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Saints of Medieval Hólar:¹ A Statistical Survey of the Veneration of Saints in the Diocese

By Margaret Cormack, *College of Charleston*

The Diocese of Hólar, comprising the northernermost of the four legal divisions (quarters) of medieval Iceland, was founded in 1106, a century after Iceland's acceptance of Christianity; its first bishop, Jón Ögmundarson (1106-1121), was locally canonized on March 3, 1200. He is said to have assigned episcopal tithes for the building of a church and monastery at Þingeyrar (and to have measured out the circumference of the future church with his cloak), although the monastery itself, the first in Iceland, did not become functional until 1133.² It was followed by another Benedictine monastery at Munkaþverá in 1155, an Augustinian house at Möðruvellir in 1296, and a convent at Reynistaður in 1295. By this time there were over one hundred churches in the diocese, as well as numerous chapels. The present article is a survey of dedications and images of saints in Hólar Diocese. When the evidence permits, I will discuss the development of the cults of individual saints.

The primary source for evidence of the cults of saints in Iceland is found in church contracts called *máldagar*, which usually include detailed inventories of church contents, including statues and lives of saints (in Latin or the vernacular), as well as other evidence of veneration. The *máldagar* also specified the number of clergy at the church, the number of masses to be sung, and other provisions, such as the requirement to disburse alms on a saint's feast.³ The more detailed *máldagar* allow us to visualize church interiors with their alabaster altarpieces, enamelled chalices, and gilded reliquaries. These documents were kept (and updated) at the church itself; in addition, bishops compiled their own registers to keep track of the property of churches in the diocese. The registers provide the basis for the present study. Unfortunately, these documents were not exhaustive; free-standing chapels rarely merited separate entries, nor did churches that were for some reason outside of the parish system, such as the church at the trading center at Gásar, of unknown origin and status. Ecclesiastical institutions such as monasteries or the cathedral itself appear to have kept their own records; information

¹ This paper is based on a presentation made at the conference "Saints and Geography" at Hólar, Iceland, in June, 2006. Thanks are due to the sponsors of this event (see introduction), and to the National Endowment of the Humanities for a Summer Stipend which enabled me to complete my contribution. The College of Charleston Research and Development Fund, the Icelandic Centre for Research (RANNÍS), and the Icelandic Millennial Fund (Kristnihátíðarsjóður) provided financial assistance at various stages of the project. I thank Helgi Skúli Kjartansson, Svavar Sigmundsson, Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir and Gunnar Guðmundsson for valuable comments which saved me from numerous errors. Dr. Asimoula Alissandratos greatly improved the style. Any remaining errors or infelicities are my own.

² *Biskupa sögur* I, ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson *et al.* (Reykjavík: 2003) part 2, pp. 227-228, hereafter BS.

³ Margaret Cormack, *The Saints in Iceland. Their Veneration from the Conversion to 1400* (Brussels, 1994), pp. 25-29; Orri Vésteinsson, *The Christianization of Iceland. Priests, Power and Social Change 1000-1300* (Oxford: 2000), pp. 101-108.

about their property is preserved in a rather haphazard fashion, the earliest record being, in many cases, from a compilation made in 1525.

The parish structure found in the *máldagi* collections dates from the twelfth century at the earliest. Recent archaeological excavations have provided evidence of churches from the eleventh century that do not appear in the documents, and may have been moved, fallen out of use, or perhaps survive as some of the chapels referred to in the *máldagar*. Once recorded, however, *máldagar* were unlikely to have been omitted from the registers, even if the church no longer existed; bishops would want the records available in case of eventual rebuilding.



Figure 1 Hólar Cathedral today. Photo: author.

The present study includes data from all ecclesiastical institutions with *máldagar* recorded before the Reformation (1550), a maximum of 127. Their age is generally unknown. It

should be noted that dedications were not fixed; churches could be rededicated, or new patrons silently adopted. As I have treated the cult of the saints in Iceland before 1400 in detail elsewhere (Cormack 1994), this article contains detailed references primarily for evidence from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Medieval Iceland was a rural society with few areas of concentrated population; for the most part these would have been at monasteries or at the two cathedrals. The places where churches were located were farms, not towns or even villages; most of these farms still exist today. When more than one farm has the same name, additional information has been supplied to aid in the identification. Hólar in Eyjafjörður is not the same as Hólar Cathedral (**fig. 1**), and the church at Möðruvellir in (southern) Eyjafjörður should not be confused with Möðruvellir Monastery, further north. Those unfamiliar with Icelandic geography may refer to the database at www.saintsgeog.net, which, when complete, will present the data in searchable format.

Dedications in Hólar Diocese

The following list shows the number of ecclesiastical institutions at which each saint is listed as the main patron (i.e., the church is referred to as St. X's church) as a fraction of the total instances when the saint is mentioned as a patron. Churches first appearing in the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries are listed by name in the right-hand column; they are included in the total. It should always be borne in mind that dedications could change (some examples are given in the discussion of individual saints), and that *máldagar* do not always include a complete list of patron saints.

Primary Patrons / Total Patronage	Church first attested 15th c. or later
Apostle Peter 20 / 24	
Virgin Mary 5 / 20	Hofstaðir
Nicholas of Myra and Bari 10 / 18	
Olaf of Norway 13 / 16	
John the Baptist 12 / 14	Skarð (Geitaskarð) in Langidalur
John the Apostle and Evangelist 4 / 8	
Andrew the Apostle 3 / 6	
Þorlákr (locally canonized 1198) 3 / 5	
Michael the Archangel 3 / 4	
Martin of Tours 3 / 3	
Thomas Becket (canonized 1173) 3 / 3	
Cecilia 2 / 2	
Magnus of Orkney 1 / 2	
Lawrence the Deacon 2 / 2	
Paul the Apostle (along with Peter) 1 / 2	
Ambrose of Milan 1 / 2	Viðvík
Apostles 1 / 1	
Bartholomew the Apostle 1 / 1	
Catherine of Alexandria 1 / 1 (changed dedication, see below)	
James the Greater 1 / 1	
Jesus Christ 1 / 1	
Jón of Hólar 2 / 2 (Cathedral and a half-church; see below)	
Matthew the Apostle 1 / 1	

Stephen the Deacon 1 / 1

Thomas the Apostle 1 / 1

The list of church patrons yields a group of universal saints, to which Olaf of Norway, Magnus of Orkney, and Icelandic Þorlákr and Jón have been added. The most popular saints (attested at ten or more churches) were Peter, Mary, Olaf, Nicholas, and John the Baptist. It might appear surprising that Peter is the most popular compared to, for example, the Virgin Mary, who was patron of the diocese, but was relatively infrequent as primary patron of churches within it. Peter, however, was not only “Prince of the Apostles,” but also patron of Skálholt Cathedral which was, for fifty years, the cathedral of Iceland. Furthermore, it appears that, in Iceland, the cult of the Virgin began to bloom in the thirteenth century (see below).



Figure 2 Retable in Hólar Cathedral, 16th century. Photo: Margrét Tryggvadóttir, with permission

Dedications are not always the most important evidence for the *cultus* of a saint. The bishop, not the builder of the church, had final say on the dedication.⁴ However, church funds or donations supplied by devout individuals paid for the statues and other decorations of the church, as well as literature about the saint. It was considered proper for a church to own an image of its patron saint, as well as a vernacular version (saga) of his or her life, if possible. The presence in a church of a statue or a saga of its patron saint might thus indicate nothing more than a sense of what was fitting. Of greater interest are images of a saint at churches *not* dedicated to him or her; in such cases, someone had spent money with a particular devotion in mind. As William Christiansen has pointed out, the “active” saint, the one to whom people pray when in need, is not necessarily the same as the titular patron, the saint to whom the church was dedicated or for whom it was named.⁵ The following list records the number of images of saints attested at

⁴ *Laws of Early Iceland: Grágás*, ed. Andrew Dennis, Richard Perkins, and Peter Foote, vol. 1 (Winnipeg: 1980), p. 31.

⁵ Christiansen, William, *Person and God in a Spanish Valley* (New York: Seminar Press, 1972), p. 68.

churches or religious houses *not* dedicated to them, compared to the total number of images.⁶ Few have survived *in situ*; most surviving medieval religious objects can be viewed at the National Museum in Reykjavík. A notable exception is the sixteenth-century retablo in Hólar Cathedral. (**fig. 2**) For illustrated discussion of extant wooden carvings, see Ellen Marie Magerøy; for alabaster, Bera Nordal.

Images at non-patronal churches, monasteries, and the cathedral

Note Numbers refer to the number of churches and institutions that do *not* name the saint in their dedications but own images vs. the total number with images. Multiple images in a single church are not counted. Dates of acquisition (when known) are treated in the discussion of individual saints.

