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One In The Same

Skriðuklaustur: A Medieval Icelandic Monastery Following In The Christian Tradition

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This is a study in the medieval Christian tradition and how it played out across distance and physical boundaries. It is meant to explore how Skriðuklaustur, a monastery in Iceland, is an example of how far reacting Christianity was at the time. The differences and similarities to other monasteries at the time are discussed and shown through the lens of their symbolic meanings as opposed to their face value. The first step is to study the layout of the monasteries and how deviation from the accepted layout affected the monastery. Secondly, the building materials are examined and explored in their geographical context. Lastly, the hospital of Skriðuklaustur is observed and tied into the traditional monastic hospitals of the time. In the conclusion the importance is placed on how the differences and similarities tie Skriðuklaustur into the Christian monastic institution despite the isolated location. The goal is to challenge how physicality separates monasteries that follow the customs within their own boundaries.

We were quite different, but we belonged together, we were more than the sum of our two selves, we were allies, we made our own community (Sándor Márai, Embers)

Thank you to my family, Cassie Rogers,
Danielle Keely, Diahann Atacho & Eduardo Ramos.

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Introduction: A Religious Iceland

Iceland, located roughly halfway between Norway, the Faroe Islands and Greenland was not known as a major player in the expansion of medieval Christianity in part due to its early inaccessibility; the Viking Age and Age of Settlement of 870BCE to 930BCE (as seen described in both *íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók*) were Nordic and Icelandic in culture and religion, and it was not until the later 11th and 12th centuries that Islanders veered towards a more Euro-Christian era. Geographical location is one of the largest barriers that both historic and more modern scholarship has fought to overcome in relation to Iceland when assessing historical standing within the medieval world, creating sometimes exaggerated ideas of savage pagan Vikings, bloodshed, and devastating battles since Iceland was isolated from not only mainland Europe but Scandinavia as well. However this is hardly the case: Iceland was home to a thriving medieval society that was influenced by the various cultures that connected to the isle. Arguably, one of the most widespread of these influences was the arrival and later adoption of Christianity in Iceland. In the second half of the ninth century Iceland was settled permanently by Norwegians. These settlers brought with them the traditions and religion of their home, paganism. "Except for the institution of monarchy, the settlers wanted to perpetuate the life they had known In Norway, including the traditional religious belief centered on the *ásatrú*, that is, the reliance on the Germanic/Nordic pantheon, and a faith in ill-defined land spirits."[1] Gradually as time progressed, Norway's contact with the world during the Viking raids and the tradition of bringing back slaves introduced them more and more to Christianity, causing a mingling of religions. This mingling of religious beliefs made its way back to Iceland, where apart from the few monks sent over previously, most were considered heathens.[2] During the tenth century this slow introduction of Christianity had bloomed and created a society that was torn between traditional pagan worship and the

[1] Jenny Jochens, "Late and Peaceful: Iceland's Conversion Through Arbitration in 1000," *Speculum 74* (1999), 627.
[2] Ibid., 634-635.

following of the new religion, Christianity.[3] However, while this process was rift with differing interpretations and opinions the full adoption of Christianity into medieval Icelandic culture was logic-driven, evaluated, and is considered to be done for reasons of preservation and cohesion. The year 1000BCE saw arguably one of the least violent conversions to occur with the outlying medieval Christian European world, and perhaps even Scandinavia. This remarkable event may have begun in the late tenth century when two missions were led to Iceland, the former by Archbishop Adaldag of Hamburg-Bremen in the *circa* 980BCE and the latter in 997BCE by the Norwegian missionary king Ólaf Tryggvason and his envoy priest Þangbrandr.[4] While neither had much success in converting the Isle, the idea of Christianity was planted in the forefront of Icelandic thought and culture. The religion already surrounded them: Denmark was Christianized by 960BCE (as seen by the Jelling stone) and Norway was struggling between Paganism and Christianity over the lifetime of three kings. Norway's conversion seriously started with Olaf Tryggvesson in 995, after his death in 1000 there was a short relapse into paganism followed by Olaf Haraldsson's Christian rule in 1015. Before 995 however Christianity in Norway was struggling constantly to catch hold as seen under the rule of the Christian King Haakon the Good in 935.[5] Meanwhile the continent and the British Isles had been Christianized for hundreds of years as seen by the Vikings when they raided the churches and monastic retreats such as Lindisfarne and Iona.[6] Christianity was pervasive, persuasive, and rapidly becoming popular within Europe and the surrounding areas. It is at this time that the Icelanders made a conscious decision in regards to not only their religion, but their lifestyle. At the parliament entitled the Alþing in the year 1000BCE the people of the Isle came together and power was given to one person to decide whether the island should

[3] Ibid., 639.
[4] Orri Vésteinsson, *The Christianization of Iceland: Priests, Power, and Social Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 17.
[5] Williston Walker, Richard Norris, David Lotz and Robert Handy, *A History of the Christian Church: Fourth Edition* (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1918), 265.
[6] Steinunn Kristjánsdóttir, *The Awakening of Christianity in Iceland: The Discovery of a Timber Church and Graveyard at Þórarinsstaðir in Seyðisfjörður* (Gothenburg: University of Gothenburg, 2004), 24.

stay Pagan or convert to Christianity. This decision had to be made to encompass all of the tribes otherwise the fighting in Iceland would be too great and cause deep rifts between families. The decision came back that they should convert to Christianity; however there were some changes to allow for some Pagan practices to continue. Such as the eating of horse meat, the allowance of infanticide as well as sacrifices to the Pagan gods as long as it was done in private.[7] This decision in the year 1000BCE was conversion of all of Iceland and it came to alter the fate of the people.

The questions that ensued were varied and significant for Icelandic culture - what did this conversion mean for Icelandic identity? Did the island suddenly become like their neighbours on the continent, building churches and having elected officials? Scholarship shows that Christianity in Iceland took a different interpretation and adaption than seen elsewhere; however this does not mean that it was not the same Christianity as found abroad. Many bishops were those of high standing chieftains or those closely connected to them.[8] While the structure of the church was adapted to what the Icelanders knew and understood. There were private churches that were built by the *goði*, the high powered chieftains that held decision power within the Alþing. It was their land that was used and therefore they held much control surrounding the church and the events that took place there.[9] The churches found on private land could have been built for access to a church or to show wealth and power. Interestingly enough many of the churches supported by the powers of the religion were built in a stave church style, such as seen in Denmark and Norway, depicting the connections that the religion and it's customs held across large continents.[10]

[7] Orri Vésteinsson, *The Christianization of Iceland: Priests, Power, and Social Change*, 17.
[8] *Ibid*., 19.
[9] *Ibid*., 27.
[10] Steinunn Kristjánsdóttir, "Becoming Christian: A Matter of Everyday Resistance and Negotiation," *Norwegian Archaeological Review* (2015), 10.

