services at the full churches.

Many chieftains and their sons were ordained as priests. Helgi Skúli (2005:101) still believes that these people were too busy to serve a number of small churches and congregations. It is more likely that they enhanced the status of their own churches by being able to offer regular services. Control of ceremonial events is an important factor in the demonstration of power relationships (DeMarrais 1996:17), so it is likely that building a church and providing a priest was a socio-political strategy for the elites to sustain or develop their power basis. The more priests there were at a church, the better the opportunities for a chieftain would have been to send out priests, or make people come to his farm, maintaining his ideological power in the populace, as well as connecting people to himself politically.

The lack of churches along the coast in Hólar bishopric, exempting the ones with only one cleric (Figure 5, match Figure 8), might indicate that maintaining control of ideology in such a location was not important. That four of the eight churches with an unknown number of clerics connected to them were also located by the coast, contributes to this image, as these churches likely also had one cleric. The even distribution of these churches might indicate that they were not actively being used in the demonstration of power, as the owners of these churches were not aspiring to surpass one another. From the bishops' point of view, these churches were probably more important, in orde to provide religious services for the whole populace.

6.8 Control of Trade and Building Material

Due to the dependence of economic resources in order to materialise ideology (see chapter four), control of trade is relevant to consider in relation to the church topography. The Hólar bishops were involved in trade with foreign merchants. The harbour at Kolbeinsárós, or Kolkuós, was located in Skagafjörður, but disputes between Bishop Guðmundur and the Ásbirningar probably contributed to making Gásir in Eyjafjörður a more important trading site. Both the second and the third bishop of Hólar were from powerful families in Eyjafjörður, further influencing the choice of Gásir as port. The Ásbirningar were probably not interested in a trading site close to the episcopal seat at Hólar, since this could make the bishops worse rivals in the area. Norwegians merchants, often sent by the archbishop in

Nidaros, were the Hólar bishops' associates and could easily become a threatening element in Kolkuós (Helgi Þorláksson 1977:168).

Gásir in Eyjafjörður was one of three major trading sites in Iceland in the medieval period, at least until the 1340s, and was the most important for the whole of Northern Iceland, even Hólar. Gásir was in a more direct route from Trøndelag to Iceland than from Bergen (Figure 19) and there are many examples of direct connections between Nidaros and Gásir (Helgi Þorláksson 1999:91). Chieftains and bishops could also affect foreign merchants' choice of port (Helgi Þorláksson 1999:91). Thus, this was probably a source of contention among them. There was easy access from Skagafjörður to Gásir through a mountain pass (Figure 18) between the two central northern fjords (Helgi Þorláksson 1999:83, 87)[14].

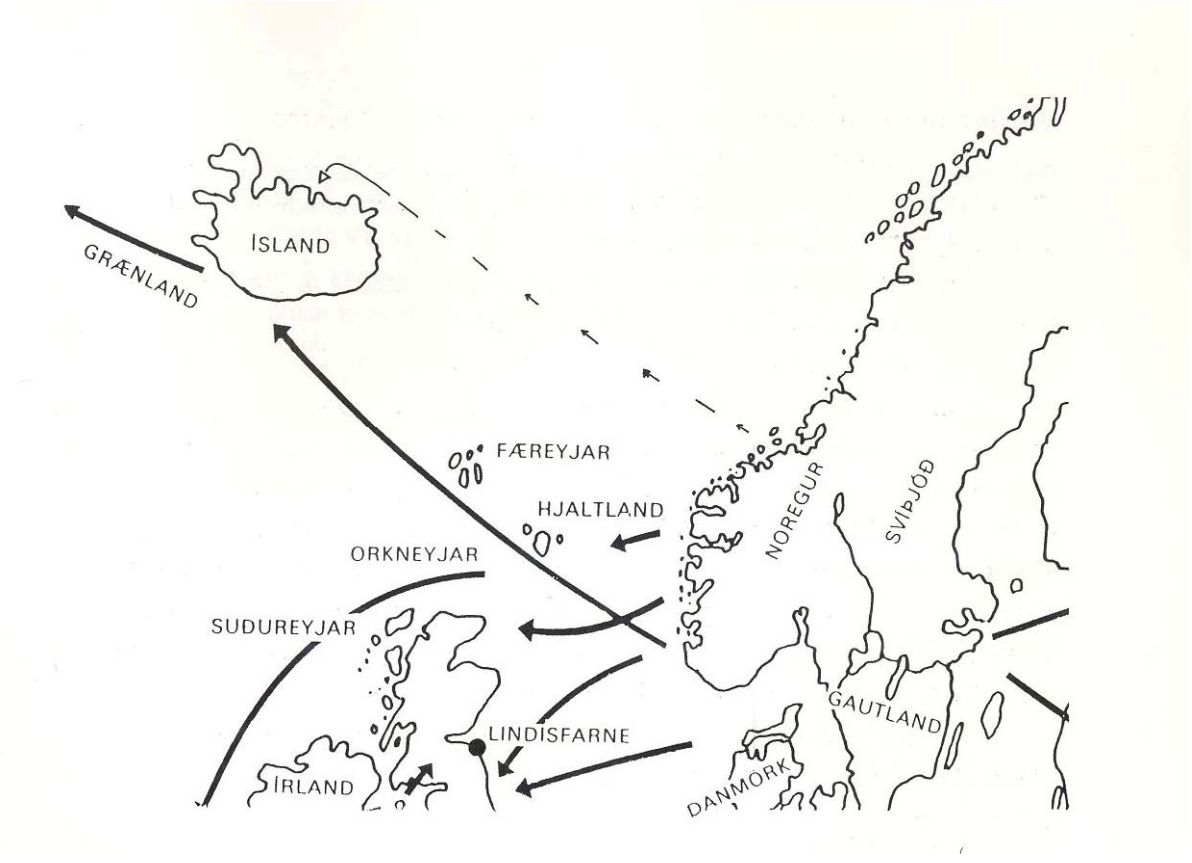

Figure 19: From Sigurður Líndal (1974). Dotted arrow line between Nidaros and Gásir added by Helgi (1999:Kart 4).

[14] From this statement it becomes apparent that Helgi contradicts his earlier argument, when he characterised Hólar as having an isolated location in Skagafjörður (1977:162) (see chapter 6.3).

It was essential for the elite to acquire goods from abroad. Most regular farmers were probably self-sufficient (see chapter 6.1), but the chieftains needed luxury goods to assert their status. For example, as administrators of major churches, they needed religious paraphernalia which only could be provided from abroad. In this regard the chieftains were completely dependent on foreign merchants, since they did not possess ocean-going vessels due to the deforestation of the country (Helgi Þorláksson 1978:112). Trade was furthermore essential in order to gain access to timber for church buildings.

The two Icelandic cathedrals were most probably built imitating the cathedrals in western Norway. Wood replaced stone as building material, however, and they were built as stave churches. This caused them to be different from the Norwegian stave churches, which were constructed on the building material's premises and had their own unique form (Hjörleifur Stefánsson 1997:30). The Icelandic cathedrals were much larger than any stave church visible in Norway today (Figure 20) (Seip 2000:18). Archaeological investigations have shown that the two cathedrals in Iceland were alike in size and shape throughout the Middle Ages (Hjörleifur Stefánsson 1997:31).

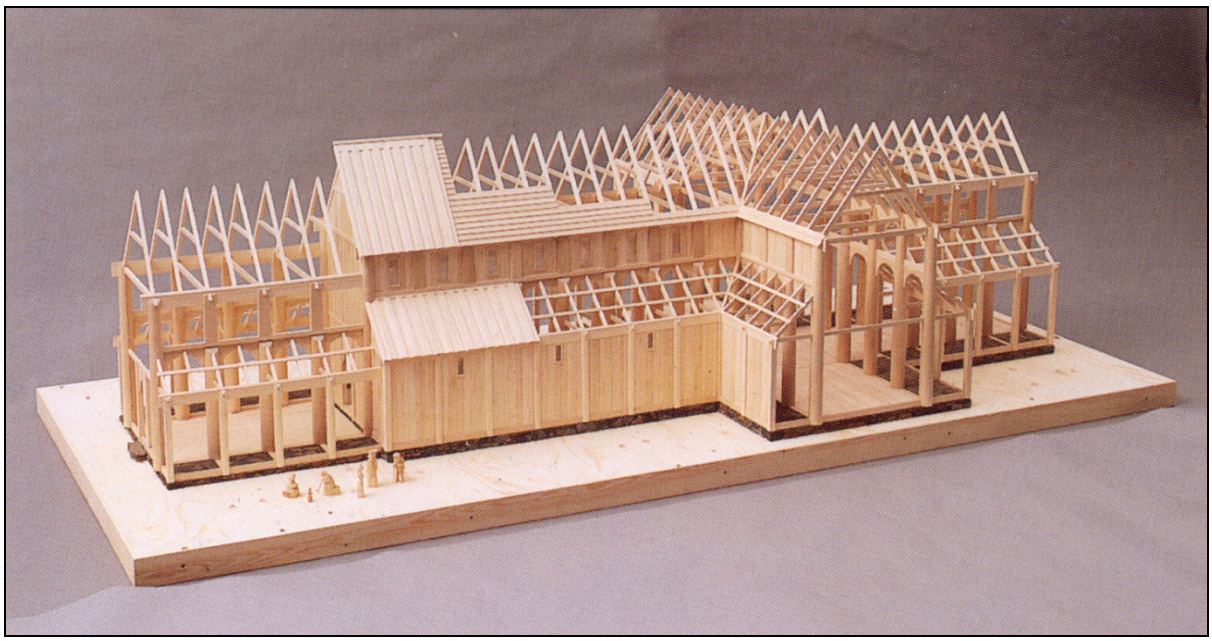

Figure 20: From Hjörleifur Stefánsson (1997:Fig. 6). Model of an Icelandic cathedral constructed of timber. The model is located in the National Museum of Iceland, in Reykjavík.