Mary 81 / 101

Olaf 22 / 35

John the Baptist 10 / 23

Peter 10 / 31⁷

Nicholas of Bari 9-10 / 26-27⁸

Catherine of Alexandria 7 (excluding Hvammur, Vatnsdalur, see below) / 8

Guðmundr Arason 7 (counting Hólar Cathedral, where his shrine was, and of which he might be considered a patron) / 7

Magnus of Orkney 7 / 8

Michael the Archangel 6 (including one on an altar dedicated to him) / 9

Jón Ögmundarson of Hólar 6 / 7

Margaret of Antioch 5 / 5

Þorlákr 5 / 10

Anne, mother of the Virgin Mary 5 / 5 (including one in a chapel dedicated to her)

Mary Magdalene 5 / 5

Andrew the Apostle 4 / 8

Paul the Apostle 4 (associated with Peter in three cases) / 6

James the Greater 4 / 4

Zita 4 / 4

Stephen the Deacon 3 / 4

Agatha 2 / 2

Christopher 2 / 2

Elizabeth 2 / 2

John the Evangelist 2 / 6

Martin of Tours 2 / 5

Zacharias 2 / 2

Anthony (presumably the hermit) 2 / 2

⁶ In the following I use the terms “image” rather than “statue” because some of the items are painted on wood, rather than carved in wood or stone, and the Icelandic terms can be ambiguous. For the precise term used for each item, the reader may refer to the database.

⁷ The church at Mikligarður, dedicated to the Apostles, is taken as including Peter among its dedicatees.

⁸ The cathedral at Hólar owned an image of either Thomas or Nicholas; see below.

Cecilia 1 / 3
Lawrence the Deacon 1 / 3
Benedict of Nursia 1 / 3 (two of the images were at Benedictine monasteries)
Ambrose of Milan 1 / 2
Bartholomew the apostle 2 / 3
Barbara 1 / 1
Brigid of Kildare 1 / 1
Edmund king and martyr 1 / 1
Jerome 1 / 1
Charlemagne 1 / 1 (on a tapestry)
Thomas Becket 0 / 3
Thomas the Apostle 1 / 1
Thomas, not identified as the apostle or Becket 6 / 6 (images in churches dedicated either to the apostle or to Becket are assumed to represent that saint).
Matthew the Apostle 0 / 1

Images found only at monasteries (none of which are dedicated to the saint)

Clare of Assisi at Þingeyrar Monastery 1
Bonaventura at Möðruvellir Monastery 1
Halvard of Norway at Möðruvellir Monastery 1

Comparison of the two lists leads to a number of observations. The top places in both lists are held by the same five saints, but in different order. In terms of images, the Virgin Mary far outnumbers all other saints. In fact, hardly a church in the diocese did *not* own an image of her. Most famous of these was a statue at Hofstaðir (see below). At non-patronal churches, statues of the Norwegian Olaf outnumbered those of Nicholas, John the Baptist, and Peter.

The relatively small number of churches where St. Þorlákr was venerated contrasts markedly with the evidence for the country as a whole, where he appeared as patron saint and/or was represented by an image in numbers comparable to those of Nicholas, Olaf, and Peter.⁹ This reflects, in part, that he was patron saint of the diocese of Skálholt, which had three times as many churches as Hólar. Þorlákr's cult originated among the clergy of Hólar, and it is possible that the dedications to him represent their enthusiasm, rather than that of the average parishioner in the diocese.

A number of saints, some of whom were not known from any dedications within the diocese, are represented by five to ten images at non-patronal churches. It should, of course, be remembered that dedications were not always written out completely, and it is possible that a more complete *máldagi* would have listed these saints as patrons. However, the cults of these saints were apparently "late arrivals" that spread in Iceland in the thirteenth century when the major period of church founding was over. Among them we find the universal saints Catherine of Alexandria, Margaret of Antioch, the Archangel Michael, Mary Magdalene, and Anne, mother of the Virgin. Local and semi-local saints also belong to this group: for example, Magnus of Orkney, whose relic arrived in Skálholt in 1298 and whose feast became obligatory in 1326. Bishop Guðmundr Arason of Hólar, who was never formally canonized, is represented in

⁹ Cormack, *The Saints in Iceland*, p. 29.

numbers comparable to Jón and greater than those for Þorlákr, despite the fact the latter's inclusion in five dedications in the diocese.

A special category consists of saints identified only from monasteries. The contents of these institutions were mostly little known before being recorded in 1525, and it is likely that the saints in question were venerated earlier, though how much earlier is unknown. They are Clare of Assisi, Bonaventure, and Halvard of Norway. It is interesting that although Clare of Assisi and Bonaventure were represented by images at monasteries, there was no sign of interest in St. Francis outside the liturgy, though his feast was used occasionally to date documents.

Of the remaining saints, Elizabeth and Zacharias appeared together at two churches dedicated to their son, John the Baptist, and Charlemagne appeared on a tapestry at the church at Hvammur in Laxárdalur in the late fourteenth century (DI III 174).

It should be noted that individual donors could have considerable influence on the saints represented at a given church. For example, a *máldagi* for the church at Möðruvellir in Eyjafjörður from c. 1500 records payments by two individuals who had been in charge of the farm at different times. *Húsfrú* Margrét supplied a gilded alabaster altarpiece, a statue of St. Lawrence and one of St. Zita.¹⁰ The farmer Grímr Pálsson acquired for the church an image of Peter and one of Christopher, two of Margaret, one each of Guðmundr, Thomas, Barbara, Magnus, Michael, and a small image of Mary with doors. At the end of the fourteenth century, the church dedicated to St. Martin had owned only images of him and of the Virgin. Interestingly, the net result of these individuals' stewardship was that the church was indebted to them. One wonders whether the debt would have been treated as a donation for the good of their souls, or whether they expected it paid.

Geography

Medieval Iceland had very few usable harbors. There were two major ports in the diocese of Hólar, at Gásar in Eyjafjörður, near the monastery at Möðruvellir, and Kolkuós, which would have been the closest port to the cathedral at Hólar. Ships are also recorded arriving at Siglunes. Glacial rivers could be as dangerous as the ocean, as described in a dramatic miracle in *Þorláks saga*.¹¹ Within the country, travel was usually on horseback (no roads were good enough for wheeled vehicles until the twentieth century), rather than by ship. We read of Bishop Páll of Skálholt arriving from Norway in Eyjafjörður, and the saga of Bishop Jón Ögmundarson suggests that when Jón arrived from his consecration journey in the early twelfth century, he arrived in southern Iceland and traveled to his diocese by land.¹²

The fifteenth century in Iceland is often characterized as the "English Age" because of trade with that country, although there was also a fair amount of traffic with Germany in the latter part of the century and into the next. During the fifteenth century, the bishops of Hólar were foreign more often than native, including Norwegians, a Dane, and -- in the middle of the century -- an Englishman who was also bishop of Skálholt; Skálholt also had a Dutch and a Danish bishop. Inventories and surviving artifacts indicate acquisition of objects from England,

¹⁰ DI V p. 308. Terms like *bóndi* (roughly translated "farmer") and *húsfrú* (lit. "house-lady;" perhaps "lady of the manor" catches the sense) are titles that often indicate high social position. An Icelandic "farm" could be an extensive estate.

¹¹ BS II 138-39.

¹² BS II 303, BS I 200 and note 5.

Ireland, and Germany. Of particular interest are alabaster statues and altarpieces, presumably of English origin, which were owned by many Icelandic churches.¹³

Development of the cult of individual saints

The following is a selective commentary on the development of cults in the diocese of Hólar. Trends have been noted, but detailed analysis has been postponed until material from the diocese of Skálholt can be incorporated. Primary source references are included regularly only for the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; for the earlier period, the reader is referred to *The Saints in Iceland* and to the database at www.saintsgeog.net. Liturgical material is not examined in detail; those interested may refer to Stockholm Perg. 4to nr. 36 V (written in the mid-fifteenth century and described in KLM vol. VIII cols. 108-109), which contains a list of feasts celebrated in the diocese. For Icelandic liturgy see Gjerløw, Lilli, *Liturgica Islandica* and *Ordo Nidrosiensis Ecclesiae*. For liturgical calendars of Scandinavia, see KLM VIII cols. 89-147. Books have not been mentioned when they are the only evidence of knowledge of a saint, as they may represent purely intellectual interests rather than veneration.

AGATHA

The Church at Ufsir in Svarfaðardalur owned an image of St. Agatha – probably a recent acquisition – at the beginning of the fourteenth century, but it was missing by 1478 (DI V 251) and was replaced by an image of St. Olaf, patron saint of nearby Vellir. The record of an image of Agatha at Vellir in 1525 (DI IX 333) suggests that the item simply changed location; however, we lack information about Ufsir for that year. The Cathedral at Hólar also had a copy of St. Agatha's saga at this time (DI IX 299). In the earliest records (DI II 433 from 1318) her feast was observed by abstaining from work at Grenjaðarstaður.

AMBROSE of Milan

The church at Höfði in Höfðahverfi was dedicated to St. Nicholas and St. Ambrose and owned an image of the latter in 1318. Possibly Guðmundr Arason, who spent some time there in 1233, was involved in the dedication.¹⁴ Ambrose appears as the main patron of the church at Viðvík, possibly a recent foundation (it is not mentioned in earlier collections) in 1432 (DI IV 511). An image of him was acquired between 1461 and 1525 by the church at Vellir in Svarfaðardalur (DI IX 333).

¹³ Bera Nordal, "Skrá um enskar alabastursmyndir frá miðöldum sem varðveist hafa á Íslandi," *Árbók hins íslenska fornleifafélags* 1985 (Reykjavík: 1986), pp. 85-128, with English summary and black and white illustrations. According to Nordal, the main places of production were Nottingham, Chellaston, Burton-on-Trent, Coventry, York, Lincoln and London. See also her 1977 dissertation, "An English Gothic Alabaster Triptych from the Cathedral of Hólar in Iceland."