Modern excavations in Iceland have led to the discovery and dating of a number of early Christian chapels and cemeteries. Four have been distinctively dated in the 11th century, Stöng, Neðri Ás, Hofstaðir and Þórarinssaðir. They all range in layout and construction technique.[11] This gives way to the idea that the beginning of Christianity in Iceland was not a standardised idea but rather a struggle between those that already had power constructing a version of Christianity that they wanted to commit to and the rules set forth by the religion itself. As time went on however this struggle died down and the church became an integral part of the Icelanders life. And so, in this integration, Icelandic monasteries and convents began to take shape. Icelandic medieval monasteries served as a place for men and women who wanted to dedicate their lives to God. It not only took care of the religious aspect of citizens' lives, by performing services, it held a practical role in society. The monasteries provided education, aided the needy and looked after the sick or injured. Catherine Wood points out that, "despite the rules and regulations of medieval monasticism it was a highly varied institution with its mission influenced by the needs of the monastic community as well as by the needs of secular society."[12]

Archaeology and literary sources give us a list of those monastic sites that are known to this day: they include *Bær*, 1033-1049; *Þingeyrarklaustur*, 1133-1551; *Munkaþverárklaustur*, 1155-1551; *Hítardalsklaustur*, 1166-1207; *Þykkvabæjarklaustur*, 1168-1551; *Flateyjarklaustur*, 1172-1184 moved to *Helgafellklaustur*, 1184-1531; *Kirkjubæjarklaustur* (a convent), 1186-1551; *Keldnaklaustur*, 1193–1220; *Saurbæjarklaustur*, 1200–1224; *Viðeyjarklaustur*, 1225-1551; *Möðruvallaklaustur*, 1295-1546; *Reynistaðaklaustur* (a convent), 1296-1551 and finally, *Skriðuklaustur*, 1493-1554.[13] While these dates and locations are known their role in society continues to be rather obscure.

[11] *Ibid*., 75.
[12] Catharine Wood, *Charity on the Fringes of the Medieval World: Skriðuklaustur, a Late Medieval Priory-Hospital in Eastern Iceland* (Iceland: Háskóli Íslands, 2013), 69.
[13] Wood, 1; Please see appendix 0-1 for a map of the sites.

Traditional scholarship on monasticism argues that these cloisters were fundamentally different than their counter parts on the continent on both function and design.

Previously mentioned, the control of the church powers in Iceland and as the evolution of these powers may have led the church to become more than a tool for the elite to control. Yet, it is still argued that the churches throughout the centuries were nothing more than larger farmhouses that did not differ greatly from the farmhouses used in secular life.[14] Other scholarship argues that cloisters in Iceland held little importance other than a place of retirement for the social elite – the aforementioned *goði*.[15] Still yet others would argue that major churches in Iceland, unlike their counterparts in England and Norway, had no special purpose at all.[16] The lack of literature on the cloisters accounts for part of the common beliefs held regarding Iceland's monastic life. The minimal sources that we can use portray the monasteries as a place of learning and power, a tool for the elite rather than a charitable house, but examples such as *Þingeyrar* (which was adapted as a place of learning and in essence a retirement home) follow the ideals of learning, healing and charity that can be found in many European monastic traditions.[17] And, interestingly enough even though we have examples and sources that highlight the activities within the monastery, these may not be the only activities present in Icelandic monastic houses.

Christianity in Iceland grew and came to hold an importance in the life of the citizens. From the year 1000BCE onward it took root in society and the focus shifted from the church as a tool for the elite to an integral part of the Icelandic culture, according to traditional views

[14] Steinunn Kristjánsdóttir, "Skriðuklaustur Monastery: Medical Centre of Medieval East Iceland?," *ACTA Archaeologica, issue 79* (2008), 210.
[15] Jesse Byock, *Medieval Iceland: Society, Sagas and Power* (Los Angeles: university of California Press, 1990), 158.
[16] Helgi Þorláksson, Church Centres: Church Centres in Iceland from the 11th to the 13th Century and their Parallels in other Countries (Iceland: Snorrastofa Cultural and Medieval Centre, 2005), 13.
[17] Jón Jóhannesson, A History of the Old Icelandic Commonwealth, trans. Haraldur Bessason (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1974), 194; Allison Fizzard, "Retirement Arrangements and the Laity at Religious Houses in Pre-Reformation Devon," *Florilegium* 22 (2005):59.

on the topic. The scholarship up until now has portrayed the religion in Iceland as fundamentally different than the Christianity seen around them. With many sources, written and otherwise, all but exhausted the myth of an isolated Icelandic religious tradition remains.

The rather dated idea of an isolated Iceland cannot be applicable for this contemporary scholarship and it can be argued that it should be retired completely: The major undertaking of this work is to argue against the traditional scholarship in hopes of revealing that medieval religious Icelandic society was not too far removed from foreign influence, and, that it did not become dormant after the initial conversion period. Instead, that this Christian society in Iceland had a significant amount of commonalities and overlapping traditions with medieval monasticism found within continental Catholicism. To challenge the scholarship the focus will be placed upon the youngest monastery, *Skriðuklaustur* from 1493-1554. Using archaeology, new research and the focus on comparative materials and traditions this work will challenge the commonly accepted frame of mind and place Iceland's monastic life on par with that of Scandinavia and mainland Europe.

Chapter One: The Monastery Layout

Christianity has always held an important role within society. In the medieval ages this role was one of great importance, influencing lives of the rich to the poor in numerous aspects. The most impacted were those that chose to live the religious life. The brothers and sisters of the habit lived their lives for God and in doing so, created a new household. The time of the hermits had not passed however, their way of life was not appealing to everyone wishing to honour the Lord. In turn, the lifestyle of the monastic house rose to popularity and the monasteries that remain today were commissioned. Yet, what was a monastery? Was it simply a home to those called to quiet contemplation or devotion? Or, was it more?