Despite lack of trees for building material, these huge churches were erected, possibly because of the close contact with Norway and influence from Norwegian builders. The Icelandic Church in fact owned forests in Trøndelag for a period of time (Seip 2000:18).

Bishop Auðun rauði Þorbergsson (1313-1322) conducted a large-scale building activity at his seat. He erected a large timber house, and supposedly started constructing a cathedral of stone. He did not survive to see it finished, and as a result the project was abandoned. The standing cathedral at Hólar at the time was wooden and built around year 1300, or somewhat earlier (Hjörleifur Stefánsson 1997:36). That Auðun, despite the recent erection of the cathedral of his predecessor, desired to build a new cathedral of stone, might indicate that this was a meaningful decision considering the demonstration of episcopal power. A similar motive seems apparent at the farm of Rein in Rissa in Trøndelag. A stone church was built there, replacing a stave church with decorative carvings, built just a few decades before (Brendalsmo 2006:286).

Except for the unfinished cathedral at Hólar, and the church at Breiðabólstaður in Vesturhóp, west of Skagafjörður, there were no churches built of stone in medieval Iceland. This seems strange considering that there were stone churches both on the Faeroe Islands and in Greenland (Hjörleifur Stefánsson 1997:35). The difficulty in getting limestone for mortar in Iceland has been held forth as an explanation. Nevertheless, if the necessary skills were available in a far-away place as Greenland, it is unlikely that this explanation alone will suffice for Iceland (Hjörleifur Stefánsson 1997:38). Jón (1969:291) explains the absence of stone buildings in Iceland with the complete lack of chalk in the country, coupled with the difficulty of procuring suitable stone for construction.

Considering the numerous churches in Hólar bishopric, built not only on the wealthiest farms, it is worth taking into account the limitation of the capacity to restructure power relationships through these monuments. An ideology composed solely of elements freely accessible to the populace has little effect as an instrument of power as it may easily be copied (DeMarrais et al. 1996:17). In this regard the control of driftwood is an element that requires consideration. Following the settlement of Iceland in the late 9th century, the birch forests in the dry lowland areas were reduced to a mere fraction of their original coverage. Burning of woodland for clearance, felling of trees and grazing animals were the main reasons for the deforestation (Orri Vésteinsson and Simpson 2004:183). However, large amounts of driftwood gathering on the shores compensated for the absence of timber from forests (Sigurður Nordal 1990:40). By the twelfth century, these shores were economically valuable resources.

This lack of wood probably resulted in a less imposing domestic architecture (Orri Vésteinsson and Simpson 2004:181). Voyages were made to Norway for house timber, but

the deforestation in Iceland contributed to the eventual isolation of the island, as ships were no longer being built. Icelanders became increasingly dependent on foreign shipping, something which consequently led to great economic inequalities due to varying access to, and control of, fuel and construction materials (Smith 1995:336). Pockets of forests probably survived, as they are mentioned in sagas and medieval documents. These must have been highly sought after and valued properties of large estates and churches. Yet, for the economy as a whole these pockets of forest were probably insignificant (Orri Vésteinsson and Simpson 2004:183-184).

Since control of driftwood was important, it is intriguing that the church topography indicates that status churches were not situated along the coast. Hence, control of the coast was economically important, but does not seem to have been important for demonstrating ideological power. This seems to have been the case in Trøndelag, where the status churches were clustered around the politically important coastline. The curious boundary between Þingeyjarsýsla and Eyjafjarðarsýsla, which was briefly addressed in chapter 6.1, might indicate that the lack of wood for ships and boats contributed to making communication by water less important than by land. This argument presupposes that the boundaries of the different regions and hreppar remained stable from the high medieval period. This *is* a general assumption, however (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson et al. 2005:155-156).

In Iceland the maintenance of churches was the responsibility of the owners of church estates, and a church was to remain in its original location unless circumstances dictated otherwise and the bishop agreed to have it moved (Jón Jóhannesson 1974:167). The necessity of rebuilding churches, as wooden churches were less durable than stone churches, might also have affected the demonstration of economic power. Archaeological investigations of church places in Iceland reveal that the churches were not durable, but rather had to be repaired, rebuilt or built completely anew with relatively short intervals. In a country without forests, it must have been difficult to maintain the framework of the wooden buildings (Hjörleifur Stefánsson 1997:34). Due to the scarce availability of timber, the church owners could, by frequently rebuilding their churches, reaffirm their ideological, as well as economic, power. Thus, the problem of a population being able to freely copy elements of ideological power, i.e. building churches on their private farms, might not have been as easy as considered above (DeMarrais et al. 1996:17). Turf would be the alternative building material, of which most of the smaller churches in the country were built. Turf churches could not demand the same kind of respect as buildings constructed of wood (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2003b:57).

I consider it likely that being able to construct buildings of wood, and not turf, was just as much a demonstration of power in Iceland as it was to build of stone in Norway. Access to timber proved that the builders controlled coastlines where driftwood gathered, as well as being able to trade with ships coming from abroad. In an insular community like Iceland, economic control was facilitated by controlling ports and maintaining authority over trade, thus limiting access to resources or goods required in the struggle for social power (Helgi Þorláksson 1999:91; DeMarrais et al. 1996:16). This limitation concerning church building entails that the number of clerics was not the only measure of ideological power materialised in Iceland. Nonetheless, it would be impossible to use this argument to establish a complete hierarchy of the churches. Still, in relation to the church topography and my main thesis, it is necessary to be aware of the consideration that ideology could materialise in different ways.

6.9 Absence of a Town and its Effects on the Church Topography

I have considered several aspects, all of which would have affected the church topography in Hólar bishopric in some way. A completely satisfactory explanation has nevertheless not been found. As the next step, I will address a significant difference between my two areas of investigation. This is the absence of a town in Hólar bishopric, which I propose, was important in shaping the church topography. In medieval Iceland, permanent and densely populated area with specialised economic functions, legally and administratively separated from the surrounding country, never developed (Helgi Þorláksson 1977:161). Whereas the archbishop's palace and cathedral were situated in a town in Trøndelag, the episcopal seat in Hólar was on a farm. According to Mann (1986:376-377), "most social relationships [in the Middle Ages] were extremely localised, intensely focused on one or more of a number of cell-like communities – the monastery, the village, the castle, the town, the guild, the brotherhood and so forth." The town of Nidaros can be considered in this way, as a community separated from the surrounding countryside (Saunders 1999a:21).

Power was inevitably constructed differently within towns compared to the countryside. It was easier to apply architecture to this avail, and, where cities were also demographic centres, there was even a larger audience to perceive this power (Wickham 2001:6). Established in the late 12th century, the archbishop's palace acted as both his main residence and the administrative centre for Nidaros archbishopric (Saunders 1999a:18).