¹⁴ Guðmundr, who was said to have been devoted to the saint, stayed at Höfði for two years, according to Bisk I, p. 440, n. 2, and p. 552; annals note that he was there in 1233-35 after being deposed from office the previous year (*Íslandske Annaler indtil 1578*, 130 and other index entries for Guðmundr). Cormack (1994), p. 77 incorrectly dates this visit.

ANDREW apostle

Veneration of St. Andrew was well established in several locations at the beginning of the fourteenth century, with dedications to him at Sjárvarborg, Ríp in Hegranes, Tjörn and Urðir in Svarfaðardalur, and the rather-isolated Þönglabakki. Images of him were found at the churches of Auðkúla and Breiðabólstaður (the latter was named for him in 1432, DI IV 513). In the course of the fourteenth century, the church at Sjárvarborg received gift(s) for the apostle, including a cow from whose milk butter was to be paid to the church on the feast of St. Andrew (DI III 173). During that century the church at Laufás, on the opposite side of Eyjafjörður from Tjörn and Urðir, acquired an image of him; an *historia* of the saint was recorded at nearby Höfði in Höfðahverfi. Images were recorded at the monasteries of Munkaþverá and Þingeyrar in 1525 (DI IX 305, 313). As these are the earliest records from these monasteries, there is no way of telling when the images were obtained. Easily passable routes connected Þingeyrar to the church at Breiðabólstaður.

ANNE, the Mother of the Virgin

The cult of St. Anne in Iceland has been studied by Kirsten Wolf in her edition of the *Saga heilagrar Önnu*.¹⁵ The cult is generally considered to have arrived in Iceland through trading contacts with Germany.¹⁶ Although the Hamburg merchant confraternity of “St Anne of the Iceland-farers” founded c. 1500 is most prominent in this regard, merchants had been active in Iceland during the previous century. *Contra* Wolf,¹⁷ I believe that the image of St. Anne at Seltjarnarnes (today a suburb of Reykjavík, in medieval times part of the diocese of Skálholt) was attested c. 1400 and is thus the earliest evidence of her veneration in Iceland (DI IV 109).

The feast of St. Anne was not entered in the summary of feast ranks from Hólar compiled c. 1400 (AM 687c 4to).¹⁸ It was, however, included in the *Missale Nidrosiensis* of 1488. There were chapels dedicated to Anne in the cathedral at Hólar in 1520 (DI VIII 732, 734) and the monastery of Munkaþverá in 1525 (DI IX 305). Munkaþverá Monastery also owned a gilded image of her,¹⁹ while the chapel in Hólar Cathedral contained an image of the Virgin (DI IX 295). Both chapels may have been in existence for some time before they were recorded. In addition to the one at Munkaþverá, statues of St Anne are recorded at Möðruvellir Monastery, Laufás, and Vellir in Svarfaðardalur in 1525 (DI IX 317, 331, 333) and at Grund in Eyjafjörður in 1551 (DI XII 197). The images at Laufás and Grund were part of “payments” to the church that had been made shortly before the time they were recorded.

At Höskuldsstaður in Húnaþing, a statue of the St. Anne Trinity existed at the beginning of the nineteenth century; it was positioned over the entrance to the choir, and the description

¹⁵ Kirsten Wolf, *Saga heilagrar Önnu* (Reykjavík: 2001), pp. xxix-xlv.

¹⁶ Hans Bekker-Nielsen, “St. Anna i islandsk senmiddelalder,” *Fróðskaparrit* 13 (1964), pp. 203-212.

¹⁷ Wolf, p. xxix.

¹⁸ The feast 9/12 was added to the calendar AM 249 e fol. from Eyri in Skutulsfjörður in the diocese of Skálholt, along with the Conceptio Mariæ 8/12; Gjerløw, *Liturgica Islandica I*, pp. 103-104, 124. According to Gjerløw the original calendar is probably from the second quarter of the fourteenth century.

¹⁹ Wolf, p. xxix.

notes that “one of them holds a baby, the other a book;”²⁰ however, it is not recorded in any of the extant *máldagar*, nor is it to be identified with the existing statue on display at the National Museum of Iceland (Þjms. 2069, from Holt, Öfundarfjörður, in the West Fjords, belonging to the diocese of Skálholt).²¹ The example illustrated by Magerøy is of unknown provenance.²² In 1513, the St. Anne Trinity was invoked in a letter sent by Icelanders to the King of Denmark to protest the behavior of the local clergy (DI VIII 429-37, “Leiðarhólmsskrá”).

Perhaps the most interesting evidence for devotion to St. Anne in the diocese is the donation by Teitr Þorleifsson of the estate Glaumbær to “God, St. Anne, and John the Baptist” after his lifetime (DI X 99, a letter by witnesses dated 1537). Teitr and his wife both invoke the saint, along with many others, in their wills dated 1531 (DI IX 586, 591).

“Anna” was given as a personal name starting in the fifteenth century, though, of course, it is uncertain whether the use of the name commemorated the saint. The name appears somewhat earlier in Norway than in Iceland, and it is possible that the name commemorated a Norwegian friend or relative.

ANTHONY

A passage from “Nýi annáll” for the year 1417 reads: “There was such a bad storm throughout Iceland on the first Saturday in Þorri [the month beginning on the third Friday in January] that men and animals suffered badly. In that same storm, St. Anthony performed a wonderful miracle for a man in the north of the country who called on him. At that time Ivent Sasse was here, requesting money for the sake of St. Anthony; everyone responded well to this.”²³

Ivent Sasse is otherwise unknown. While it is possible that he was a Franciscan collecting for Anthony of Padua, it should be noted that the hospital order of St. Anthony the Hermit was expanding in Scandinavia in the fourteenth century (KLNMI cols. 167-68) and that Iceland had just been through a serious plague, which struck in the early part of the century (after their having escaped the Black Death fifty years previously). Collectors for the hospitals of the Antonine order are recorded in fifteenth-century English episcopal registers²⁴ and it is possible they reached Iceland as well.

All Icelandic references to “Anthony” in Hólar *máldagar* date from the fifteenth century or later. Although the saint is never more precisely identified, it is probable that the hermit rather than Anthony of Padua is meant. Liturgical and dating references, as well as two vernacular translations of *vitae* of “Anthony” pertain to the hermit, and it might be assumed that if the cult of a new “Anthony” arrived, both of them would be identified in some way in order to avoid confusion.

²⁰ Sveinbjörn Rafnsson, *Frásögur um fornaldarleifar II* (Reykjavík: 1983), p. 483.

²¹ Kristján Eldjárn, *Hundrað ár í Þjóðminjasafni*, Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóðs, 4th ed. (1973) nr. 20.

²² Ellen Marie Magerøy, “Útskurður og líkneskjusmíð úr tré,” *Árbók hins íslenska fornleifafélags* 1999 (2001), p. 42.

²³ Kom hríð svo mikil laugardaginn fyrsta í þorra um allt Ísland, að bæði hraktist menn og fénaður. Gerði heilagur Antoníus þá fagra jarteign þeim manni, er hann kallaði til dugnaðar sér í þeirri sömu hríð fyrir norðan land. Var Ivent Sasse þá hér á landi, og bað peninga vegna heilags Antonii; vikust þar allir vel undir. *Annálar 1400-1600* (Reykjavík: 1922-27) I, p. 21.

²⁴ Dr. Pat Cullum, personal communication.

An image of St. Anthony, along with other items, was obtained for the church at Miklibær in Blönduhlíð by its priest, Síra Sigmundur (who also gave a copper crown for Our Lady) between 1464 and 1472 (DI V 324). The convent at Reynistaður, located in the same broad valley as Miklibær, owned a saga of the saint in 1525 (DI IX 321). The monastery at Munkaþverá owned an “old” image of “Anthonius” in 1525 (DI IX 305). The first Icelandic named Antonius is referred to in a patronymic when an Íon Antoniusson is mentioned in 1510 (DI VIII 303).

APOSTLES (see also individual apostles)

The Church at Mikligarður in Eyjafjörður was dedicated to the apostles, and it owned images of the Virgin Mary and Peter.

BARBARA

Before 1400 Barbara was venerated at two churches dedicated to her in the diocese of Skálholt. In the diocese of Hólar, interest in her dates from the fifteenth century. An image of her, along with images of numerous other saints, was paid to the church at Möðruvellir in Eyjafjörður at the time of the first visitation of Bishop Gottskalk of Hólar (1442-1457; DI V 308). A saga of the saint is listed at Möðruvellir Monastery in 1461 (DI V 289).

BARTHOLOMEW the Apostle

In the diocese of Hólar the veneration of the apostle Bartholomew is limited to Eyjafjörður, where the church at Ufsir at the mouth of Svarfaðardalur was dedicated to him and owned an image of him in 1318. Across Eyjafjörður, the church at Grýtubakki had acquired an image of him between 1394 and 1471 (DI V 266). The first full record of the monastery at Möðruvellir in 1525 lists a statue of the saint (DI IX 316) and a Bartholomeus *kver* (“booklet,” perhaps containing an office) (DI IX 318).

BENEDICT of Monte Cassino

The monasteries at Þingeyrar and Munkaþverá were Benedictine houses. The former owned an altar and image of St. Benedict in 1525 (DI IX 313), while the latter owned a “large gilded image” of the saint (DI IX 305). The monastery at Möðruvellir owned a copy of a saga about him in the second half of the fourteenth century (DI V 289). Outside the monastic environment, an image of St. Benedict is recorded at Fagranes in 1360. In his will, composed in 1363, Benedikt Kolbeinsson requests to be buried at Þingeyrar and notes that he trusts in the suffrages of this saint (DI III 185).