1.1 The Monastic Design Rule

A monastery was a community that dedicated itself to providing a space for those that wished to devote their lives to God and follow His word in their daily life in the most extreme senses. The daily tasks required of religious life demanded a certain type of space, segregated and practical. While monasteries may appear different they in fact, hold to principles that conform the division of space across the board with few variants. Patrick Greene explains, "The dominant features of the monastic plan were a smooth blend of spiritual necessity and common sense."[18] The most important part of this plan was also the biggest, the church. The church usually contained the high alter, choir stalls, chapels. However, the large size was not due directly to what it had to contain but rather, to the importance it held. The church was a symbol of the worship and dedication that the monastery held and therefore it had to be grand in appearance.[19] It is because of its importance that the church was built first and from it radiated the rest of the monastic complex. The church was designed with the high alter at the east end, a tradition that is entrenched in hundreds of years of church design for debated

[18] J. Patrick Greene, *Medieval Monasteries*, (New York: Continuum, 2005), 5.
[19] Ibid., 6.

origins.[20] While not all churches laid directly on an east-west axis, the data regarding the orientation concludes that most attempted to obtain this ideal unless there were strict land restrictions.[21] The church commonly resided on the north side of the monastic structure, adjacent to the cloister. These design specifics allowed for the church to block the colder winds from coming into the open area while also not restricting sunlight. The church was the area of the monastery that basked in the most natural light.[22]

In the middle of the monastery was an open courtyard. This area was entitled the cloister. If possible the cloister was designed as square however, in the actual building phase this may have changed into a rectangle or a parallelogram depending upon the land restrictions.[23] As previously mentioned the church was typically found on the north side of the cloister as to block the harsh winds and allow the most sunlight into the monastery. In the centre, open to the sky is the garden also entitled a "garth" and surrounding the garth are cloister walks, covered passageways with arcades looking into the garden.[24]

Almost all of the activities that were present in a monk's life could be found in the buildings that surrounded the cloister. As one moves around the cloister the division of space becomes clear. On the south of the cloister, adjoining a commonly found cross section of the church known as a transept was a room entitled the sacristy. Found here were alter furnishings, candlesticks, vessels for the Eucharist and other items that would have been needed in the Church for service.[25] Further south to this building was the chapter house; a place in which the brethren congregated to read out a chapter rule each day, this particular

[20] Ibid., 6.
[21] Peter Hoare and Caroline Sweet, "The orientation of early medieval churches in England," *Journal of Historical Geography* 26, no. 2 (2000): 169. [162-173]

[22] Lionel Butler and Chris Given-Wilson, *Medieval Monasteries of Great Britain,* (London: Michael Joseph Limited, 1979), 66.
[23] Greene, 6.
[24] Ibid., 6.
[25] Ibid., 7.

building was of large importance to the brethren. Moving further south along the cloister was the calefactory. This room, also known as a warming room, contained fireplaces and was one of the only areas in the monastery where the residents could go to heat up.[26] The second floor of the monastery, above the sacristy, chapter house and calefactory was the dormitory. The dormitory held the sleeping arrangements for the brothers and commonly had access to the latrines through a projecting eastern side. Continuing around the cloister, on the southern side, was the refectory. The refectory was an area in which the brethren ate their meals, it was generally near to the warming room so the residual heat aided in the comfort at mealtimes. Directly connected to the refectory on the western side was the kitchen.[27] The medieval kitchen was separated from the eating area due to the smells, the noise of the food preparation as well as to minimize the risk of a fire catching throughout the site.[28] In most of the orders the floor above this refectory, along the west range, were designed as the abbot's quarters. South-east of the cloister was the second most important area of the monastery, the infirmary, an area dedicated to the healing of the ill and injured both physically and spiritually.[29] To the west of this, on the outer side of the courtyard were the guest quarters and service buildings. The guest quarters supplied hospitality to those travelling, an obligation in the rule of most monastic orders. The service buildings provided the community with their daily needs.[30]

Surrounding the buildings themselves were other attributes that were found at most medieval monasteries. One of these was the presence of a fish pond, or a system of fish ponds that supplied the brothers with the food found at the refectory table. A windmill was also common to ground cereals up in order to provide the bake house with their needs. An herb

[26] Terryl N. Kinder, Cistercian Europe*: Architecture of Contemplation*, (Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 279.
[27] Greene, 7-9.
[28] Melitta Weiss Adamson, *Food in Medieval Times*, (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2004), 59.
[29] Greene, 9.
[30] Ibid., 9.

garden was widespread, as it was useful for both the kitchens and the infirmary. Lastly, a vegetable garden and an orchard were prevalent on the monastery grounds.[31]

All of these common attributes come together to create a general floor plan of a medieval monastery. While there may be some subtle differences that vary from site to site, the main aim was to stay as close to the accepted floor plan as possible. In Britain one of the largest remaining ruinic examples of a medieval monastery is Rievaulx Abbey. Rievaulx Abbey is a Cistercian church, a branch of the Benedictine sect that strove to get back to the strict rules of St. Benedict by separating themselves from the other religious orders of the time. While Cistercian is of a different order than the Icelandic monasteries, which were mostly Benedictine or Augustinian, they developed from these religious houses and thus shared the attributes that had become common within the monastic floor plan. It is said that "Cistercian architecture builds on this historic continuum, as does its *raison d'etre*, Cistercian life; the general layout of a Benedictine monastery was adopted by the Cistercians, just as they adopted the *Rule of Saint Benedict*."[32] Rievaulx Abbey's building has multiple phases, it originally began in the 1140s and the second building vital phase began in the 1220s.[33] The importance of this house, apart from having an abundance of recorded excavations and ruins which allowed an abundance of knowledge on the site to be discovered, is also the one important difference found within this location. The attached appendix 1-1 shows the layout of the church and monastic complex at its varying building stages. The most important difference that can be noted is the lack of an East-West church axis that was just described above as one of the basic architectural details embodied by monastic houses across Christendom. The goal to have the church facing East-West was real, based upon theology, sun positioning, or possibly both. In this case the church utilized a largely south-north

[31] Ibid., 11.
[32] Kinder, 108.
[33] Richard Fawcett, *Scottish Cathedrals*, (Scotland: B.T. Batsford, 1997), 43.

orientation as seen by the floor plan below. While this orientation was done due to site constraints, mostly a difficult terrain, it goes against the generally accepted plan of the monastic complex set out through building tradition.[34] To keep this orientation from ostracizing the Abbey and drawing attention to the way that it does not conform to the Christian monastic ideal it "is generally described, along with the claustral ranges, as lying east-west, according to liturgical use."[35] While the importance of this difference may seem vague it in actuality is quite important in understanding the importance of the architectural tradition. This axis difference and the attention given to it, the focus on ignoring or concealing the fact, shows that while this abbey may follow the tradition in all other respects this is an important dissimilarity. The way that this change is treated shows the mentality that went along with the designing of a monastic floor plan. If there is an oddity found within the tradition it was hidden and the abbey would be forced to attempt to fit in within the norm. No monastic plan is created with the idea of individuality rather; the importance is placed on conformity. The conformity of space is one of the lead attributes in a Christian cloister; it connects the home to the others found throughout Christendom. The layout is a specifically designed model and any variant from the ideal is based upon necessity, not free willed design.

1.2 Understanding the Deviations of Skriðuklaustur

Design and conformity was essential in the monastic tradition which brings the focus to the floor plan of Iceland's monastery, *Skriðuklaustur.* The floor plan of Skriðuklaustur resembles that of a traditional Catholic monastery.[36] The church itself makes up one edge of the property with a long nave, with the cloister garden beside it. On the side of the cloister

[34] *The Grove Encyclopedia of Medieval Art and Architecture: Volume Two*, ed. Colum Hourihane (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 327.
[35] Glyn Coppack, "Some Descriptions of Rievaulx Abbey in 1538–9: The Disposition of a Major Cistercian Precinct in the Early Sixteenth Century," *Journal of the British Archaeological Association 139* (1986): 118.