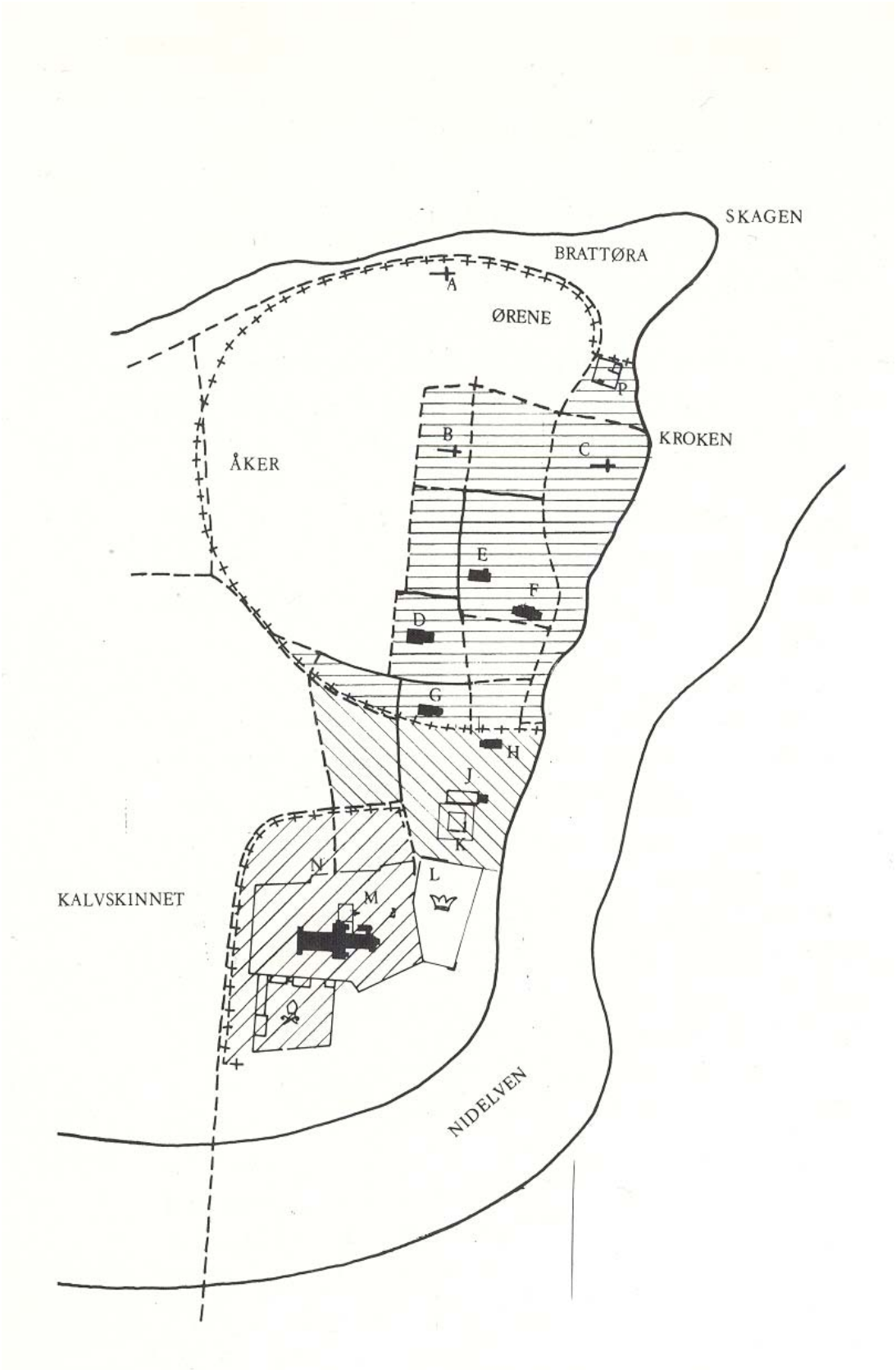

Figure 21: From Lunde (1977:Fig. 140). The medieval churches in Nidaros. The cathedral (area M) and the archbishop's palace to the south of it dominate the town from their position on the highest point of the Nidarnes peninsula. The king's palace (area L) is situated to the east of the cathedral. The map lacks a compass needle, but north is evident, considering the cathedral's correct orientation west-east.

Both the palace and the grand cathedral can be said to have been situated quite conspicuously (Figure 21). Placed on the highest point of the Nidarnes peninsula, they held dominating positions, signifying archiepiscopal power. The buildings visually dominated the town which stretched along the low-lying river bank to the north (Saunders 1999a:21). Considering that the rest of the settlement consisted of low wooden structures with narrow streets in between, this becomes even clearer (Christophersen 1992:55). No matter where in the city people were, they would be able to see the buildings because of their height and location. This topographical positioning also provided the archbishop with the ability to observe activities going on in the city (Saunders 1999a:21).

Both the cathedral and the archbishop's palace were situated within walls, through which movement could be controlled. The walls were fortifications, but in addition they helped to maintain and legitimise the palace as the archbishop's private property, securing his privacy. The architecture and topographical positioning of the palace were methods of displaying ecclesiastical and aristocratic authority. The wall around the archbishop's palace was rebuilt in a more monumental form in the first half of the 13th century, a clear sign of the influence of the archiepiscopal power in the city. The southern wall stretched along the top of the riverbank, increasing the physical presence of the complex for people coming into the town by the river (Saunders 1999a:19-22, 1999b:91). By building the cathedral larger and greater it became a dignified seat for the archbishop of Nidaros. Furthermore, it would become a magnificent sepulchre church for the holy king Olav, attracting thousands of pilgrims. The battle for money was thus far more important than the battle for souls during periods of the Middle Ages (Brendalsmo 2006:263).

From ca. 1150 to ca. 1320/50, few churches were built in the countryside of Trøndelag[15]. It is possible that both king and Church focused their economic and political effort to the cities in this time period (Brendalsmo 2006:39). Whether the church building ca. 1150-1320/50 mainly took place in Nidaros, and who were behind the building, was not the aim to determine in Brendalsmo's investigation, however. But as few churches can be documented to have been built in the countryside during this time period, this seems to be a reasonable conception (Brendalsmo 2006:290). Øivind Lunde (1977:209) raises the question of who would have had interests in building churches in a city where there were so many

[15] Sandnes (1993:110) believes that many of the churches from 1100 to 1350 were built by farmers in the regional societies, not just the secular elite, and not just in the town. Thus, he is being contradicted by Brendalsmo (2006).

churches right next to one another. It seems more likely that the secular elite would demonstrate their conspicuous consumption at their farms in the countryside. The precise number of churches in Nidaros is not known. Regardless, these churches were to serve the approximately 2,000-3,000 town dwellers (Moen 1971:91; Brendalsmo 2006:51).

As remarked by Jón Viðar (2005a:188), and repeated several times throughout the previous chapters, the distance between Hólar Episcopal seat and the closest major churches is significant. A similar situation existed in Skálholt bishopric where 21 of the 220 churches were major churches (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2005a:186), and distributed a long distance from the episcopal seat (Figure 22). The absence of status churches in the vicinity of both Icelandic bishoprics thus provides support for my idea that the absence of a town was of great relevance for the distribution of status churches in Hólar bishopric.

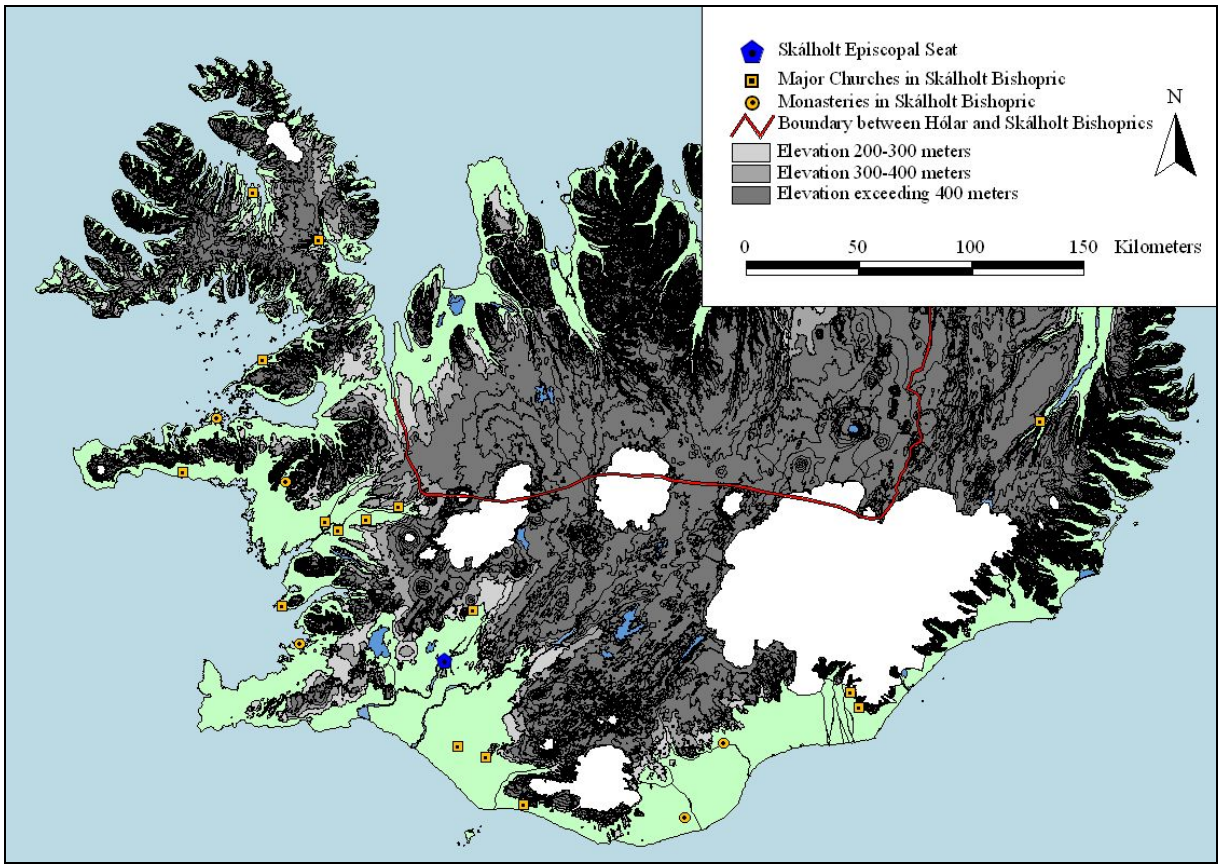

Figure 22: Major churches in Skálholt bishopric as used by Jón Viðar (2005a:Figur 1) to discuss the political situation in Iceland in the 11th and 12th centuries.

Brendalsmo (2006) advocates a competition manifested within the secular elite in Trøndelag, visible in their conspicuous consumption when constructing stone churches. From the map of stone churches in Trøndelag (Figure 13) it becomes clear that they were distributed around

Nidaros in a different way than the major churches were distributed around Hólar Episcopal seat. Since it might have been more problematic for the archbishop in Nidaros to achieve control over the privately owned churches and priests, he conceivably increased his efforts to establish a stronger archiepiscopal power in Nidaros, where his seat was located. Concerning the relationship between town and countryside, I propose that there was less competition between the archbishop and the secular elite in the countryside of Trøndelag precisely because of the presence of the town. Since it seems that the archbishop had significant religious authority in Nidaros – clearly demonstrated in the cathedral and palace complex – he had less need for competing with the secular elite in establishing status churches throughout his bishopric, covering the rural countryside. There the competition seems to have manifested to a larger degree within the secular elite, reflected in the churches built to demonstrate their conspicuous consumption (Brendalsmo 2006:286). It is worth mentioning that the stone church at Stiklestad belonged to the archbishop, at least in 1432. Thus, the competition within the secular elite involving stone churches, should not be considered without reservation. Nonetheless, it does provide a good general picture of the situation in Trøndelag.