BIRGITTA of Sweden, d. 1373 canonized 1391. See also BRIGID of Kildare.

“Brigitar bok j norænu” (“Brigit’s book in Norse”) is listed at Hólar Cathedral in 1525, after a volume containing four saints’ sagas (DI IX 299). That the item is a separate volume, called “book” rather than “saga,” and is specifically stated to be in Norse, suggests that it belongs to a different category than the translated saints’ lives. It is probably a vernacular version of the *Revelations of St. Birgitta*, rather than a saga about the saint (which would have probably been listed as “Brigitar sögu a einni bok” or the like). The presence of St. Birgitta’s *Revelations* need not indicate a direct tie with Sweden, as her order was widespread and her *Revelations* had been translated into many vernaculars.

BONAVENTURE, Franciscan, d. 1274, canonized 1482.

There was an image of Bonaventure in the *kapella* at Munkaþverá Monastery in 1525 (DI IX 305). His feast was not, to my knowledge, included in any of the Scandinavian liturgical books.

BRIGID of Kildare. See also BIRGITTA of Sweden

The single Icelandic statue of St. Brigid, in Bergsstaðir, Svartárdalur, first appears in 1360. A saga about her was found at the monastery at Möðruvellir in a volume with sagas of other female saints who were not well-known in Iceland: Ursula, Euphemia, Justina, Eugenia, and Basilla (DI V 289-90). It is thus surprising to see “Brigida” following the better-known Mary Magdalene, Cecilia, and Margaret in a list of holy virgins in a vow made at Grund in Eyjafjörður in 1477 (DI VI 105).

CATHERINE of Alexandria

The development of the cult of St. Catherine in the diocese of Hólar can be followed more clearly than that of many saints, as all the churches in question have *máldagar* in Auðunn’s collection of 1318. The only reference to her in that collection is to the statue at the church at Hvammur in Vatnsdalur (DI II 476), which according to that collection is dedicated to the Virgin. In 1432 the church at Hvammur is listed as “the church of St. Catherine” (DI IV 513). By the end of the fourteenth century, there is evidence of her veneration from Eyjafjörður: a painted image (*blað*) of Catherine had been acquired by the church at Hrafnagil (DI III 560), while the church at Höfði on the eastern bank of the fjord owned a copy of her office (DI III 569). By 1461, images are recorded at four more churches in Húnaþing and Skagafjörður (Breiðabólstaður, Vesturhóp (after 1360); Holtastaðir, Langidalur (after 1394); Hvammur, Laxárdalur, (after 1360); Víðimýri, Skagafjörður (after 1360). The church at Hrafnagil had acquired a statue (*líkneski*) and a saga of the saint, in addition to the *blað*, in 1461 (DI V 315-16). A saga is recorded at Möðruvellir Monastery in 1461 (DI V 289).

The 1525 collection of inventories, which includes references to the religious houses, reveals a saga about the saint at Hólar Cathedral (DI IX 299), but no image is mentioned: possibly Catherine is represented by one of the four *meyia líkneski* (“images of virgins”) in the *kapella* (IX 295). At this time Þingeyrar Monastery and the convent at Reynistaður owned images of her. The one at Reynistaður was made of alabaster (DI IX 313, 320).

Both the dating and the distribution pattern suggest Húnaþing as an early locus of the cult that perhaps emanated from the monastery at Þingeyrar. Víðimýri, however, is in close proximity to Reynistaður Convent.

CECILIA

In 1318 St. Cecilia is attested as patron of Saurbær in Eyjafjörður, which also owned a *vita*, saga, and statue of her; by the end of the century it owned a section in the woods of another farm that were named for the saint (*Cecilíu partur*, “Cecilia’s section,” DI III 524). The church at Nes in Aðaldalur was also dedicated to her in 1318; although it owned an image of St. Olaf at that time, a statue of Cecilia is first recorded in 1394 (no *máldagi* exists from 1360). In 1360 an image of Cecilia is recorded in the first *máldagi* of Glaumbær in Skagafjörður. The *cultus* appears to stagnate during the fifteenth century.

CHARLEMAGNE

A tapestry portraying Charlemagne was owned by the church at Hvammur, Laxárdalur, in the second half of the fourteenth century; the monastery at Möðruvellir (DI V 290) and the convent at Reynistaður owned copies of his saga (DI IX 321). At Möðruvellir, it is associated with sagas of other saintly kings, see OLAF. *Karlamagnús saga* has been preserved in medieval manuscripts and is a translation of various *Chansons de geste*.

CHRISTOPHER

The only image in Iceland recorded before 1400 is that at Hof on Skagaströnd in 1318. The church at Möðruvellir in Eyjafjörður records an alabaster image of St. Christopher (along with images of other saints), given by the farmer in the mid-fifteenth century (DI V 308).

CLARE of Assisi

An image of St. Clare was at Þingeyrar Monastery in 1525 (DI IX 313).

HOLY CROSS

It goes without saying that all churches and chapels were supplied with crosses and/or crucifixes. However, a donation of a painting of the crucifixion (along with one of the Virgin Mary) is selected for special attention as the gift of a priest to the church at Grenjaðarstaður at the end of the fourteenth century (DI III 582).

In addition to the churches at Silfrastaðir and Spákonufell, with dedications attested before 1400, the one at Barð in Fljót was dedicated to the Cross as well as St. Olaf according to the *máldagi* from 1472 (DI V 254). The dedication may in fact be older, though unrecorded. In 1525 there was a Cross chapel at the cathedral and a Cross altar at Þingeyrar Monastery (IX 295, 313). See also JESUS.

EDMUND, King and Martyr

The feast of Edmund king and martyr is included in the *Ordo Nidrosiensis*, and three churches were dedicated to him in Norway. The only evidence of his veneration in Iceland, however, is an image, obtained in the fourteenth century, at Lögmanshlíð, where the local family was able to trace their genealogy to him. The year of Edmund's martyrdom became the key date in Icelandic chronology, according to Ari fróði, who identified it with the year in which Norwegians first settled in Iceland (note that this dating is not necessarily accurate).

ELIZABETH, mother of John the Baptist

Statues of Elizabeth and Zacharias, parents of John the Baptist, were located at Auðkúla and Vesturhópshólar, both of which were dedicated to the Baptist.

FRANCIS of Assisi

Franciscan houses did not exist in Iceland. St. Francis is known from liturgical fragments,²⁵ and his feast was well enough known to be used in dating; it was the dedication day of the church at Vesturhópshólar (DI V 343 from c. 1461). Although no evidence attests to the veneration of the saint himself, two other Franciscan saints, Clare of Assisi and Bonaventure, are represented by images at the monasteries of Þingeyrar and Munkaþverá, respectively.

²⁵ Gjerløw, *Ordo Nidrosiensis*, p. 36, 38.

GERVASE and PROTASE

These martyrs are recorded as patrons of the church at Ás in Vatnsdalur in 1432 (DI IV 512).

GUÐMUNDR ARASON, Bishop of Hólar d. 1237

Although never formally canonized, Guðmundr Arason was venerated in the diocese of Hólar following the promotion of his sanctity in the early fourteenth century by Bishop Auðunn of Hólar (r.1313-1322), in whose time a number of miracles were recorded. Recent work on Guðmundr by Ciklamini focuses on narrative sources, most of which were composed in the first half of the fourteenth century to record his life and promote his *cultus*.²⁶ It is thus not surprising that sagas of Guðmundr are the earliest evidence of interest in him, as it would have been considered improper to venerate images of an individual whose sanctity had not yet been established. There were sagas at Múli in Aðaldalur and Goðdalir in Skagafjörður in 1318. By 1360, as a result of the activity of Auðunn and others, images of Guðmundr were acceptable, and could be found at the church of [Stóra-]Ásgeirsá and at Hof on Skagaströnd. In 1394, images are recorded at Fagranes and at Svalbarð on Svalbarðsströnd. By the middle of the fifteenth century, images were to be found at Hrafnagil and the church at Möðruvellir, both in Eyjafjörður (DI V 315, DI V 308): the latter was part of a payment including several other images.

When information about monasteries becomes available in the early sixteenth century, it is hardly surprising to discover that copies of his saga were owned by the religious houses Reynistaður, Munkaþverá, and Þingeyrar (DI IX 321, 307, 314). The cathedral at Hólar owned two copies, one of which was described as “old,” as well as a statue and Guðmundr’s shrine (DI IX 295, 297, 299).

If a pattern is to be discerned here, it is the not very surprising fact that veneration developed in Eyjafjörður somewhat more slowly than in Skagafjörður or Húnaþing, where the presence of the cathedral and the monastery at Þingeyrar, respectively, can be assumed to have promoted it. It is worth mentioning two vows, one made at Hólar Cathedral in 1365 (DI III, 205-7) and another at the monastery of Munkaþverá in Eyjafjörður in 1403, the year the plague reached Iceland (DI III 682-3), to collect funds to send a messenger to the pope and to try and obtain Guðmundr’s canonization. Sixteenth-century documents refer to a renewed attempt to obtain his canonization (DI IX 84-85, cf. 228-29, 335-36, 419). Presumably it was funds for this purpose that were claimed to have been wrongfully held by the Bishop of Skálholt according to a letter from 1522 (DI IX 120). The gift of land to the cathedral in 1432 asks no reward except such as the donor may receive from the Virgin Mary, Johannes (Jón Ögmundarson), and Guðmundr the good (DI IV, 510).