[36] See appendix 1-1 and 1-2.

gardens, opposing the church itself, is the area taken up by the dorms in which to house the occupants, a refectory, a kitchen and even an infirmary. The presence of an infirmary will be addressed further on in this thesis. Although this design may not be followed directly in the case of every monastery in the Catholic world; it does lay the ground work in creating a guideline for what can be expected. Despite the isolated location of Skriðuklaustur it still fulfills the majority of common attributes seen across the board with two noticeable differences. Catharine Wood points out that the layout contains two key features that mark it as unique from the standard Western European model. First: the church is located on the south side of the cloister instead of the north side and the second feature is that all the buildings that comprise the cloister, including the infirmary, are located within a single structure.[37] These may be due to the location of the church itself. With the harsh conditions of Iceland and the severe wind, placing the buildings together and on the opposite side of the church as opposed to the usual pattern may be explained as it potentially decreases the amount of time spent in the environment. It also uses the walls of the pre-existing structure, such as the church, to block out some of the wind. It is not necessarily the building itself that is important but rather the importance behind the building. The focus on any medieval monastery was placed upon the church first, as it was the work dedicated to god himself.[38] In the case of Skriðuklaustur the church itself was a bit smaller than most. However it is the main focus on the grounds, with every other part of the property radiating off of it, such as in other European cloisters. The general direction of the church falls into the East-West category and even incorporated a distinct drainage system as in other monasteries. It is the use of this common floor plan and the importance placed on the church that creates a hybridity of ideas with the Christian order abroad. Skriðuklaustur uses the important idea of mimicry of the Christian floor plan and

[37] Catharine Wood, *Charity on the Fringes of the Medieval World: Skriðuklaustur, a Late Medieval Priory-Hospital in Eastern Iceland* (Iceland: Háskóli Íslands, 2013), 60.
[38] Patrick Green, 5.

adapts it to fit the needs it requires just as was seen in the floor plan of the monastic house Rievaulx Abbey. Adaptations such as a smaller church, omitting the transept, the location of the cloister and the use of timber, turf and stones all create an Icelandic take on a larger Christian ideal, falling into a category of both hybridism and mimicries.[39] While the details may not completely comply with the ideal Christian layout, the overall look and importance of the meaning as a place of separation from the material world is intact. With the importance and meaning of the floor plan intact and mostly in line with traditional monastery floor plans, it is reasonable to say that Skriðuklaustur challenges the idea of a completely different building type effected by the isolated location. The location has made very little impact on the Catholic tradition to which Skriðuklaustur prescribed itself.

[39] Fredrik Fahlander, "Third Space Encounters. Hybridity, Mimicry and Interstitial Practice." In *The Materiality of Death: Bodies, Burials, Beliefs*, ed. F. Fahlander and T. Oestigaard (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2008), 28.

Chapter Two: Monastic Building Materials

The building of a monastery was not an easy and simple feat, it was a long process spanning many years. As previously mentioned, the layout of the monastery was created in a way that utilized years of knowledge in order to best relay the heavenly roles on earth. The monastery harnessed the division of space to show the separation of the earthly and the divine. The role of the church as the heart of the monastery emphasized how thought out the planning of the monastery was. Nothing in its design was left to coincidence; this includes the materials used to build the monastery. To understand the importance of the building materials it must be understood how they differed across geographical areas.

2.1 British Building Materials

In the 15th century Britain already had a long history of Christianity as well as a large presence of monasteries integral to the social landscape. These monasteries differed in terms of customs, traditions and goals however; many were built using the same types of materials. In the time before the Norman Conquest and after the fall of the Roman Empire the churches and cloisters were built using timber on account of the fact that the transfer of Roman tradesmen left a vacuum in society with a lack of men knowledgeable on the art of stonework.[40] Examples of these can be found within the archaeology of the British Anglo-Saxon sites. The monastery at Abingdon circa sixth century is described as being a cluster of connected cells, which may have been connected to a surrounding wall using beam like objects as seen at the Gaulish site in Condat.[41] These objects being described as beams are understood to be composed of timber as the term beam rarely refers to an artifact crafted through masonry. These earlier centuries were overrun with building campaigns across the

[40] Warwick Rodwell, "Appearances can be Deceptive: Building and Decorating Anglo-Saxon Churches," *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 165 (2012), 24.
[41] *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England: Basic Readings*, ed. Catherine Karkov (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1999),138.

isles and most were done through the use of wood as opposed to the heavier stone. The site at Jarrow gives a history of building campaigns that spanned many centuries and included craftsmen from near and abroad. In the beginning it was made of timber and a thatched roof, as was common in the 600s, it was comprised of a single long nave and simple construction.[42] The transition in monastic construction can be seen through the passage of time in Jarrow. In the mid-ninth century the site moved away from the Gaulish influence and moved towards the use of glass and masonry.[43]

In Britain it was not uncommon to have the monasteries built to withstand the test of time as well as to portray the grandeur and importance of the Church. In order for these goals to be accomplished masonry became a fundamental building block of the monastic cloisters. The builders used masonry types that were closest to the monastic location and used the natural elements such as quarries and rivers to supply and transport building materials.[44] In areas that were abundant with natural building resources the structures integrated much more masonry than in other areas. This can be seen in the monastic houses found in Yorkshire.[45] Byland Abbey is one example of a monastic church in the Yorkshire area that was able to harness the natural resources to create the cloister. Byland Abbey in 1190 harnessed the northern materials and created a grand cloister designed by a master mason.[46] The church itself was built with limestone and gave way to an impressively tall and light west front, available now due to the use of the stonework.[47] The use of the stone was thoroughly adapted into commonality in the north in the later centuries. Rievaulx Abbey thrived on the use of

[42] Ibid., 149.
[43] "Jarrow Church, Durham," in *The Saturday Magazine: Volume the First* (London: The Committee of General Literature and Educations, 1832), 117.
[44] Vibeke Olson, *Working with Limestone: The Science, Technology and Art of Medieval Limestone Monuments* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011), 215.
[45] Anthony Emery, *Greater Medieval Houses of England and Wales Volume Two: East Anglia, Central England and Wales* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000), 43.
[46] "Building Phases," *The Cistercians in Yorkshire*, accessed May 24, 2015, http://cistercians.shef.ac.uk/byland/buildings/church/church2.php.
[47] Reuben Percy and John Timbs, *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction* (London: J Limbird, 1839), 171. See Appendix 2-1.

masonry and became one of the most impressive ruins available today. The builders of Rievaulx diverted streams and rivers and created quarries nearby. The quarries were used to create the large stone church, while timber, which was previously used as a building material, was used to create furnishings.[48] This transition and rebuilding of older foundations with stone of varying degrees argues the importance of the Church and the grandeur that went into the building of it. While timber was the only material available it was harnessed, but when the prospect of masonry usage was viable the cloisters harnessed it, and created mammoth structures of stone.[49] Rievaulx Abbey went through multiple building phases, visible by the differing stone types and ashlar changes. While this may create a dizzying archaeological effect it depicts the importance of the church and the role it had not only within the monastery but also within the society. When a new type of architecture became popular or a new material was found and accessible, it was used, displaying the magnitude of the cloisters within England. The movement from timber to stone to finely cut ashlar can be seen across the British Isles as the times changed and the prices that the society must have paid to continue the upkeep of the Church.