In Iceland, where there appears to have been more competition between the bishops and the chieftains, the reason for this might be sought in the fact that the bishop's seat was not separated from the countryside by an urban landscape. As such the bishops had to establish their authority in a different manner than what was necessary in Trøndelag. The Hólar bishops had to assert their influence, much like the chieftains, in order to control the area surrounding their seat. There was no separate enclave which the bishop more easily could dominate. In this regard, control of the churches in the vicinity and control of priestly services seem to have been important parts of the bishops' strategy. Their influence in the neighbouring areas is visible due to the lesser number of major churches, as well as the incorporation of the closest churches into the episcopal estate.

6.10 Norwegian Influence and the Struggle for Church Liberty

The centenary prior to 1318 saw several important changes in the Icelandic Church which I will argue contributed to greater power for the Icelandic bishops. Reform had earlier been difficult, as the Church in Iceland was not a clearly defined organisation. The strong influence of secular powers contributed to this difficulty (Byock 1988:159), as accounted for in full in chapter 6.3-6.5. Before the reforms in the 13th century could gain foothold, however, influence from abroad was required. The first that would be natural to assume as a real epoch-

making event in Norwegian-Icelandic relations, was the incorporation of the Icelandic bishoprics in the new archbishopric with its seat in Nidaros in the middle of the 12th century. Nevertheless, Icelandic written sources do not tell us much about this. *Lögmannsannál*[16] mentions it with only four words: "opprettet erkebispestol i Nidaros."[17] This seemingly limited interest among Icelandic writers possibly reflects the manner in which the Icelandic chieftains regarded the archbishop and his role in the ecclesiastical development on Iceland. They did not dispute the archbishop's superior status in religious matters, but considered his job mainly to be to approve their own decisions (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2003a:122).

One attempt from the Norwegian archbishop to influence matters came already in 1190, when he prohibited the ordination of chieftains as priests, thus hoping to lessen the control the secular leaders held over the Church. This interdiction was never officially made part of Icelandic law, however (Byock 1988:150). It is interesting to note that the practice which the archbishop outlawed was already becoming outdated (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:170).

The civil war in Norway lessened the Norwegian influence in Iceland. Archbishop Øystein Erlendsson and King Sverre Sigurdsson (1184-1202) were in a severe struggle which led to the king's excommunication, that the country was placed under interdict, and that the Norwegian bishops were exiled. It was not until well into the 13th century that the archbishops and the Norwegian king, particularly under Sverre's grandson, King Håkon Håkonsson (1217-1263), were able to work together efficiently, in order for both Church and King to extend their authority to Iceland (Byock 1988:150). This change should be considered in relation to the year 1238. Bishop Guðmundur Arason died in 1237, and in the same year the office of the bishop of Skálholt fell vacant too. Two Icelandic bishop candidates were sent to Nidaros in 1238, but instead of approving their nominations, Archbishop Sigurd Eindridesson (1231-1252) consecrated two Norwegians to serve as bishops in Iceland. His motives for doing so were probably to ease the way for official papal policy, and attempt to consolidate the growing Norwegian influence in the country (Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1953:148; Jón R. Hjálmarsson 1993:49). Thus, the Norwegian archbishop probably contributed to the conclusion of the Icelandic Commonwealth Period in 1262/64. After Iceland came under Norwegian rule, Icelanders were once again elected to the two Sees, and they eagerly advocated the reduction of secular power and influence within the Church. The bishops

[16] The *lögmenn* were the heads of the Icelandic judiciary and presided over the law court at the Alþing, i.e. the Icelandic general assembly which convened at Þingvellir at the end of June every year (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:287, 293).
[17] "Archiepiscopal seat established in Nidaros."

fought for supremacy over the local churches, an endeavour in which they received support from the archbishop and the Norwegian king (Helgi Þorláksson 1977:174).

In 1275 the Alþing adopted Bishop Árni Þoláksson of Skálholt's (1269-1298) code of Church Law. Most of what the Church, Guðmundur Arason among others, had fought for was now made into law. The Church regarded the local churches as belonging to the saints to which they were dedicated. As a consequence, demands for ecclesiastical superiority over them could be raised (Jón Jóhannesson 1969:150). All Icelandic churches were farm churches (Magnús Stefánsson 2000:12). When a church was built, the building and an amount of landed property, was donated to God, as well as a specific saint. The saint became the legal owner of church and property, but the builder usually set the terms for the gifts. He and his heirs had the right to administer the property. In practice this meant that the establisher of the church and his family could manage the church's landed property and income fairly unrestricted. They also employed priests (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2000:51). The church farmers advocated their privileges concerning the churches, which had been set as terms and guaranteed by the bishop before the consecration of the churches took place (Magnús Stefánsson 2000:214).

A farm which the local church owned in its entirety constituted a staðir and was an independent economic unit. The staðir churches did not have any specific characteristics or functions, however (Magnús Stefánsson 2000:191-192). Of the presupposed 110 churches in Hólar bishopric around 1300 there were 41 staðir, i.e. 37 percent (Magnús Stefánsson 2000:146). The staðamál conflict might have directly influenced the continued development of the church topography, as chieftains in the 13th century avoided establishing new staðir. They might have expected the bishops to demand to gain control over them (Helgi Þorlaksson 2005:140). Helgi (2005:129) briefly presents a discussion between Axel Kristinsson (1998, 2003) and Magnús (2002), in which they consider the possibility that staðir had earlier been established in order to avoid divided inheritance. Since a staðir could not be divided up, a core part of the landed property would be kept within the family administering the farm where the church was located. This might seem to indicate that all staðir were large and wealthy centres of power and sources of income. This was not always the case, however. Many were quite small, and the idea of primogeniture or allodial privilege might then instead be proposed as an explanation for why some staðir developed into rich institutions, rather than as a motive for their establishment.

This conflict over the ownership of the staðir churches dragged on. The staðamál conflict can be seen as the most direct influence of the Gregorian Reform, initiated by Pope Gregor VII (1073-85). The two matters of most importance in the reform was the liberty of the Church (*libertas ecclesiae*) and papal superiority (*supremati*). *Libertas ecclesiae* entailed among other things control over landed property, a separation of ecclesiastical law from secular law, and that the clergy should be free from familial entanglement, for in this way to be able to focus on their religious duties and not allow for family interests to influence them (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson et al. 2005:188-189). Greater independence was probably a consequence when family interests became less imposing on the religious offices. Concerning celibacy, Einar Ól. (1953:155) suggests that the most presseing matter was to avoid new marriages in the clergy. Thus, it was the younger generation of clerics which was more affected by the injunction. The older generation of already married priests would, due to natural causes, not carry on the custom of having a family.

Orri (2000:213) believes that the clergy's loyalty lay more with the household than to the fact that they were ordained. This made them lack a common identity under shelter of the bishop's authority. As long as most ecclesiastical property by and large was under secular control, the priests had little choice but to be loyal to the farmer on the land which sustained them. The staðamál conflict was concluded in 1297 when an agreement was reached at Avaldsnes in Norway (Gunnar F. Guðmundsson 1997:62). The bishops' achieved control over the staðir churches while the secular farmers kept their authority over the bændakirkjar (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2005a:184). With these changes the Icelandic Church was establishing itself in similar ways as abroad. It was no longer a half-Icelandic institution. It took form as part of an international Church, with foreign laws and acknowledged foreign masters in the archbishop and pope (Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1953:147).

Around the same time as these changes occurred in the Icelandic bishoprics, there was some kind of transition going on in the church organisation in Trøndelag as well. In the second phase of church building in this area, only four new churches were built, and all were made of wood, not stone. This might entail that the elite's previous conspicuous consumption by building in stone now manifested in other ways (Brendalsmo 2006:287, 290). The aristocracy had started giving up their privately owned churches and farms to the archiepiscopal seat and the cathedral chapter. A possible reason for this was that building churches and maintaining priests were no longer suitable strategies for the elite in order to position themselves in the struggle for social power (Brendalsmo 2006:287). In Trøndelag,

around 1320, there remained a great number of privately owned churches, however (Brendalsmo 2006:177). Until well into the 14th century many church owners defended their control over churches, both for ideological and economic reasons. Many priests probably felt more loyalty towards their chieftain than towards the bishop as they were poorly schooled in theology (Brendalsmo 2003:238).

The staðamál in Iceland is thus mirrored in the conflict regarding who should control churches in Trøndelag, a struggle not resolved until the end of the Middle Ages. That it dragged on for so long was probably due to the inability of the episcopal power to reach all part of the bishopric. In 1295, only two years before the staðamál conflict ended, a Benedictine convent was established by Bishop Jörundur Þorsteinsson (1267-1313) at the farm of Reynistaður. This farm was administered by the Ásbirningar family. The establishment of this religious house was possibly another strategy from the Hólar bishop to reduce competition in his bishopric. How the bishop could achieve this, considering the presence of the chieftain family at the farm, can probably be be explained from the fact that the episcopal seat owned part of the land belonging to Reynistaður (Magnús Stefánsson 2000:144).