HALVARD of Oslo

The feast of St. Halvard of Oslo is found in both the *Ordo* and *Breviarium Nidrosiensis* and in the calendar AM 249b fol. The only evidence for his veneration in Iceland, however, is a statue recorded in the *Jónsstúka* (John’s chapel) at Munkaþverá Monastery in 1525 (IX 305).²⁷

²⁶ Ciklamini 2004. For sagas about Guðmundr, see Stefán Karlsson, “Guðmundar sögur biskups,” *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Pulsiano et al., (New York: 1993), pp. 245-246. There has been some discussion as to the extent to which individual sagas should be considered “hagiographic,” but I will not enter into it here.

²⁷ I consider the reference to St. Halvard in the saga of Guðmundr Arason (Bisk. I 453) to reflect the author’s sense of propriety in having the major local Scandinavian saints appear to a visionary rather than reflecting any significant veneration of Halvard.

JAMES (presumably James the Greater)

One of the most famous early Icelandic pilgrimages is said to have included a stop at Santiago de Compostela,²⁸ and a will, dated 1405, requests the heirs of the testator, Björn *Jórsalafari* (“Jerusalem-traveler”) to fulfil his obligation to make the pilgrimage if he has not done so by the time he dies (DI III 703). However, the *cultus* of St. James is poorly attested in early church dedications. *Máldagar* often refer to “James” without specifying which is meant, but James the Greater seems likely. In 1432 the church at Marðarnúpur in Hólar diocese is recorded as dedicated to “James” (DI IV 513) and a will from 1363, which mentions donations made to that church, invokes James and his brother John, suggesting that James (and perhaps John) were its patron(s) (DI III 186). More evidence for “James,” from major ecclesiastical institutions, appears in the sixteenth century.

In 1525 a gilded image of him was to be found at Grenjaðarstaður (DI IX 322), and another (acquired, with images of several other saints, after 1461) at Vellir in Svarfaðardalur (DI IX 333). There was a statue of him in the *Jónsstúka* (John’s chapel) at Munkaþverá Monastery (DI IX 305), and another at Þingeyrar Monastery (DI IX 313). Hólar Cathedral owned a saga of “John the Apostle and James” at this time (DI IX 299).

A post-Reformation tradition associates the church at Gröf on Höfðaströnd in Skagafjörður with St. James, see “Þóris þátrr hasts ok Bárðar birtu” found in in seventeenth-century manuscripts.²⁹

JEROME

An image of St. Jerome was acquired at Hrafnagil between 1394 and 1461 (DI V 315).

JESUS CHRIST (fig. 3)

In 1318 a Christ Church was located at Másstaðir in Vatnsdalur. It had a small endowment with no burial rights and the dedication is dated with respect to the feast of St. Francis (DI II 475). Together this information suggests a relatively recent foundation. The fifteenth century sees the appearance of images of Our Lord distinguished from crucifixes – possibly representations as the “Man of Sorrows.”³⁰ In the late fifteenth century, the church at Höskuldsstaðir owned an image of Jesus (DI V 346), and the church Urðir in Svarfaðardalur owned an “image of Our Lord made of alabaster” (DI V 259). In 1525 a statue of Jesus is listed at Þingeyrar after a picture (*mynd*) of the Trinity and before a statue of Mary (DI IX 313); at Möðruvellir Monastery one is listed between images of Mary and Anne – perhaps part of a St. Anne Trinity (DI IX 317). A similar arrangement is found at Munkaþverá in 1525, with cloths over the Virgin, Jesus, and Anne (DI IX 306). Again, the arrangement suggests a Saint Anne Trinity, although in that case one might expect a single covering over the whole group. At Grenjaðarstaður in 1525 there were two images of Jesus in addition to crucifixes (DI IX 322). A “Jesus Choir” is noted at the cathedral in 1550 (DI XI 852). See also HOLY CROSS, TRINITY.

²⁸ Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson, who lived in the West Fjords of Iceland, is said to have traveled there in the late twelfth century.

²⁹ *Íslendinga sögur*, ed. Guðni Jónsson (Reykjavík, 1947) vol. 8, xi, 359-360.

³⁰ I thank Helgi Skúli Kjartansson for this suggestion.



Figure 3 Christ figure from crucifix, originally hung in church at Ufsir, North Iceland. Birchwood with traces of pigment, 12th century. National Museum of Iceland nr. 10888. Photo: Margaret Cormack.

JOHN

When treating saints named “John” I have made the assumption that if the patron saint is identified as John the Baptist, John the Evangelist, or John of Holar in one or more of the *máldagar*, any statues or sagas of “John” in that church pertain to that saint. The only statue whose identity remains uncertain is one recorded at the convent at Reynines in 1525 (DI IX 320).

JOHN THE BAPTIST

The eight indications of patronage (i.e., where John is named as patron, or an image is recorded, and he is later named as patron) recorded in 1318 are mostly in the western part of the diocese. In Húnaþing we find special veneration of the Baptist’s parents, Elizabeth and Zacharias, at the churches of Auðkúla and Vesturhópshólar. Strikingly, even in the sixteenth century none of the fourteen churches mentioning the Baptist in their dedications -- and only one of the twenty-three possessing images of him -- is located east of Eyjafjörður: Grenjaðarstaður, a

major church which first records an image in 1525, is the easternmost location recording evidence of his *cultus*.

Virtually all churches dedicated to the Baptist contain an image of him contemporaneous with the first record. The single exception is Hólar in Eyjafjörður, which owned an image of the Virgin in 1318 and would acquire one of its patron, John only by 1394.

By the end of the Middle Ages in the diocese of Hólar fourteen churches were dedicated to the Baptist and there were ten statues at churches or monasteries not dedicated to him.

JOHN THE EVANGELIST

John the Evangelist was patron of eight churches in the diocese. He was the primary patron of the churches at Svalbarð on Svalbarðströnd, Bakki in Öxnadalur, and Víðivellir in Blönduhlíð (all of which possessed a saga about the saint at the time of their first recording: the first two owned images as well), and at Eyjardalsá. He was co-patron at Hafrafellstunga in Öxarfjörður, Garður in Kelduhverfi, Spákonufell on Skagaströnd, and Espihóll (also known as Stórihóll). The church at Ás in Kelduhverfi (not dedicated to John) obtained an image of him by the late fifteenth century. At that time, two other churches in the general area were dedicated to him: at Hafrafellstunga (which owned an image at the end of the fourteenth century) and at Garður, where other patrons (the apostle Thomas and Þorlákr) seem initially to have been more important -- if we judge by the images there. An image of John is also first recorded here in the late fifteenth century. The Evangelist is thus represented at three churches in Kelduhverfi and Axarfjörður, an unusually large concentration for this area. At Eyjardalsá and Spákonufell other saints were preferred when it came to purchasing images, with one of Mary recorded at both churches in 1318 (however, an anonymous *líkneski* is recorded at Eyjardalsá), while the church at Spákonufell had acquired an image of Þorlákr by 1360. For this year there is no *máldagi* for Eyjardalsá, which in 1394 had images of “Thomas” and “John,” neither identified further. The church at Víðivellir in Blönduhlíð would appear to have been associated with the Apostle Peter in 1318, as it owned a statue and a saga about him. In 1394, the record contains the dedication to “the Apostle Peter and the Apostle John” and notes that the church owned sagas about and images of both saints. Reference to the Evangelist as the church’s primary patron is first made in 1432 (DI IV 511). An image is recorded at Þingeyrar Monastery in 1525 (DI IX 313).

JÓN OF HÓLAR

The center of Jón’s veneration was Hólar Cathedral, where his shrine was located over the high altar. In addition, the cathedral boasted elegant silver and gilt items decorated with filigree which must also have contained relics of the saint: Jón’s head and Jón’s arm “all the way to the elbow.” The cathedral also owned a large gilded image of the saint and a copy of his saga (DI IX 295, 297). The 1550 inventory records two bells named for its patrons, Jón and the Virgin Mary (DI XI 852). I believe we may safely assume that the “Jóns *stúka*” – or chapel – mentioned in this inventory was that of the Icelandic Jón rather than some other saint of the same name. A gift of land to the cathedral in 1432 invokes Jón along with the Virgin Mary and Guðmundr Arason (DI IV 510).