2.2 British Decoration

In addition to the masonry used to create the physical building there are building materials used to decorate the site. Some of these other materials include the ironwork, the glass, plaster, painted decoration, as well as ceramics. In the case of Rievaulx Abbey there have been excavations that show the medieval floor tiles that covered the church floor in a highly thought-out pattern.[50] These tiles were intricately designed and would have been laid to cover the church floor with colour and patterns, bringing an added emphasis on the

[48] Janet Burton, *The Monastic Order in Yorkshire 1069 – 1215* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 297.
[49] See Appendix 2-2.
[50] See Appendix 2-3.

importance of the house of worship.[51] Added to the floor decoration in the church it was not uncommon for the interior to be ornamented. Churches of all shapes, sizes and orders were able to decorate through the use of carved masonry, plaster, paint, and other means harnessed by tradesmen. Examples of these can be found in St. Augustine's Abbey in Canterbury in the period after the Norman Conquest. The abbey has been excavated and found within the ruins are sculptures of intricate foliage, painted to display depth as well as vault ribbing painted in varying colours.[52] The emphasis on decoration depicts the centre of importance of the site, a tradition that can be seen across many locations. Meaux Abbey has displayed the same custom even though the Cistercians were known to follow the rule of austere living more to the letter than their religious counterparts. In the excavations at Meaux Abbey it has been found that the inside of the church walls were home to paint stenciled decorations through the discovery of a lead stencil on site.[53] Again, the emphasis is placed on the importance of glorifying the church, as previously stated, it was the representation of God on earth.

2.3 Scandinavian Building Materials

Churches in the British Isles were not the only site to have multiple building phases and decoration. The Scandinavian churches went through multiple processes and changed according to society's preferences and economical means. In Sweden there have been tales of upwards of 300 churches in Skåne alone, while this may be an exaggeration it lends support to the idea that even though not part of the continent or the isles, Sweden had a large scale Christian building operation. Many of these were created on or before the eleventh century,

[51] Paul Wilkinson, "Rievaulx Abbey's 6,000 missing bits," *Times*, 15 July 1998, http://find.galegroup.com/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTDA&userGroupName=oslo&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=BasicSearchForm&docId=IF500894056&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0.
[52] Greene, 79.
[53] Ibid., 79.

built with timber and crafted by tradesmen.[54] In the years following this there was a focus on rebuild such as was seen in the earlier centuries in Britain. The timber constructed churches were rebuilt using stone in the twelfth and later centuries.[55] Many of the current ruins are in fact ruins because of the value of the masonry used in the church building. After the reformation many of the Swedish churches, like the British ones in the time of King Henry VIII, were stripped and the stonework was used in other buildings. While this use of stonework may seem late it was on par with other Scandinavian countries. Norway for instance was building in timber until the twelfth century. Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim for example began with a simple construction but underwent many building phases, just like the British examples mentioned above. By the later phases the church was built in stone incorporating an Anglo-Normal transept and the remainder was of a Gothic influence.[56]

2.4 Scandinavian Decoration

The Scandinavian sites, like their counterparts in the Isles and on the continent, also drew attention to the elevated importance of the church through the use of decoration. Like previously mentioned the Scandinavian churches painted their vault ribbing and highlighted the architecture through embellishments meant to draw the eye.[57] The churches also contained murals, religious depictions painted onto the interior walls to further remind the attendees what was preached. A prime example of this can be found in the church of Dalköpinge. Circa 1300 this church housed a painting on the wall of a crucified Christ. However, shortly after its execution it was repainted, in favour of an enthroned Christ.[58] While this may seem as

[54] Birgit and Peter Sawyer, *Medieval Scandinavia: From Conversion to Reformation circa 800-1500* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1993), 110.
[55] Ibid., 110.
[56] Kenneth John Conant, *Carolingian and Romanesque Architecture 800 – 1200* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1978), 437.
[57] Lena Liepe, "On Connection between Medieval Wooden Sculpture and Murals in Scanian Churches," ed. Eva Louise Lillie and Nils Holger Petersen, *Liturgy and the Arts in the Middle Ages* (Denmark: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1996), 221.
[58] Ibid., 224.

irrelevant it follows the same pattern seen with the building phases from Britain. A job was commissioned for the Church, and it was done yet, times changed and in order to keep up with the trends and continue to have the church as the gleaming beacon of the cloister, the new trends overtook the old, even if they had just been completed. There was no room for the Church to be seen as behind, it was a focal point of the community and thus, only the best was specially made, regardless of the price or timing. This trend can even be seen in the original stave churches. When the building materials consisted of timber alone decorate motifs and intricate designs were carved into the wood itself.[59] The portal of the stave church at Urnes displays entwined animals and natural plant designs in a complex design, drawing attention to the entrance of the church.[60] While this may seem vastly different from the discussion regarding the materials themselves seen prior, it in fact is tied together through the value of the act. Whether the medium was wood, stone, paint, iron or ceramic, the message was clear, to place an emphasis on the church through the elevation of design. This trend can be seen through Britain, Scandinavia and finally in the decoration and materials found at Skriðuklaustur in Iceland.

2.5 The Materials of Skriðuklaustur

Skriðuklaustur monastery has been a part of an excavation in the last couple years, shedding light on this cloister set far apart from its counterparts. The archaeology has brought to light the building materials that were used to create this religious house in the fifteenth century on an island in the middle of the ocean. Unlike many monasteries in the fifteenth century, which were constructed close to a quarry in the later middle ages, quarried stone was not a reasonable building material. Skriðuklaustur monastery would closer resemble a Scandinavian stave church or a pre-Norman church in terms of materials used. With the lack

[59] See Appendix 2-4.
[60] Fred S. Kleiner, *Gardener's Art Through the Ages: A Western Perspective 14th Edition* (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2013), 311.

of quarries another type of natural material had to be found on the island to create these religious houses.[61] This led to the use of turf and stones, the same materials that were used to build the farmhouses and halls seen across the island.[62] With the easy decay of these materials and the idea of reusing materials for contemporary buildings the archaeological evidence became depleted, leaving little behind to be discovered.[63] However, what has been discovered is invaluable to understanding the connection between Iceland and the religious houses outside of Iceland.