The monastery at Möðruvellir in Hörgárdalur was established the following year, in 1296 (Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1953:112). Bishop Jörundur reserved authority for himself over the monastery's economy. Instead of being presided over by abbots, the monastery was managed only by priors (Jón Johannesson 1974:198), allowing the bishop to maintain control of this strategically significant area in Eyjafjörður, close to the trading site at Gásir (Adolf Friðriksson et al. 2006:41). (Match the location of Gásir in Figure 18 with the monastery at Möðruvellir in Figure 7, located in the valley where the mountain pass (Figure 18) opens up in the direction of Gásir.) Möðruvellir might even be regarded as an outpost for the Hólar bishop in Eyjafjörður. Several churches in this area also seem to have been incorporated (Figure 11), thus strengthening the impression that the Hólar bishop was establishing his power also in Eyjafjörður.

The noticeable correspondence in years between the establishment of a convent in 1295, a monastery in 1296, and finally the staðamál compromise in 1297, indicates that these events should probably be regarded as related. Possibly, the owners of the farms which were to house the new institutions might have realised that they were fighting a losing battle against the bishop concerning the control of their properties. Thus, it is conceivable that they willingly gave up their farms, in the hope that they would retain a certain amount of control

over them, and the way in which they were administrated. In addition, they would probably receive goodwill from the increasingly powerful bishop. If Jón Viðar's (2005a:186) assumption is correct, that the farms where the monasteries were established previously had housed major churches, there would have been at least two additional major churches in existence, not long before 1318, one in Skagafjörður and the northernmost of the two monasteries in Eyjafjörður (Figure 7). This strengthens the image that the power relationships in the bishopric were renegotiated in this period. The bishop manifested his power both in his immediate vicinity, with the convent at Reynistaður in the central part of the valley, where the powerful Ásbirningar family up until then possibly had stood fast with a major church, and further away, with the monastery at Möðruvellir, perhaps with the motive of securing even better control over the trade at Gásir in mind.

6.11 Possible Aspects Affecting the Church Topography: Summary

In this chapter I have considered different aspects assumed to have affected the church topography and distribution of major churches in Hólar bishopric. The settlement pattern was addressed first, as the explanation for the distribution of clerics ought to correspond to where there were Christians to provide services for. Although Skagafjarðarsýsla and Eyjafjarðarsýsla are similar landscapes concerning the availability of areas suitable for settlement, they display significantly diverging distributions of status churches. Thus, the landscape alone cannot account for the anomalous church topography. Moreover, the presupposed population numbers in the four main regions of the bishopric correspond almost perfectly. Skagafjörður was somewhat more densely populated, but if anything, this should have made the presence of major churches there *more* likely, as a greater number of people would be living in the areas around each church. The opposite is the case, however, as no major churches, with the likely exception of Reynistaður, which in 1318 had been established as a convent.

When comparing the number of clerics documented in the two countries, a remarkable discrepancy reveals itself. If the information in the documents is correct, the number of parishioners in Trøndelag was almost twelve times as high as in Hólar bishopric in the High Medieval Period. If considering possibilities such as the inclusion of omitted lesser clerics, or clerics at churches not mentioned in *Trondhjems Reformats* from 1589, the number of parishioners per cleric in Trøndelag is still no less than seven times as high. Thus, a difference between the two areas in the importance of having clerics available to the populace is evident. The landscape and settlement in Trøndelag might indeed have played a part, since the central

fjord was essential for communication in the area. Parish divisions might even have included areas on both sides of the fjord (Brendalsmo 2006:Figur 21). This importance of the fjord can probably contribute to explaining the distribution of status churches in the area around it as well. There is furthermore a tendency that these churches had more parishioners connected to them than the wooden churches had. However, it needs mentioning that many of them were county churches, and hence were to guarantee the whole population access to Christian services (Brendalsmo 2006:162).

Elements of the political situation in Northern Iceland have been necessary to evaluate in order to be able to comprehend how bishops and chieftains interacted. The relations between these two different offices of power, and how they oftentimes were intimately connected influenced how the episcopal power rose or waned through time. In the beginning, the office of bishop does not seem to have been something the chieftains considered important to be associated with. The circumstances surrounding the establishment of the seat at Hólar, with no chieftain wanting to relinquish their land, can stand testimony to this. Later, however, when the episcopal power increasingly manifested itself in the area, the estate at Hólar in Hjaltadal must have been an important centre to control. However, when discussing the episcopal power in the early phases of Icelandic Christianity, it is worth keeping in mind that the bishop was only as influential or insignificant as the person behind the office, as the story about Guðmundur Arason demonstrates.

Economy was an underlying factor for church building and upkeep. Access to timber was important, and the continuous maintenance of churches must have been an economic burden. Still, income from tithes or religious services could have functioned as powerful incentives to establish churches and keeping clerics. And the more clerics at a church, the more income the administrator of a church would conceivable receive, as he would be able to provide services for more people. Moreover, if granted parish status, the administrator of a church could receive as much as two of the four parts of the tithes. Whether or not the bishop had the power to organise the parishes in the early period has been doubted. However, the fairly even distribution of clerics in relation to population in 1318 indicates that he had sufficient influence to do so, thus making sure that religious services were available to the populace. Economic incentives to build churches after the introduction of the tithe law in 1096/97 was probably important for an *initial* church topography, with churches being built on hundreds of farms, if not over a thousand, and tiny parishes being established, not necessarily larger than the boundary of the farm on which the church stood. Many churches

must quickly have fallen into decay, however, or have been replaced by less dominating structures of turf, due to scarcity of timber for construction. Continuous maintenance of timber churches would then conceivable stand testimony of a person's or a family's economic power, as well as religious piety.

The analysis of Hólar bishopric in comparison with Trøndelag has strengthened my idea that the importance of being in control of religious ceremonies was great in Iceland. The high number of clerics in relation to the population clearly indicates this. Ideological power can manifest in different ways, and the stone churches in Trøndelag and major churches in Hólar bishopric, with their many clerics, are two examples of this. The comparative material has been applied to all aspects where I have deemed it would make good sense. The differences in church topography originating from the presence or absence of a town has been particularly significant, as the Hólar bishops would have had to establish their ideological power differently than the archbishops in Trøndelag. Whereas the seat at Hólar was based at a farmstead and not in a separate cell-like community comparable to the archbishop's seat in Nidaros, with a greater audience to perceive the office-holder's authority, the Hólar bishop instead had to fight to extend his influence over a larger area.

Influence from the Norwegian archbishop on the ecclesiastical institutions in Iceland has clear relevance for changes in the Hólar bishop's power, but indirectly also for the church topography. The period at the end of the 13th century was an age of great transition, and was arguably initiated as early as in 1238, along with the election of Norwegian bishops to the two Icelandic episcopal seats. The end of the Icelandic Commonwealth Period and the stadamál conflict continued the upheaval within the Icelandic Church, from which the Hólar bishops emerged with greater supremacy. Churches that had earlier been under secular control now fell to the Church, and with the changes initiated by the Gregorian reform, it would for the first time be possible to talk of a Church with a capital C.

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7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis I have sought answers for the curious spatial distribution of status churches in Hólar bishopric anno 1318, revealed through the church register, or máldagi, of Bishop Auðun rauði Þorbergsson (1313-1322). By considering the possible impact of different aspects in medieval Icelandic society, I have shown how the power and influence of the Hólar bishop seems to have changed through time; a fluctuation discernable from correlating the church topography anno 1318 with what is known about the episcopal power in the earlier periods, when chieftain families controlled the elections or coveted the episcopal office themselves. The church topography in 1318 indicates a powerful bishop with an influential seat in Skagafjörður. Thus, from being somewhat like a representative, or sometimes possibly even a puppet, for chieftain families, the bishop made a name for himself, establishing his power in a similar way as the chieftains did.

From the various aspects discussed in relation to their effects on the church topography, the importance of the secular-ecclesiastical relationship has become particularly evident, and as such it is essential for understanding the church topography in Hólar bishopric and the church organisation there. As Brendalsmo (2006:289) remarks when he concludes his investigation of the churches and church builders in Trøndelag, there was no "master plan" regarding the parish system, the archiepiscopal seat or the formation of the state. Christianity and church building were incorporated into the existing social and economic relations and co-existence. They were new resources which the elite could apply as strategies in the competition for power in society (Brendalsmo 2006:289). The same would have been the case in Iceland where family interests deeply saturated the Christian institutions, and where the chieftains were used to the idea that their office entailed authority in all aspects of society, including religion. This can explain why so many chieftains were ordained priests themselves, and why even many chieftains, especially in the early period of Christianity in Iceland, were consecrated as bishops.

The idea of the bishop as chieftain is intriguing. Bishops could, and probably were expected, to take part in conflicts, and it must have been common to side with their own families. They were, however, also expected to advocate peaceful settlements, consequently acquiring a function not much different from chieftains, striving to maintain control in their area of influence (Orri Vésteinsson 2000:163-164). Conceivably they were perceived by the common Icelander as a chieftain, and fitting the image of an authority combining political and

ideological power, the bishops would have to demonstrate their power on equal terms with the chieftains. Thus, the location of the episcopal seat was essential for the way in which the church topography developed in the Northern Iceland. The presupposed desire of the bishops to be free from competitors in the surrounding countryside is demonstrated in the distribution of major churches in Skagafjörður, compared to Eyjafjörður. Along with the changes happening in the 13th century, the office of bishop became more influential and also less dependent on secular interests. A further indication that this was a time of transition, with a Church and bishop becoming increasingly powerful, was that Bishop Auðun started erecting a cathedral of stone at his seat at Hólar. In a country without stone structures, this would conceivably have been a powerful signal of ideological and economic power and supremacy.