According to a visitation record from 1432 (DI IV 510-11) a half-church (i.e., a church at which half the usual number of masses was celebrated) was dedicated to Jón at Akarar (now Stóru-Akarar) in Blönduhlíð. Peter Foote (BS I 1 cccxiii) argues that the entry must be erroneous, but I see no reason to reject the identification. Another *máldagi* (DI XII 26-28, date uncertain; however, the relevant part of the document appears to be from 1382) names Peter as the church’s

patron, but it also notes that lights are to burn during certain parts of the mass before the images of Peter, John the Baptist, and Jón of Hólar, and throughout the entire mass before the image of the Virgin Mary. This is consistent with the late-fourteenth century *máldagi* of Miklibær (in Miklibær) which names Akrrar as a subordinate full church served by the priest of Miklibær (DI III 565) without mentioning its patron saint. Interestingly, the Miklibær *máldagi* is copied virtually unchanged in 1461 (DI V p. 324); the church at Akrrar is not listed as a half-church in this document. This could reflect the bishop's unwillingness to accept that Akrrar could no longer support a full church (and pay the corresponding dues). Alternatively, the *máldagi* might simply have been copied without being updated. It is worth noting that the visitation list from 1432 contains another dedicatee different from earlier ones: St. Catherine replaces the Virgin Mary at Hvammur in Vatnsdalur (which, however had an image of St. Catherine, DI IV 513, cf. DI II 476). Furthermore, many entries in this document are incomplete, with spaces left for filling in relevant information.³¹

The churches at Glæsibær and Laugaland owned images of Jón in 1394; in each case, this is the first surviving *máldagi* of the church in question, and tells us little about the actual dates of acquisition. The churches are both within 5 km. of Möðruvellir Monastery, where a copy of Jón's saga is recorded in 1461 (DI V 289). The images at Lundarbrekka and Sauðanes were acquired during the first half of the fifteenth century (DI V 320, DI V 277). The image at Vellir in Svarfaðardalur was obtained between 1461 and 1525 (DI IX 333). In 1525 the monastery at Þingeyrar owned an image and a saga about Jón (DI IX 313-14); the original saga is, in fact, attributed to a Þingeyrar monk in the early thirteenth century. The monastery at Munkaþverá had copies of *Jóns saga* in both Latin and Norse in 1429 (DI IV 374). Like the cathedral, the monastery at Munkaþverá had a chapel known as "Jónsstúka"; use of the vernacular, as opposed to the Latin, form of the name suggests that the chapel should be associated with Jón of Hólar rather than the Apostle or the Baptist. Another chapel, known simply as *kapella*, held images of (the apostles) Johannes and Jacobus, whose names were carefully given the Latin forms (DI IX 305 from 1525). Copies of *Jóns saga* were presumably available long before they were recorded in 1525 at the cathedral (DI IX 297) and the convent at Reynistaður (DI IX, 321).

JOSEPH

Statues of the Virgin Mary and Joseph were found in an altarpiece at Hólar Cathedral in 1550 (DI XI 852).

LAWRENCE the deacon

Two churches in the diocese were dedicated to St. Lawrence: at Grund in Eyjafjörður and Reykjahlíð in Mývatnssveit. Both had images of him in 1318. An image of the saint, along with one of St. Zita, was given to the church at Möðruvellir in Eyjafjörður by *húsfrú* Margrét in payment of its *portio* for the 16 years before 1461 (DI V 308). Möðruvellir is not far from Grund.

MAGNUS of Orkney

The first attestations of the *cultus* of St. Magnus of Orkney in the diocese are the dedications of Húsavík and (together with other saints) Þönglabakki, attested in 1318. The

³¹ The document in question, AM 235 4to 1-7, consists of a list of the general form "the church of St. X at Y has . . ." with a brief indication of land or income, followed in some cases by full *máldagar*, in others by spaces into which a more detailed description of the church's property is obviously meant to be entered.

church at Húsavík owned a statue of the saint at this time, but that at Þönglabakki did not, though it had one of its main patron, St. Olaf. The feast of St. Magnús was adopted as obligatory for Iceland in 1326, and his *cultus* spread during the following centuries. The churches at Skútustaðir, Mælifell, and Svalbarð on Svalbarðsströnd acquired images of St. Magnus during the fourteenth century. The images at Urðir in Svarfaðardalur and Möðruvellir in Eyjafjörður were acquired in the first half of the fifteenth century (DI V 259, 308); in 1525, the monasteries at Munkaþverá and Möðruvellir owned images of the saint (DI IX 305, 317). Oddly enough, no evidence exists of veneration in Kelduhverfi, where Magnus performed a miracle according to an account found in a manuscript from the late fourteenth century.³²

MARGARET of Antioch

Images of St. Margaret of Antioch are attested at Goðdalir and Þverá in Skagafjörður in 1318. One was acquired by the church at Vesturhópshólar in Húnaþing in the second half of the fourteenth century (DI III 547). In the first half of the fifteenth century, an image was acquired by the church at Hrafnagil in Eyjafjörður (DI V 315), and two (one made of alabaster) were paid to the church at Möðruvellir in Eyjafjörður by the farmer on the estate, Grímr Pálsson (DI V 308).

MARTIN of Tours

The *cultus* of St. Martin belongs to the oldest strata of Icelandic dedications; references to him occur in the early thirteenth-century sagas of the two native saints, Þorlákr and Jón. He is patron of the venerable church at Haukadalur in the diocese of Skálholt, as well as the important church at Grenjaðarstaður in the diocese of Hólar.

The cathedral at Hólar and the church at Grenjaðarstaður may have owned relics of St. Martin mentioned in *Jóns saga*, composed early in the thirteenth century (BS I part 2, 222-223), and possibly referred to in an episode found in the sagas of both Jón and Guðmundr (BS I part 2, 297-98; Bisk I, 468). At the beginning of the fourteenth century dedications are found at three churches: Grenjaðarstaður, Hof in Vesturdalur, and Möðruvellir in Eyjafjörður. An altar devoted to St. Martin at Möðruvellir in Eyjafjörður is first attested in the mid-fifteenth century (DI V 308) when the church also owned an image of him and a reliquary, though, as usual in Iceland, the contents of the reliquary are not described. An antependium from Möðruvellir in Hörgárdalur has survived to the present day. (fig. 4) The church at Grenjaðarstaður owned a saga of the saint in 1318, but did not acquire an image until 1394--a reversal of the usual pattern. The church at Lundarbrekka in Bárðardalur had acquired an alabaster image by the mid-fifteenth century (DI V 320). In 1525, an image is recorded at the monastery at Munkaþverá, and sagas are recorded at Munkaþverá, Reynistaður, and Grenjaðarstaður (DI IX 305, 307, 321, 322).

The distribution of the churches dedicated to St. Martin is interesting in that it includes two churches at the very ends of inhabited areas. A convenient route north across the highlands (Kjölur) would depart from Haukadalur in the diocese of Skálholt, where the church (probably founded very early) was dedicated to Martin. Hof in Goðdalir is the furthest church inland in Vesturdalur, not far from the northern end of the Kjölur route, an area once dominated by the family named for Haukadalur. *Landnámabók* claims a connection between the two locations: Eiríkr Hróaldsson, the purported first settler at Hof, is said to have married the sister of the wife of Ketilbjörn the Old of Mosfell, ancestor of the first bishops of Skálholt and their relatives at

³² *Magnus' Saga. The Life of St Magnus Earl of Orkney 1075-1116*, tr. Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards (The Perpetua Press, 1987), pp. 41-42.

Haukadalur.³³ One wonders if an older highland route might have connected the two churches (and the families who presumably built them).



Figure 4 St. Martin antependium from Möðruvellir in Hörgárdalur, produced in Bergen in the early fourteenth century (Cormack 1994 p. 124). National Museum of Iceland 6430. Photo: Ívar Brynjólfsson. After “Handritin heima” <http://www.handritinheima.is/juni2002/html/fyrirbrik.htm>

VIRGIN MARY (figs. 5, 6)

The Virgin Mary was the original patron of Hólar Cathedral (founded in 1106); Hvammur, Vatnsdalur; Tjörn, Vatnsnes; Staður, Hrútafjörður; and Hofstaðir, Skagafjörður. Her veneration was not as widespread as that of Peter or Olaf in the earliest period. This is consistent with the fact that in the original text of Iceland’s Christian Law, the *Pater Noster* was the only prayer Icelanders were obliged to know (along with the *Credo*): the *Ave Maria* was added in the

³³ Jakob Benediktsson, ed., *Íslendingabók – Landnámabók* (Reykjavík, 1968), p. 231.

course of the thirteenth century.³⁴ Later her popularity increased rapidly, as illustrated by the number of churches owning images of her or mentioning her as co-patron. Of the five churches at which the Virgin was listed as primary patron, we know that half the farm at Staður was a donation to her by Þórunn Eyjólfsdóttir c. 1318, who stipulated that masses be celebrated for her soul and that three paupers should be fed annually on seven feast days, including those of Mary (DI II 485). The church at Hofstaðir, which first appears on record in the fifteenth century, owned the farm at that time (DI IV 277-8, 381, 511). An image at that church, the “Hofstaða María,” was a focus of veneration. Among others, the newly-consecrated bishop of Skálholt, Ögmundur Pálsson, made a vow to her when in danger at sea in 1522 (DI IX 98).

In a vow made for protection from the plague in 1402, pilgrims were enjoined to recite fifty *Ave Marias* on their knees before images of the Virgin at locations that ensured that they travel a significant distance (DI III 680-81). A gift to the cathedral in 1432 invoked her, as well as the two Icelandic patrons, Jón and Guðmundr (DI IV 510). Icelandic vows, prayers and indulgences are associated with the Virgin.³⁵ Selma Jónsdóttir analyzed a statue of the Virgin in *Saga Maríumyndar*.

MARY MAGDALENE

The *cultus* of Mary Magdalene developed in the fourteenth century, when images of her were acquired by three churches: Hólar in Eyjafjörður, Ríp in Hegranes, and Skútustaðir in Mývatnssveit. The church at Svalbarð on Svalbarðsströnd acquired one in the second half of the fifteenth century (DI V 300). A chapel at Reykir (today Stóru-Reykir) in Fljót received a donation of drift-collecting rights in a will dated 1400 (DI III 671). The testator referred to the otherwise unknown chapel as that of “my [dear] Mary Magdalene.” A saga of the saint at Hólar Cathedral and an image of her at Þingeyrar Monastery were recorded in 1525 (DI IX 299, 313), but were probably older.