Found within the excavations are numerous materials, beginning with timber. The excavations in 2004 led to the discovery of timber from different types of trees used in the construction of the church.[64] Present on the site were remnants of spruce, Scots pine and Icelandic birch trees. The differing in tree types may show that the timber that was used was harnessed on the island as well as using driftwood. With the options limited as they were it gave way to the use of multiple types of wood.[65] This has been seen before in masonry when there was a mixture of stone types. Some of the pieces of wood found through the archaeological dig had nails present.[66] These nails go against the idea that Iceland had only few metal resources as not only are many of them used in the building of the church, arguably representing the church importance, but also the fact that they were left behind at the site when the monastery was forsaken.[67] Skriðuklaustur's building materials were not just turf and timber but also stones. While quarries were not a viable option the use of stones was still harnessed in the building plans of the monastery that is seen distinctly apart from its masonry

[61] Pam Crabtree, edit., *Medieval Archaeology: An Encyclopedia* (Oxford: Routledge Publishing, 2000), 237.
[62] Steinunn Kristjánsdóttir, "The Tip of the Iceberg: The Material of Skriðuklaustur Monastery and Hospital," *Norwegian Archaeological Review 43* (2010): 46.
[63] Karen Milek, "Floor formation processes and the interpretation of site activity areas: An ethnoarchaeological study of turf buildings at Thverá, northeast Iceland," *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 31 (2012): 119.

[64] Nicola Macchioni, "VIÐARGREININGAR 2004," Skriðuklaustur, August 26, 2013, https://notendur.hi.is//~sjk/SKR.htm.
[65] Davíð Bragi Konráðsson, "Naglar í byggingu Skriðuklausturs," (Reykjavik: Skriðuklaustursrannsóknir, 2007), 7.
[66] See Appendix 2-5.
[67] Discussion with Steinunn Kristjánsdóttir, Haskoli Islands, February 20 2015.

built counterparts. The stones that were used were of varying shapes and sizes created the layout and the base of the structure. On top of these stones the timber and turf were placed.[68] The use of the stones to create a more permanent and sturdy structure can be seen as influenced from the continent and the Isles where masonry helped the churches grow in size and longevity. Turf, stone and timber created the structure for the cloister however it was not the only building material that was found during the excavations. On the site were multiple pieces of copper, found in varying forms with a concentration of the pieces found within the location of the church.[69] The pieces found range from flat and round to twisted and long and everything in between.[70] While it is still under speculation on what these could be a part of, some may be nails, others decoration or constructional reinforcement plates, the important point is that the copper is present. The existence of these copper pieces and their high concentration in the church shows the importance of the monastery and the church in particular. While most normal buildings at that time in Iceland were created using turf layers as explained, Skriðuklaustur on the other hand is comprised of vastly different material. The cloister incorporated stones, timber, driftwood, turf and copper. The use of the multiple mediums places emphasis on the monastery and in doing so shows the importance that the church, members of the church and the religion had in the eyes of the society.

2.6 The Meaning Behind the Material

The excavation of Skriðuklaustur is shedding new light onto the reality of Iceland's cloisters. Not only does the architecture of Skriðuklaustur align itself with the Catholic ideal seen elsewhere in the western world as discussed earlier, but the materials do so as well. The building materials differ from the quarried stone normally used in the construction of the monastic houses within the continent during that time period. The use of turf, timber and

[68] Konráðsson, 7.
[69] See Appendix 2-6.
[70] See Appendix 2-7.

stone sets the building apart only in raw materials. The material must always be considered in accordance with a social and cultural landscape and as a consequence, the establishing of similarities or differences should not be based solely on building material itself.[71] Therefore, the use of stone, turf, driftwood and copper sheds light on the importance of the building as it was not simply a glorified farmstead: by employing multiple materials and mediums, not only is there some level of skill involved, but there is visual representation of significance. It is this very significance that is highlighted in various architectural designs, just as the use of quarried stone helped to convey the importance of the monasteries on the continent and in the British Isles.[72] While it may not, in the traditional sense use important materials, it follows the idea of a hierarchy of materials. Assuring that only the best of the available building materials were used is indicative of the symbolic importance of these structures.[73] In this case the use of timber illustrates the importance of the monastery as timber was a limited resource at the time of its construction. Also to note is the copper. This copper may have been used in decoration of the church, possibly on the roof. This again uses material as a symbol; the presence of copper indicates the importance of glorifying the structure and distancing itself from other farms. The building materials and decorative materials may differ from the traditional yet Iceland still employs the idea of elevating the church through resources. The connection is not through what is used to build these cloisters but what the meanings behind the materials are. In the case of Skriðuklaustur the meaning is clear. The effort that went into collecting, creating and using these resources is on par with the effort it took to quarry stone and carve out masonry designs. The importance and effort is present and it therefore connects

[71] Kristjánsdóttir, "The Tip of the Iceberg," 47.
[72] M. Beresford and J. Joseph, *Medieval England: An Aerial Survey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 254.
[73] Elizabeth Lambourn, "Brick, Timber and Stone: Building Materials and the Construction of Islamic Architectural History in Gujarat," *Muqarnas* 23 (2006): 201.

Skriðuklaustur with the wider Christian ideal, breaking down the physical barriers that are seen to isolate the religion on the island.

Chapter Three: The Hospital

While Christian cloisters frequently revolved around the life that the monks chose and the religious services to the community it often took on other social roles. Part of the duty of the religion was to care for the needs of those in the community. This more often than not referred to the spiritual needs of the lay people however, in many cases this also meant physical assistance in the form of a type of medieval health care. The Augustinian community, which Skriðuklaustur was a part of, prescribed to the rules of St. Augustine. St. Augustine noted the importance of his followers and their activities in the community. His writings focused and encouraged the caring for God first and foremost but following God the focus was placed on the others in the community. He pushed for a bond between brothers and also for the idea of charity, and helping out those around you as much as you would help yourself.[74] Charity could be taken numerous ways but one way that it materialized was through the creation of hospitals.[75]

There is still a debate on when the earliest hospital was founded as the idea of hospitals has changed throughout time. However, Andrew Crislip argues that for it to be truly classified as a hospital it must contain three important elements. The first of which is the presence of an inpatient facility, a place where patients are able to stay for the duration of their treatment, provided with sleeping quarters, food and support. This is important as it creates a distinction from what can be deemed a hospital as opposed to what can be deemed as a clinic, as seen in earlier periods. Secondly, is the existence of professional medical expertise. The hospital has staff on hand devoted to the treatment and eventually curing of the patients through medical aid; as opposed to what was seen earlier at a hospice where the staff was not necessarily devoted to the treatment but rather to the comfort of dying patients, aiding

[74] James Brodman, *Charity and Religion in Medieval Europe* (United States of America: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 224 – 228.
[75] Ibid., 45 – 46.

them as the transitioned out of this life. Lastly, a hospital must have been created from the idea of charity, a place to treat the ill for nothing more than to help the sick in society.[76] The idea of charity that he mentions is what resonates with the monastic life. While the other two characteristics of a hospital can be found elsewhere, the idea of treatment evolving out of the notion of charity strongly connects to the Christian morals mentioned above in the following of St. Augustine. All of these prerequisites combined together give way to the prototype of today's hospitals, the monastic hospital.