It is likely that a different distribution of major churches existed in Hólar bishopric before the bishops, due to Church reforms, acquired the amount of power that they did throughout the 13th century. By claiming this, I contradict Jón Viðar (2005a), who has argued that the major churches had existed even from the 12th century. Despite a certain stability in the number of clerics at each church, which I also advocate, it is well worth considering that only small variations would have been needed in order to profoundly change the church topography in the bishopric. If all the churches with two clerics in Skagafjarðarsýsla and Eyjafjarðarsýsla would have had three clerics, and thus considered major churches, both regions would have had the same number of these status churches, i.e. six. Furthermore, Húnavatnssýsla would have had a total of nine. Hence, the problematic aspects of the term ’major church’ which were addressed in chapter 5.1 should not be forgotten.

As anticipated, the introduction of a comparative material did provide me with a set of new ideas concerning the power relations and episcopal influence in Hólar bishopric. In retrospect, the comparison between Hólar bishopric and Trøndelag has provided an particularly illustrative case of different ways in which ideology can materialise. This theoretical framework can be of great use when archaeological material in an area to be investigated is scarce, or when trying to avoid some of the problems posed by dealing with contemporary ecclesiastical terms. Thus, the theory of materialisation of ideology has been helpful, first of all in order to be able to link the different sets of material in the two areas, applying different categories of status churches. The comparison with the church topography in Trøndelag moreover led to the realisation of how significant the absence of a town seems to have been for the shaping of the church topography in Hólar bishopric, due to the bishops’ need to assert their influence in a different manner than the archbishops in Trøndelag. In this

regard, the Hólar bishops' were comparable to secular chieftains, struggling for power and influence.

By examining the population numbers and numbers of clerics in the two countries, I discovered great differences in how many parishioners each cleric in the respective areas were required to serve. Somewhat unexpectedly then, I feel the need to reconsider an aspect of medieval Icelandic society which I did not set out to investigate. This concerns the count of the medieval population. Perhaps, as earlier investigations have shown, it amounted to 70,000, or even closer to 80,000. Still, by proportionally increasing the population in Hólar bishopric to fit a total population of 80,000 for the whole country, the average number of parishioners per cleric would still be approximately 135. As each priest in Trøndelag would have had as many as a thousand parishioners, this must entail that there was a fundamental difference in the importance of keeping clerics at one's church in Hólar bishopric, compared to Trøndelag.

The distribution of clerics in Hólar bishopric in 1318 makes good sense from a church organisational point of view, since it is fairly balanced according to the population. However, there was no clear consistence in the distribution of major churches, related to parishioners. Perhaps the distribution of major churches was the aftermath from an earlier system of chieftains or wealthy farmers in conflict. It is possible that they desired to display their control over ideology by having numerous clerics at their farm churches. However, the bishops' power must have increased significantly throughout the centenary prior to 1318, facilitating their likely consideration of ensuring a good distribution of clerics in the bishopric. The major churches can be fit this image since their administrators, by keeping a significant number of clerics at their churches, were able to express ideological supremacy without coming into conflict with the bishops' requirements for a general availability of religious services. Wealthy chieftains and farmers could still make people in their areas come to their own churches, consequently securing income and even loyalty for themselves. However, in their own area of influence in Skagafjörður, the Hólar bishop would no longer allow such demonstrations of ideological power, hence the lack of major churches.

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APPENDIX

Churches in Hólar Bishopric

Entry in the Auðunar-máldagi	Church name as stated in the Auðunarmáldagi	Modern name	Type of church	Total # of clerics (deacons)
240 (I)	Saudaness kyrckia	Sauðanes at Langanes	Bændakirkja	1
241 (II)	Sualbard j Thistilfirde	Svalbarð in Þistilfjörður	Stað	1
242 (III)	Presthola kyrkia	Presthólar, Hólar, in Gnúpasveit	Stað	?
243 (IV)	Kyrkia j Haffrafells Tungu	Hafrafellstunga in Axarfjörður	Bændakirkja	?
244 (V)	Skinnastada kyrckia	Skinnastaðir in Axarfjörður	Bændakirkja	2
245 (VI)	Gardz kyrkia	Garður in Kelduhverfi	Stað	1
246 (VII)	Huusavijkur kýrkia	Húsavík at Tjörnes	Stað	2
247 (VIII)	Askyrkia	Ás in Kelduhverfi	Bændakirkja	1
248 (IX)	Reýkiahlýdar kýrckia	Reykjahlíð in Mývatnssveit	Bændakirkja	1
249 (X)	Skuutustada kyrkia	Skútustaðir in Mývatnssveit	Bændakirkja	1
250 (XI)	Þuerær kyrkia	Þverá in Laxárdalur	Bændakirkja	1
251 (XII)	**Grenia[dar]stadar kýrkia**	**Grenjaðarstaðir in Aðaldalur**	**Stað**	**6/7 (4)**
252 (XIII)	**Mwla kýrckia**	**Múli in Aðaldalur**	**Stað**	**4 (2)**
253 (XIV)	Neskyrkia	Nes in Aðaldalur	Stað	1
254 (XV)	A stad j kin	Staður, Þóroddsstaðir at Kinn	Stað	2 (1)
255 (XVI)	Helgastada kýrckia	Helgastaðir in Reykjadalshreppur	Bændakirkja	2 (1)
256 (XVII)	Einarstada kýrckia	Einarsstaðir in Reykjadalshreppur	Bændakirkja	2
257 (XVIII)	Lundarbrecku kýrkia	Lundarbrekka in Bárðardalur	Bændakirkja	1
258 (XIX)	Eýardalsar kýrckia	Eyjardalsá in Bárðardalur	Bændakirkja	1
259 (XX)	Liosavatns kýrckia	Ljósavatn in Ljósavatnshreppur	Bændakirkja	2 (1)
260 (XXI)	**Häls kýrckia**	**Háls in Fnjóskadalshreppur**	**Stað**	**3 (1)**
261 (XXII)	Jllugastada kýrckia	Illugastaðir in Fnjóskadalshreppur	Stað	2
262 (XXIII)	Drafflastada kýrckia	Draflastaðir in Fnjóskadalshreppur	Bændakirkja	1
263 (XXIV)	Flatøiar kýrckia	Flatey in Fnjóskadalshreppur	Bændakirkja	?
264 (XXV)	Grijmsøiar kýrckia	Grímsey (Miðgarðar) in Grímseyjarhreppur	Bændakirkja	2
265 (XXVI)	ÞaunglaBacka kyrckia	Þönglabakki at Firðir	Stað	1
266 (XXVII)	Grýtubacka kýrckia	Grýtubakki	Bændakirkja	1
267 (XXVIII)	Hofda kýrckia	Höfði in Höfðahverfi	Stað	1
268 (XXIX)	**Laufäs kýrckia**	**Laufás in Grýtubakkahreppur**	**Stað**	**3 (1)**

269 (XXX)	Sualbards kýrckia	Svalbarð at Svalbarðsströnd	Bændakirkja	1
270 (XXXI)	Kaupangs kýrkia	Kaupangur in Öngulsstaðahreppur	Bændakirkja	1
271 (XXXII)	**Modruualler j Eýiafirde**	**Möðruvellir in Saurbæjarhreppur**	**Bændakirkja**	**3 (1)**
272 (XXXIII)	Nupufells kýrckia	Núpufell, Gnúpufell in Saurbæjarhreppur	Bændakirkja	2 (1)
273 (XXXIV)	Holakýrckia j Eyiafirde	Hólar in Saurbæjarhreppur	Bændakirkja	1
274 (XXXV)	**Saurbæjar kýrkia**	**Saurbær in Saurbæjarhreppur**	**Stað**	**3 (1)**
275 (XXXVI)	[Diupadals kýrkia]	Stóridalur, Djúpidalur in Saurbæjarhreppur	Bændakirkja	?
276 (XXXVII)	Mýklagardz kýrckia	Miklagarður in Saurbæjarhreppur	Bændakirkja	2
277 (XXXVIII)	Grundar kýrckia	Grund in Hrafnagilshreppur	Bændakirkja	2
278 (XXXIX)	**Raffnagils kýrkia**	**Hrafnagil in Hrafnagilshreppur**	**Bændakirkja**	**4 (2)**
279 (XL)	Kýrckia j Logmanshlýd	Lögmannshlíð, Hlíð in Kræklingahlíð	Bændakirkja	1
280 (XLI)	Glæsibæiar kýrckia	Glæsibær in Glæsibæjarhreppur	Stað	?
281 (XLII)	[Arskogr]	Árskógur, Stærri at Árskógarströnd	Stað	1
282 (XLIII)	**Vallna kýrckia**	**Vellir in Svarfaðardalshreppur**	**Stað**	**3 (1)**
283 (XLIV)	Vrda kýrckia	Urðir in Svarfaðardalshreppur	Bændakirkja	1
284 (XLV)	Tiarnar kýrckia	Tjörn in Svarfaðardalshreppur	Stað	1
285 (XLV).	Vpsa kýrckia	Uppsir at Uppsaströnd in Svarfaðardalshreppur	Stað	1
286 (XLVII)	Hrýseyar kýrkia	Hrísey in Svarfaðardalshreppur	Bændakirkja	?
287 (XLVIII)	[Bard j Fliotum]	Barð in Fljótahreppur	Bændakirkja	1
288 (XLIX)	Fells kýrckia	Fell in Sléttahlíð	Stað	1
289 (L)	Malmeýiar kýrkia	Málmey in Höfðastrandarhreppur	Bændakirkja	1
290 (LI)	Hoffda kýrkia [ä hofdastrond]	Höfði in Höfðastrandarhreppur	Bændakirkja	1
291 (LII)	Hoffz kýrckia a Hoffdastrond	Hof in Höfðastrandarhreppur	Bændakirkja	1
292 (LIII)	Mýklebæiar kýrkia j Oslandzhlijd	Miklabær in Óslandshlíð, Höfðastrandarhreppur	Incorporated	1
293 (LIV)	Þuerä j skagafirde	Þverá in Blönduhlíð	Bændakirkja	1
294 (LV)	Mýklabæiar kyrkia j Blonduhlijd	Miklabær in Blönduhlíð	Bændakirkja	2 (1)
295 (LVI)	Wijdevalla kýrckia	Víðivellir in Blönduhlíð	Bændakirkja	2 (1)