MATTHEW the Apostle

The church at Fagranes in Skagafjörður was dedicated to the Apostle, but its first statue, recorded in 1318, was of the Virgin Mary. Images of St. Benedict and St. Nicholas had been obtained by 1360. A two-dimensional image of St. Matthew (*blað*), as well as one of Guðmundr Arason (possibly three-dimensional), was recorded in 1394. Interestingly, the earliest inventories also mention a copy of the gospel of Matthew (assuming the *æuum* of DI II 468 is an error for *euangelium* of DI III 174).

MICHAEL the Archangel

Four dedications to St. Michael in the diocese are attested in 1318. He was the main patron at three of them, all of which also owned images: Bólstaðarhlíð, Núpufell, and Reykir. At Tjörn in Svarfaðardalur he was co-patron with the Virgin Mary, John the Baptist, and Andrew; there were images only of the Virgin and the Baptist. At that time, images of this archangel were to be found at Kaupangur in Eyjafjörður and Höfði on Höfðaströnd. The church at Glaumbær in Skagafjörður owned an image when its *máldagi* was first recorded in 1360. The church at

³⁴ Ole Widding, “Ave Maria eller Maríuvers i norrøn litteratur,” *Maal og Minne* (1958), pp. 1-7; Cormack (1994), pp. 126-129. The large number of images and “co-” patronages (as opposed to primary patronages) also points in this direction.

³⁵ These are discussed in Cormack, 2009.



Figure 5 Virgin and child from AM 249 c. fol. c. 1300. Photo: Jóhanna Ólafsdóttir



Figure 6 Virgin and Child from Möðruvellir in Hörgárdalur, perhaps once owned by the monastery at that location. Photo: National Museum of Iceland nr. 10888, with permission.

Möðruvellir in Eyjafjörður received an image as part of a payment on the occasion of the visitation of Bishop Gottskalk in the mid-fifteenth century (DI V 308), and one was acquired at Laufás between 1461 and 1525 (DI IX 330). At that time the monastery at Munkaþverá had both an image of and an altar dedicated to St. Michael (DI IX 305).

NICHOLAS of Bari (figs. 9, 10a, b)

The cult of St. Nicholas is attested early in Iceland. An influential Iclander is known to have visited Bari in the mid-twelfth century, and a pilgrim guide presumed to have been composed by Abbot Nikulás of Munkaþverá (d. 1159) mentions the shrine. Interestingly, Munkaþverá does not seem to have been a center of the cult of St. Nicholas, which was spread fairly evenly throughout the diocese, nor does its distribution appear to reflect the interests of sea-farers. The strongest area of veneration appears to have been the area of Skjálfafljót and Aðaldalur in Þingeyjarþing. Aðaldalur includes Helgastaðir, whose church owned the famous *Helgastaðabók*, an elegant illuminated manuscript of Nikulás saga. (figs. 7-10) The nearby church at Grenjaðarstaður, for which early references name only St. Martin as patron (and which appears to have owned a relic of that saint; see above) names Nicholas as a co-patron, together

with the Virgin Mary, in 1525 (DI IX 514). The church had owned a statue of Nicholas since c. 1394 (DI III 581).



Figure 7 St. Nicholas on his episcopal throne, Helgastöðabók, Stockholm Royal Library Perg. 4to nr. 16, c. 1400, with permission. Photo: Kristján Pétur

Of special interest in the case of St. Nicholas is the prevalence of copies of his saga. More sagas about St. Nicholas were recorded (at thirteen churches) than about any other saint, including the Virgin Mary. The church at Myrká, in fact, had two copies, an “old” and a “new” saga. This probably reflects composition in the early fourteenth century of a new version, in a more elaborate literary style than the earlier one, by Abbot Bergr Sökkason of Munkaþverá. The manuscript from Helgastaðir contains that work. (fig. 7, 8, 9, 10a,b) The difficulties faced by those responsible for episcopal registers are reflected in the entry of a “statue of Thomas or Nicholas” at the Hólar Cathedral in 1525 (DI IX 295). One would have thought the residents at the cathedral might have known which of the two bishops was represented.



Figure 8 Vision of St. Nicholas' election, Stockholm Royal Library Perg. 4to nr. 16, c. 1400, with permission. Photo: Kristján Pétur

OLAF of Norway

The sixteen dedications to St. Olaf are fairly evenly distributed geographically. All but one of these churches also owned an image of him. The exception, Spákonufell, owned images of two other patrons, instead: Mary and Þorlákr. St. Olaf also had a prominent presence in religious houses, as can be seen from the records from 1525. Þingeyrar Monastery had an altar dedicated to him, as well as two images--one made of alabaster (IX 313). Reynistaður Convent also had one made of alabaster. The cathedral at Hólar (DI IX 295) and Möðruvellir Monastery (DI IX 317) also owned two images each, including a gilded one at the cathedral. In Munkaþverá the image was located "over the high choir" (DI IX 305). By this time, too, the church at Vellir in Svarfaðardalur owned a bell named for the saint (DI IX 333).

Ten *Olafs sagas* were recorded among the liturgical books of churches and monasteries in the diocese, all but two in churches where he was patron. Possibly some of them are versions of the translated *vita* found in the *Norwegian Homily Book*. This is not always the case, however, as can be seen from a saga found in an entirely different context, a partial book-list from Möðruvellir Monastery (DI V 290). Listed in this order are: a saga of Olaf Tryggvason, a saga of St. Olaf, and "a book of kings beginning with Magnús Ólafsson the Good up to Sverrir" (i.e., a continuous history of the kings of Norway from Olaf Tryggvason to Sverrir). Interestingly, the



Figure 9 Consecration of St. Nicholas, Stockholm Royal Library Perg. F4to nr. 16, c. 1400, with permission. Photo: Kristján Pétur

saga listed immediately before those of the two Olafs was that of Charlemagne (see above). These three individuals were not just kings, but Christian, even saintly, kings.



Figure 10a Death of St. Nicholas, Stockholm Royal Library Perg. 4to nr. 16, c. 1400. Photo: with permission, Stockholm Royal Library

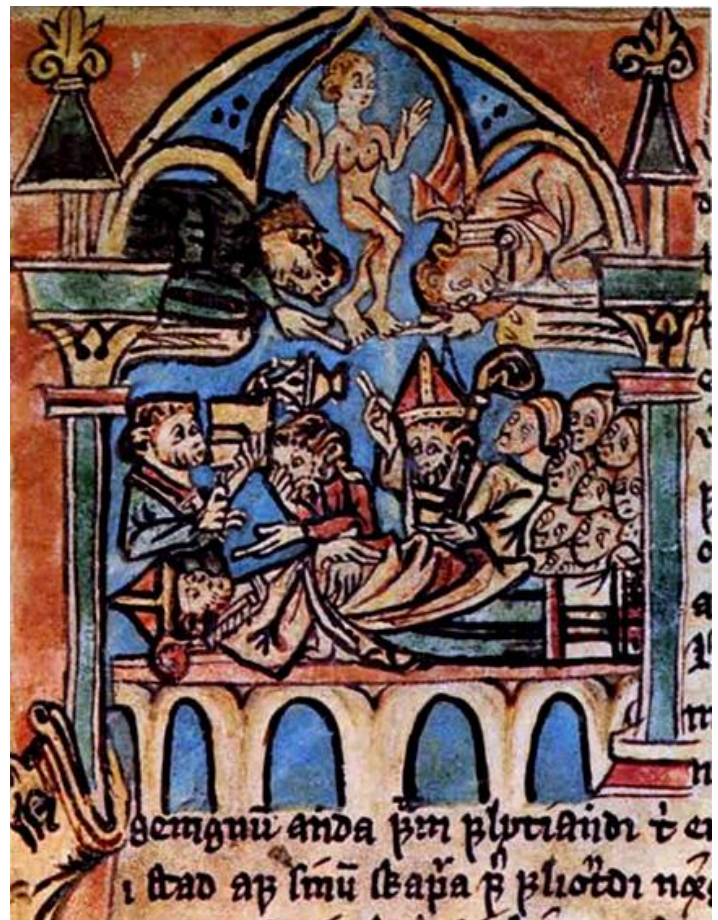


Figure 10b Detail of Death of St. Nicholas, Stockholm Royal Library Perg. 4to nr. 16, c. 1400. Photo: Kristján Pétur

PAUL Apostle

Peter and Paul were the patron saints at Skinnastaður; St. Paul alone, at Auðbrekka (DI III 521). Images of St. Paul, usually accompanied by images of Peter, were first recorded at the end of the fourteenth century or later. Only at Auðkúla, where Paul was represented by an image attested in 1394, was there no obvious association with Peter; the church was dedicated to John the Baptist. The nature of “Paul’s book” (*pälsbok*) at Hrafnagil is a mystery.

PETER Apostle

St. Peter was patron at twenty-four churches in the diocese of Hólar, the highest number for any saint. He is accompanied by Paul in one case (Skinnastaðir). With few exceptions, images were found at churches dedicated to him (only Geldingaholt, Miklibær in Óslandshlíð, and Þönglabakki lacked images). By 1525, ten other churches (one, Auðbrekka, dedicated to St. Paul) owned images of him.