3.1 The Emergence of the Monastic Hospital

The first monastic hospital is believed to have existed in the latter half of the fourth century in the eastern Mediterranean.[77] From the fourth century onward there was an appearance of hospitals, the idea was harnessed and it evolved after the following of Basil of Caeserea, a bishop that created an early architecturally complex hospital in the fourth century.[78] Through the evolution of the hospital it became a staple in the Christian monastic scene and as the ages progressed this monastic hospital became vital to society.

In the ninth century what had become a varying mix of hospital styles was changed to create some consistency within the health care sector. In 816 at the synods of Aachen there was an assembly of abbots who established a comprehensive and standardized program of monastic hospitality. The hospital duties were directly connected to canonic life and bishops were given the responsibility of distributing the funds to care for the poor and sick.[79] The monasteries became central hubs for the care of the sick and medically desperate. By the tenth century this idea of a monastic hospital was fully accepted and while St. Benedict may not

[76] Andrew Crislip, *From Monastery to Hospital: Christian Monasticism and the Transformation of Health Care in Late Antiquity* (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 2005), 100-102.
[77] Ibid., 101
[78] Ibid., 104.
[79] Guenter Risse, *Mending Bodies, Saving Souls: A History of Hospitals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 95.

have envisioned his words taken quite so seriously, his rules on charity led to the treatment of the sick in multiple cloisters across Europe.[80]

3.2 The Traits and Requirements

There were many details that led to the monastery being built with the treatment of the sick in mind. One of these details was the access to water. While most monasteries were built with access to water in mind, with the incorporation of a hospital this need became even greater. Many times streams in the area were diverted in order for the monks to have access to water for bathing, cooking, sewage and medical purposes. The buildings themselves were built to keep the secular world and the spiritual world divided. This can be seen in the example of St. Gall, where a monastery floor plan designed by Abbot Heito of Reichenau in 830 still survives.[81] In this layout the eastern half of the property belonged to the spiritual part of the monks' lifestyle. At the centre of this space was the church, visually depicting the importance of the building. Also in this area, one can find the monks' living quarters including dormitories, warming room, refectory, vestry, cellar and larder.[82] On the other side of the property sat the secular part of the grounds. The infirmary itself was typically a smaller version of the monks' dormitories. Many had a bath and a kitchen located in a separate building. In the case of St. Gall the infirmary was located between a bloodletting house and an herb garden. Also on site was a structure used to house the monk that provided the medical healing. This structure incorporated a fireplace as well as a drug cupboard.[83] One of the most common attributes of an infirmary was a herb garden, used to grow supplies that were used in many varieties of healing. It is clear that different sites would have some differing layouts,

[80] Ibid., 97.
[81] See Appendix 3-1
[82] Ibid., 98.
[83] Ibid., 98.

especially concerning the water and the winds however, it is clear that many of the monastic hospitals had quite the same layout.

Just as the way a hospital was conceived changed over time, so too did the treatment. Early hospices contained people to ease the patients' transition from the earthy world; their jobs were to make the end more comfortable, not to find a cure for the ailment. Post tenth century, after the attempts to standardize the hospitals, did the infirmaries have staff. This staff was dedicated to the treatment and cure of physical ailments. While the term doctor was not used, a common name used to describe this staff was the term *medics*.[84] The medics used herbs, poultices and what was considered scientific treatment of the time, such as bloodletting, to aid the ill that were brought to the monastic infirmary. Many of these *medics* also took part in bone healing and surgeries.[85] Many of the herbs that were harness as treatment for the ill or injured were grown in the herb garden found on most monastic properties. While medicine has vastly changed since the tenth century the herbs that were used did have some relieving effects for the patients. In a collection of works entitled the *Herbarium* complex a list of 185 herbs and their medical uses can be found. Upon further study of these, 130 of them are still used today in herbal or other medicinal remedies.[86] While herbs were used for pain and aiding in healing other physical medical issues were brought to these monastic infirmaries. Surgery was also an activity that was performed by the *medics*. Writings by Bede and other well-known authors tell of tales of monastery surgeries. One of these stories speaks of a medic who, "performed surgery on a throat tumour of St Æthelthryth at Ely just before she died."[87] And another "medics associated with a Northumbrian monastery tried to reduce a tumour on a brother's eyelid by fomentations and ointments, and

[84] Audrey Meany, "The Practice of Medicine in England about the Year 1000," *Social History of Medicine 13*, no. 2 (2000): 223.
[85] Ibid., 223 – 224.
[86] Ibid., 227 – 228.
[87] Ibid., 222.

debated cutting it away, but feared to make it worse."[88] Broken bones are not an ailment of today's society only, medieval culture quite commonly had to deal with the issue of broken and fractured bones. Commonly, the *medics* would use straps, pressure, time and bindings to heal fractures, breaks and dislocations. For breaks they would reset the bone using pressure and straps to hold a certain part of the body in place, then bind the affected bone so that it was immovable, allowing the body to give it time to heal.[89] This created a medieval cast, such as would be used today in the case of a broken bone. While the exact medicinal treatments may not have worked to the extent that treatments work today, the *medics* were versed in the skills and knowledge of the time and used techniques and equipment that provided the ill and injured with a relatively standardized treatment.

One other important part of a medieval monastery was the presence of a cemetery. Scholars are able to understand the daily workings of a monastery infirmary based upon the graves that are found on site. While the *medics* tried to heal and cure those that came to them not everyone lived. While this was a harsh reality another reality was the fact that these bodies now had to buried somewhere. Not everyone that came to see them had someone to look after their bodies if they did not make it through the treatment, therefore bodies were buried at the monastery. The presence of a cemetery near the hospital is not seen as anything more than the last step in caring for those that were treated there. As the grounds were used to bury those of the religious houses, these burial grounds were not seen as a place to merely dump a body. The act of burial by the church can be seen as the final act of treatment for the afflicted. The church took care of the body as much as they could, and when that treatment was not successful, the church then moved to taking care of the soul. One example of this is in London at St. Mary's Spital, where bodies of the sick or injured were buried around those of the church and also those of high social standing. Interestingly enough, in these burials however

[88] Ibid., 222.
[89] Crislip, 101.

there appears to be a class differentiation within the burials themselves and their placements among the property. The Hospital of Notre Dame du Pont-Fract had a cemetery for the hospital but, not only were the ill and injured populace buried there but those of the Church of St. Anthony as well, as the Church of St. Anthony was the head of the hospital.[90] When thought about this tradition should come as no surprise. Those of the church have the right to be buried where they lived and worshipped, large donors as well reserve the right to be buried where they have paid to have their soul looked after and finally, those that sought refuge there in a time of need also have the right to a burial quickly and with a member of the church looking out for their eternal soul. The segregation of the burials also makes sense as the classes of the time had a large divide and those that paid or gave their lives to the church are deemed more important than the poor that gave a lot less to the religion. These cemeteries not only provided for those buried there but also provided archaeologists today with a better understanding of the time period known little about. The remains depict bone breaks, healing, disease, child birth and more. A monastic hospital cemetery will have very different remains than a cemetery not within the area where people sought treatment. Historians can use this information to piece together a snap shot of the monastic infirmary that through the importance of charity and the rules laid out by the Christian saints, strove to give aid to the sick and wounded, and in doing so created the earliest prototype of a modern day hospital. However, this idea of a hospital and how it connects to Skriðuklaustur is the focal point of this argument.