296 (LVII)	Sýlffrastada kýrckia	Silfrastaðir in Blönduhlíð	Bændakirkja	1
297 (LVIII)	FlataTungu kyrckia	Flatatunga in Akraþingsókn	Bændakirkja	1
298 (LIX)	Kýrckia a Abæ	Árbær, Ábær in Blönduhlíð	Bændakirkja	1
299 (LX)	Kyrckia ä Hoffe	Hof in Lýtingsstaðahreppur	Bændakirkja	1
300 (LXI)	Guddalir	Goðdalir in Lýtingsstaðahreppur	Stað	2 (1)
301 (LXII)	Mælefell	Mælifell in Tungusveit	Stað	2
302 (LXIII)	Reykia kýrckia	Reykir in Tungusveit	Bændakirkja	1
303 (LXIV)	Kýrckia j Holme [sem nu kallast Glombær]	Glaumbær in Seyluhreppur	Incorporated	1
304 (LXV)	Wijdemýrar kýrckia	Víðimýri in Seyluhreppur	Bændakirkja	2 (1)
305 (LXVI)	Gielldingahollt	Geldingaholt in Seyluhreppur	Bændakirkja	2 (1)
306 (LXVII)	Rýpur kýrckia	Rípur at Hegranes	Incorporated	0,5
307 (LXVIII)	Borgarkýrkia	Sjávarborg, Borg in Sauðárhreppur	Bændakirkja	1
308 (LXIX)	Fagranes kýrckia	Fagranes at Reykjaströnd	Stað	1
309 (LXX)	Huamms kýrckia	Hvammur in Laxárdalur, Skefilsstaðahreppur	Bændakirkja	1
310 (LXXI)	Hof a Skagastrond	Hof at Skagaströnd	Stað	1
311 (LXXII)	Späkonufells kýrckia	Spákonuell at Skagaströnd	Bændakirkja	1
312 (LXXIII)	Hoskulldstada kýrckia	Höskuldsstaðir at Skagaströnd	Stað	2
313 (LXXIV)	Hollstada kýrckia	Holtastaðir in Langadalur	Bændakirkja	2
314 (LXXV)	Bolstadar hlijd	Bólstaðarhlíð, Hlíð in Langadalur	Bændakirkja	1
315 (LXXVI)	Bergstada kýrckia	Bergsstaðir in Svartárdalur	Bændakirkja	1
316 (LXXVII)	Blondudalshola kyrckia	Blöndudalshólar, Hólar in Blöndudalur	Stað	1
317 (LXXVIII)	Kýrckia a audkulu	Auðkúla in Svínavatnsþingsókn	Bændakirkja	?
318 (LXXIX)	Suijnavatns kýrckia	Svínavatn in Svínavatnsþingsókn	Bændakirkja	1
319 (LXXX)	Hialltabacka kýrckia	Hjaltabakki in Torfalækjarhreppur	Stað	2 (1)
320 (LXXXI)	Marsstada kýrckia	Másstaðir in Vatnsdalur	Bændakirkja	1
321 (LXXXII)	Huams kýrckia j vatzdal	Hvammur in Vatnsdalur, Fremri Vatnsdalshreppur	Bændakirkja	1
322 (LXXXIII)	Kýrckia j Grýms Tungum	Grímstunga, Grímstungur in Fremri Vatnsdalshreppur	Stað	2 (0/1)
323 (LXXXIV)	Vnderfells kýrckia	Undirfell, Undinfell in Fremri Vatnsdalshreppur	Stað	2 (1)
324 (LXXXV)	BreýdaBolstaadar kýrckia j vatzdal	Breiðabólstaður in Neðri Vatnsdalshreppur	Bændakirkja	2 (1)

325 (LXXXVI)	Wýdedals Tungu kýrckia	Víðidalstunga in Víðidalshreppur	Bændakirkja	1
326 (LXXXVII)	Asgeýrsar kýrckia	Ásgeirsá in Víðidalshreppur	Bændakirkja	1
327 (LXXXVIII)	**[Breidibolstadr j Vestrhopi]**	Breiðabólstaður in Vesturhóp	**Stað**	**4 (2)**
328 (LXXXIX)	Hola kýrkia j westurhope	Vesturhópshólar, Hólar in Vestara Hópshreppur	Stað	2
329 (XC)	Tiorn a vatnsnese	Tjörn at Vatnsnes, Vestara Hópshreppur	Stað	1
330 (XCI)	Huams kýrckia j midfirde	Kirkjuhvammur, Hvammur, in Miðfjörður	Bændakirkja	1
331 (XCII)	Melstadar kýrckia	Melur in Miðfjörður	Stað	2 (0/1)
332 (XCIII)	StadarBacka kýrckia	Staðarbakki in Miðfjörður	Stað	2 (0/1)
333 (XCIV)	Gnwps kýrckia	Núpur, Gnúpur, Fremri/Efri, in Miðfjarðarhreppur	Bændakirkja	1
334 (XCV)	Stadur j Hrutafirdi	Staður in Hrútafjörður	Stað	?
335 (XCVI)	Gunnsteinsstada kýrckia	Gunnsteinsstaðir in Langadalur	Bændakirkja	1
336 (XCVIII)	**Mwkaþuerär klaustur**	**Munkaþverá in Öngulsstaðahreppur**	**Monastery**	**?**

Table of the churches in Hólar bishopric mentioned in Auðundarmáldagi (DI II:240-336): The major churches are indicated by bold letters. The number of clerics connected to the church is first stated in total, and then with the number of deacons or other lesser clerics in parenthesis.

Churches in Trøndelag, Norway

Church Name (Alternative name)	Dating	Owner	Bulding Material	Parish 1589	Clerics	Farmers
Osen	*1589*	E	Wood	Bjørnør	2/3	45
Roan (Bjørnør)	*1432*	E	Wood	Bjørnør[18]	2/3	45
Å (Åfjord)	*1329*	E	Wood	Åfjord	1/2	56[19]
Jøssund	*1589*	E	Wood	Åfjord	1/2	24
Nes	*1520*	E	Wood			
Undås	*1432*	F	Wood			
Hemne (Sta. Margreta)	*1422*	A?	Wood	Hitra[20]	1/2	69
Vinje (St. Andreas)	*1125*	A	Wood	Hitra	1/2	11
Selnes	*1432*	E	Wood	Ørland	1/2	15
Veklem	ca. 1140	A?	Stone	Ørland	1/2	100
Vik	*1550*	E	Wood			
Uthaug	*1533*	E	Wood			
Austrått	ca. 1140	A	Stone			
Agdenes	ca. 1120	K	Wood			
Storfosen	1236	K	Wood			
Rein (Rissa)	ca. 1150	A	Wood/Stave	Stadsbygd	1/2	92
Reinskloster	ca. 1160	A	Stone			
Lille-Rein (Stadsbygd)	*1184*	E	Wood/Stave	Stadsbygd	1/2	55
Alshaug	*1432*	E	Wood/Stave			
Gryting (Orkdal)	ca. 1130	K	Stone	Orkdal	2/2	120
Grøtte (Meldal)	*1250*	K	Wood	Meldal	1/2	91
Lo	*1533*	E	Wood			
Horstad (Voll/Renboe)	ca. 1120	E	Wood/Stave	Meldal	1/2	69
Hol (Flå)	*1432*	E	Wood			
Vang (Oppdal)	*1383*	E	Wood/Stave	Oppdal	1	100
Lo	ca. 1250	K	Wood			
Ålbu	*1550*	E	Wood			
Singsås (Sindtzagger)	*1300*	E	Wood/Stave	Haltdalen	1/3	38
Stein (Holtålen)	ca. 1150	F	Wood/Stave	Haltdalen	1/3	21
Hov (Ålen)	ca. 1150	E	Wood/Stave	Haltdalen	1/3	42
Støren	*1432*	E	Wood	Støren	2/4	44
Hov (Soknedal)	*1250*	E	Wood	Støren	2/4	60
Foss	*1200*	E	Wood	Støren	2/4	14
Grinni	*1200*	F	Wood	Støren	2/4	39