STEPHEN the Deacon, Protomartyr

The church at Melstaður in Miðfjörður was dedicated to St. Stephen. Unfortunately the images it owned in the fourteenth century are not identified until 1461, when they included an image of the Protomartyr. The churches at Grýtubakki in Höfðahverfi and Víðivellir in Blönduhlíð acquired images of the saint in the fourteenth century (though the church at Grýtubakki appears to have owned his saga at an earlier date). The church at Sauðanes had obtained an image of St. Stephen in the first half of the fifteenth century (DI V 277).

THOMAS unidentified

Seven churches owned images and/or sagas of “Thomas” without indicating which saint was meant (Höskuldsstaðir, Skagaströnd; Hrafnagil, Eyjafjörður; Möðruvellir, Eyjafjörður; Muli, Aðaldalur; Ríp, Hegrans; Staður, Hrótafjörður; Eyjadalsá, Barðardalur). A statue of “Thomas or Nicholas” was found at the Hólar Cathedral in 1525 (DI IX 295; see above).

THOMAS, Apostle

The Apostle Thomas was patron, with other saints, at Garður in Kelduhverfi, which also had an image of him (DI II 427, DI III 585).

THOMAS of Canterbury

Thomas Becket was the sole patron of three churches: at Ás in Kelduhverfi and at Efrinúpur and Kirkjuhvammur, both in Miðfjörður. All three churches owned images of him.

TRINITY

In 1525 images of the Trinity were recorded at the monasteries at Munkaþverá (*líkneski*, IX 305) and Þingeyrar (*mynd*, IX 313), and at Saurbær in Eyjafjörður (*blað*, DI IX 328). Of these the *blað* was two dimensional, the *mynd* might have been, and the *líkneski* was probably three-dimensional. See also Jesus Christ.

ZACHARIAS See ELIZABETH

ZITA

Zita's *cultus* appears to have been rare outside Italy and England-- the latter more likely served as the origin for its appearance in Iceland. Two images, at Holtastaðir in Langidalur (DI V 350) and Möðruvellir in Eyjafjörður (DI V 308), were recorded in the collection of *máldagar* of Ólafur Rögnvaldsson, compiled between 1461 and 1510. Both churches are in the vicinity of monasteries (Þingeyrar and Munkaþverá, respectively) where images of the saint were recorded in 1525 (DI IX 313, 305). Since we have no earlier records from those monasteries, the images might be older. It is worth noting that the image at Möðruvellir in Eyjafjörður was paid as part of the church's *portio*, along with, among other things, an alabaster altarpiece and an image of St. Lawrence, by the lady in charge of the farm between the visits of Bishop Gottskalk in 1450 and

that of Ólafur Rögnvaldsson in 1461. She was Margrét, daughter of governor (*hirðstjóri*) Vigfús *hólmr* and wife of Þorvarður Loptsson. Vigfús's family was commemorated in the prayers of the chapter of Canterbury Cathedral, according to a letter from 1415 (DI III 764-765). It is possible that this English connection led to the purchase of an image for the church at Möðruvellir from which the devotion spread to the monastery at Munkaþverá, rather than the reverse. (**fig. 11**)

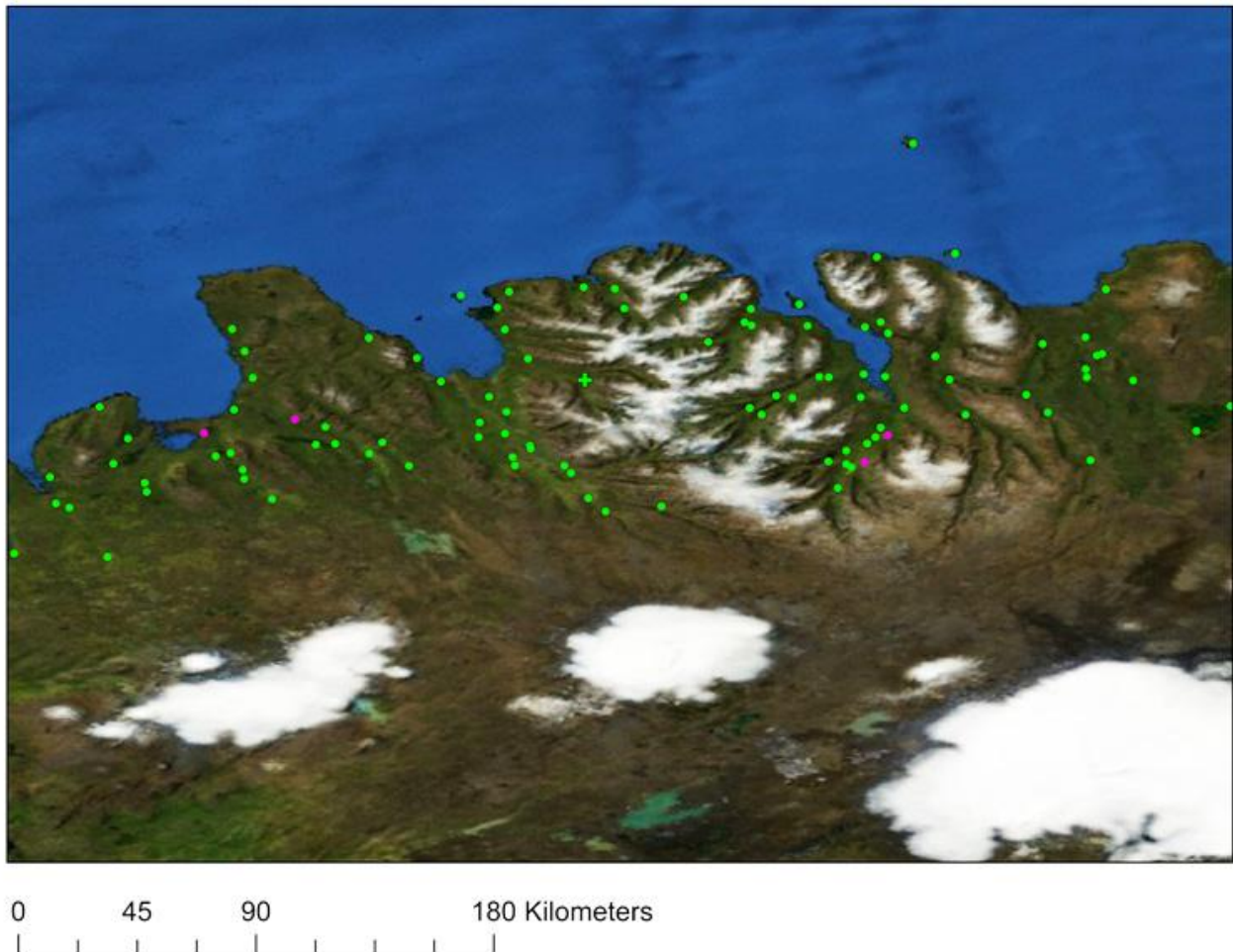


Figure 11 St. Zita in Iceland. Dots indicate churches and chapels; the cross is Hólar Cathedral. Pink dots are locations of statues of St. Zita, from left to right: Þingeyrar monastery, Holtastaðir church, Möðruvellir church, Munkaþverá monastery. Map: Margaret Cormack.

Þorlákr

St. Þorlákr was named as patron of five churches in the diocese. He first appeared at one of these (Garður in Kelduhverfi) in this capacity in 1461, apparently replacing three other saints (DI V 275, cf. DI III 585).

The chronology of the acquisition of images can be documented to some extent. At Höfði on Höfðaströnd, the church owned an image of Þorlákr, as well as images of Mary and Michael, in 1318. The dedicatees of this church are unknown. At Barð, the image seems to be a fairly recent acquisition in 1318; it is listed along with an image and saga of St. Olaf at the end of the *máldagi*. Olaf was one of the patron saints of the church. The same collection of *máldagar*

records the priest Björn's gift to the church at Bergsstaðir of a painting (*spjald*) of the Virgin Mary and images of Olaf and Þorlákr, its two patrons. In 1360 at the other end of the diocese another (presumably) priest called Björn had recently given to the church at Presthólar some books and an image of Saint Þorlákr, to whom the church was dedicated. It already owned an anonymous, probably two-dimensional, image (*skript*). The church at Spákonufell obtained an image of Þorlákr, one of its patrons, during the first half of the fourteenth century; it already owned an image of Mary, another patron.

At the church of Víðimýri, dedicated to the Virgin and St. Peter, an image of Mary was the first acquired, and the statue of St. Þorlákr was obtained between 1360 and 1461, along with one of St. Peter. At this time it had an additional, alabaster, image of the Virgin, and one of St. Catherine as well. The church at Laugaland first appears on record in 1394, at which time it owned images of its patron John the Baptist, as well as Mary, Nicholas, Jón of Hólar, Ólaf and Þorlákr. The only recorded copy of *Þorláks saga* in the fourteenth century was at Glæsibær, though copies were recorded at Þingeyrar Monastery and Hólar Cathedral in 1525 (DI IX 314, 297).

If a pattern is to be observed here, it is that the cult was developing first at coastal churches in outlying areas, possibly new foundations. Some of the *máldagar* appear to be recent as well, for example, that of Spákonufell, where the complete dedication and detailed provisions concerning which farms shall pay tithe suggest that the church is not particularly old. The document for the church at Bergsstaðir is similar, and concludes with a note that "Bishop Lawrence (1324-1331) built the churchyard and permitted burial" (DI II 473). Interestingly, Bishop Lawrence was in office *after* the purported date of the collection (1318); this inconsistency suggests that this note might have been added to the episcopal book. ●

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