Melhus	ca. 1140	K	Stone	Melhus	2/5	100
Skjerdingstad	*1533*	A	Wood			
Flå	*1432*	A?	Wood/Stave	Melhus	2/5	21
Grøtan (Grøtte)	*1533*	E	Wood	Melhus	2/5	22
Kolbrandstad	*1300*	E	Wood	Melhus	2/5	15
Vassfjellet	*1250*	K?	Wood			
Nypan (Leinstrand)	*1533*	E	Wood	Melhus	2/5	40
Ven (Skaun/Skogen)	ca. 1160	A?	Stone	Orkdal	2/2	49
Husby	ca. 1140	A	Stone			
Viggja (Børsa)	*1250*	A	Wood/Stave	Byneset	1/3	72
Steine (Byneset)	ca. 1140	K	Stone	Byneset	1/3	72
Hangra	*1350*	A?	Wood			
Husby (Buvik)	*1350*	E	Wood	Byneset	1/3	28
Lade	ca. 1130	K	Stone	Strinda[21]	1/4	80
Bratsberg	*1432*	E	Wood	Strinda	1/4	32
Malvik	*1432*	E	Wood	Strinda	1/4	36
Tiller	*1520*	E	Wood	Tiller and Klæbu	1/2	12
By (Klæbu)	*1325*	E	Wood/Stave	Tiller and Klæbu	1/2	34
Nesta (Selbu)	ca. 1120	A?	Stone	Selbu	1/2	90
Kirke Voll (Tydal)	*1300*	F	Wood	Selbu	1/2	10
Hegra (Heggrem)	*1250*	E	Wood	Stjørdal	2/4	87
Ådalen	*1350*	F	Wood			
Kirkevoll (Meråker)	*1350*	F	Wood			
Værnes	ca. 1090	K	Stone	Stjørdal[22]	2/4	41
Skatval	*1500*	E	Wood/Stave	Stjørdal	2/4	44
Auran	*1520*	A?	Wood	Stjørdal[23]	-	-
Lånke (Lunke/Lexdal)	*1520*	E	Wood	Stjørdal	2/4	50
Voll	*1432*	E	Wood			
Skjølstad	*1520*	E	Wood	Stjørdal[24]	-	-
Røstad (Leksvik)	*1300*	E	Wood	Frosta	2/5	42
Grandan	*1533*	E	Wood			
Hindrem (Stranda)	*1589*	E	Wood/Stave	Frosta	2/5	22
Logtun (Frosta)	ca. 1120	K	Stone	Frosta[25]	2/5	77
Vangberg	*1533*	A	Wood			
Tautra kloster	ca. 1130	K?+M	Stone			
Vang (Åsen)	*1432*	E	Wood	Frosta	2/5	31
Veie	*1520*	E	Wood	Skogn[26]	-	-
Svengård	*1520*	E	Wood	Skogn[27]	-	-
Jevik (Ekne)	*1450*	F	Wood	Skogn	2/3	15

Gustad	*1548*	E	Wood			
Alstahaug (Skogn)	ca. 1130	K	Stone	Skogn	2/3	100
Levanger	ca. 1120	A?	Stone	Skogn	2/3	63
Munkeby kloster	ca. 1140	M	Stone	Skogn[28]	-	-
Haug	ca. 1130	K	Stone			
Stiklestad (Verdal)	ca. 1140	AB	Stone	Verdal	2/3	102
Leklem	*1520*	E	Wood	Verdal[29]	-	-
Lyng	*1280*	A	Wood	Verdal[30]	-	-
Auglen (Aulle)	*1520*	E	Wood	Verdal[31]	-	-
Auskin (Widskin)	*1432*	E	Wood	Verdal[32]	-	-
Vuku	*1520*	E	Wood	Verdal	2/3	68
Hallan	*1513*	A?	Wood	Verdal	2/3	30
Vinnan (Mosvik)	*1250*	E	Wood	Ytterøy	1/2	28
Vestvik (Verran/Werren)	*1300*	E	Wood	Inderøy	2/4	20
Eid (Ytterøy)	*1432*	E	Wood/Stave	Ytterøy	1/2	54
Røvik	*1533*	AB	Wood	Ytterøy	-	-
Sakshaug (Inderøy)	ca. 1110	K	Stone	Inderøy	2/4	128
Hustad	ca. 1120	A	Stone	Inderøy	2/4	35
Kirknes	*1533*	E	Wood	Inderøy[33]	-	-
Ulven	*1490*	A?	Wood	Inderøy[34]	-	-
Kvistad	*1533*	A?	Wood			
Salberg (Røra)	*1432*	E	Wood/Stave	Inderøy	2/4	50
Mære (Sparbu)	ca. 1050	K	Stone	Sparbu	2/3	106
Skei (Ogndal)	*1300*	E	Wood	Sparbu	2/3	38
Henning (Hedings)	*1300*	E	Wood	Sparbu	2/3	28
Egge	*1490*	A	Wood	Stod	2/5	29
Solberg (Beitstad)	*1300*	E	Wood	Beitstad	2/4	70
Lagtu	*1533*	E	Wood	Beitstad	2/4	16
Kirkreit (Reit/Eidtz(Malm)	*1432*	E	Wood	Beitstad	2/4	40
Elden (Mandalseid/Eid)	*1300*	A	Wood/Stave	Beitstad	2/4	24
For (Stod)	*1250*	A?	Wood/Stave	Stod	2/5	37
Kvam (Quam)	*1200*	E	Wood/Stave	Snåsa/Stod[35]	2/5	28
Ol (Aal)	*1533*	E	Wood	Snåsa/Stod[36]	2/5	12
Føling	*1430*	E	Wood/Stave	Stod	2/5	19
Vinje (Snåsa)	ca. 1150	A?	Stone	Snåsa	1/2	60
Devka (Sørli/Findelijd)	*1548*	F	Wood	Snåsa	1/2	9
Grong	*1200*	E	Wood/Stave	Overhalla	1/3	42
Gløshaugen	*1250*	F	Wood/Stave	Overhalla	1/3	8
Romstad (Høylandet)	*1250*	E	Wood/Stave	Overhalla	1/3	19

Ranem (Overhalla)	ca. 1110	K	Stone	Overhalla	1/2	70
Skage	*1432*	F	Wood/Stave	Overhalla	1/2	20
Sævik (Klinga)	*1520*	F	Wood/Stave	Fosnes	1/2	30
Fosnes	*1500*	E	Wood	Fosnes	1/2	34
Vik (Otterøy)	*1250*	E	Wood	Fosnes	1/2	31
Halmøy (Flatanger)	*1468*	E	Wood	Fosnes	1/2	51
Nærøy	ca. 1120	A?	Stone	Nærøy[37]	1/3	60
Varøya (Løffsnesz)	*1589*	E	Wood	Nærøy	1/3	30
Leknes (Leka/Leckenn)	*1430*	E	Wood	Nærøy	1/2	40
Foldereid (Follen)	*1500*	E	Wood	Nærøy	1/2	17
Kolvereid	*1597*	E	Wood			

Table of churches in Trøndelag, Norway: After Brendalsmo (2006:277-280), with modifications and additions from Thr.R. Explanation for the columns: *Church Name/Alternative name*: an alternative name has been included whenever misunderstandings or uncertainties concerning the church's name can occur, either due to an old name that differs from the modern version, or in those cases when two different names of a single church are used alternatively.
***Dating*: Italics = prior to.**
***Owner*: Ownership of the church at the time of its erection. K = King, AB = Archbishop, M = Monastery, A = the aristocracy, E = the elite in society, i.e. *haulds* (big farmers), B = farmers**
***Building material*: Stone or wood; in some cases wooden stave construction.**
***Parish*: The parish to which the church belonged to in 1589 (Thr.R.). The field is empty in those cases where the church is not mentioned in the Thr.R. In some cases there are reforms mentioned in Thr.R., e.g. that people should use other parish churches. In these cases the parish is stated in parenthesis.**
***Number of clerics*: The number before the dash states the number of clerics serving the number of churches stated after the dash.**
***Number of farmers*: The number of tithe-paying farmers belonging to each parish church.**

Lists of bishops and archbishops[38]

Bishops at Hólar 1106-1322

1106-1121: Jón Ögmundarson

1122-1145: Ketill Þorsteinsson

1147-1162: Björn Gilsson

1163-1201: Brandur Sæmundarson

1203-1237: Guðmundur Arason

1238-1246: Bótólfur

1247-1260: Heinrekur Kársson

1263-1264: Brandur Jónsson

1267-1313: Jörundur Þorsteinsson

1313-1322: Auðun rauði Þorbergsson

Bishops at Skálholt 1056-1320

1056-1080: Ísleifr Gissurarson

1082-1118: Gissur ísleifsson

1118-1133: ÞorlákurRunólfsson

1134-1148: Magnús Einarsson

1152-1176: Klængur Þórsteinsson

1178-1193: Þorlákur helgi Þórhallsson

1195-1211: Páll Jónsson

1216-1237: Magnús Gissurarson

1238-1268: Sigvarður Þéttmarsson

1269-1298: Árni Þorláksson

1304-1320: Árni Helgason

Archbishops in Hamburg-Bremen

1043-1072: Adalbert I.

1072-1101: Liemar

1101-1104: Humbert

Archbishops in Lund

1104-1137: Asser Sveinsson

1137-(1152/53)1178: Eskil

Archbishops in Nidaros

1152-1157: Jon Birgersson

1158-1188: Øystein Erlendsson

1189-1205: Eirik Ivarsson

1206-1214: Tore I

1215-1224: Guttorm

1225-1226: Peter av Husastad

1227-1230: Tore II “den trøndske”

1231-1252: Sigurd Eidridesson

1253-1254: Sørle

1255-1263: Einar

1265-1267: Håkon

1267-1282: Jon Raude

1287-1309: Jørund

1309-1331: Eiliv