3.3 Skriðuklaustur as a Hospital

To begin with, before an argument can be made about Skriðuklaustur as a hospital and the meaning behind this fact it must be shown to have a monastic infirmary in the first place. To argue that Skriðuklaustur did have an infirmary present one will draw upon the

[90] James William Brodman, *Charity and Religion in Medieval Europe* (United States of America: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 252.

archeological excavations to give insight to the little known history of the monastery. During the archaeological excavation done by Steinunn Kristjánsdóttir, it was noted that the rooms of the monastery were all similar in size, *c*. eight to twelve meters squared, except for what is believed to be the infirmary hall, which measured three times as much.[91] Such a large room could be used to house any number of people, even the secular in times of need. However, to keep in line with the Catholic order of space between the secular and the religious, as required, there was only one door accessible to this room. This door was located on the south-facing wall, and only easily accessed by the monks, allowing for a clear division between the laypersons and the clerics. This accessibility argues the division of space and supports the claim that this large room was used as a hospital. The infirmary became a space of importance to both the community and the monastery.[92] The significance is further seen when the results of the graves are discussed. When describing the findings at Skriðuklaustur monastery Kristjánsdóttir states:

> Approximately ninety graves have been identified from the surface inside the cloister garden and the church, and seventy of which have been exhumed. Identification of the human bones shows clearly that the monastic cemetery differs greatly from other contemporary cemeteries in Iceland. Bones of foetuses, neonates, adolescents and, in particular, young females have been discovered in the graves.[93]

The difference in both sex and age found within the graves reaffirms the fact that this infirmary was used to help the secular and not to care specifically for the brethren. This is further affirmed when the archaeological evidence takes into account the presence of females and children. These people traditionally would not have under normal circumstances been

[91] Kristjánsdóttir, "The Tip of the Iceberg," 50.
[92] Ibid., 51.
[93] Kristjánsdóttir, "Skriðuklaustur Monastery," 212. See Appendix 3-3.

buried at a monastery unless they died there seeking medical aid. It is also shown that; "most of the adult skeletons bear clear signs of various chronic diseases, such as syphilis, tuberculosis, lung infection, cleft palate, *echinococcus granulosus*, gum diseases of various kinds, broken bones, and some unidentified infections."[94] Such a large group of ill people of varying ages and sexes buried together leads to a clear argument that this was indeed a hospital working on the lay people of this Eastern Icelandic Quarter as transporting a body back from a hospital for burial elsewhere is largely unheard of. Nancy Sirasisi, in her book of medieval medicine says; "The essential equipment of the medieval period surgeon consisted of knives, razors and lancets for making incisions, cautery irons, grasping tools, probes, needles, *cannulae* (small reeds or tubes to be inserted into the body to remove fluids) and a tool for trepanation (drilling holes in the skull to release pressures and fluids and remove tumours) … as well as sutures and pads."[95] Some of the above medical tools were found in the two smaller rooms beside the infirmary, and there were eighteen lancets, scalpels and pins found during the excavation of Skriðuklaustur.[96] This implies that healing as well as surgeries and injury treatment procedures may have taken place at Skriðuklaustur monastery. All of this evidence points to a hospital within the monastery that aided and assisted in not only the physical health of the secular but also the spiritual health as well as those that did not fare well during the treatment were buried on the grounds.

The hospital reaffirms the charity ideal within the Augustinian community, of which Skriðuklaustur was a part of. The act of healing someone spiritually was always a large part of the life of an Augustinian monk. However, the aid in the physical healing shows the step away from just a religious idea to an idea of being charitable. The medical help in the area also aided the idea of creating a strong foundation of community which Augustine felt was

[94] Kristjánsdóttir, "Skriðuklaustur Monastery," 212. See appendix 3-2
[95] Nancy G. Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 155.
[96] Kristjánsdóttir, "The Tip of the Iceberg," 52.

not only an option but rather an obligation for those that dedicated their life to Christ. This ties Skriðuklaustur into the greater Christian idea. It shares the sense of purpose, morality and charity that the other monasteries across the continent felt. The presence of an infirmary at Skriðuklaustur shows that the religious life in Iceland was not drastically different than its counterparts; even if it was physically set apart it was not different in design and purpose.

Conclusion: Skriðuklaustur and Tradition

The meaning of this work is not to show that Skriðuklaustur was a monastery identical to those in the rest of Western Europe, it is not meant to lump this cloister into a homogenous group where the trivial details differing it does not matter. Skriðuklaustur is different; physically it stands apart from many medieval cloisters. What this work is meant to show is that while Skriðuklaustur is physically different it is not symbolically different. The particulars that make Skriðuklaustur the type of building that it was contribute to its place within the wider Christian community. The adaption of a floor plan to better adapt to Northern life was not so much as a deviation from a set plan but rather an adjustment to an already fluid idea of special importance. The change does not take away from the importance of the layout, nor does it hinder the day to day activities known to the orders of the time. Rather, it takes the ideal, alters it, and fits itself within the original design party. The focus is still on the church and the alter, in all of its glory. This idea of adaptation is seen again in the building materials. The hierarchy of materials is essential in understanding how something so different can be so similar. The importance is not that the materials are the same but instead that they represent the same importance. If quarried stone is the best material to glorify God available than it was used however, if this material was not an available option then a material of the same importance was used. In the case of Skriðuklaustur this was driftwood and metals, rare to the island. Understandably stone and wood are drastically different, yet in relation to location their importance is the same. Showing, that it is not solely the physical that ties the Christian monasteries together, it is the symbolism of the physical. The emphasis is on the meaning, not the material. Finally, the presence of a hospital is drastically important. The infirmary ties Skriðuklaustur into the order's need to take part in charity. The monasteries in the West held hospitals and so too did Skriðuklaustur. It may not have been as big, or as grand but it was as important. The people that ended up there believed just as feverishly in the

power of God and the saints there to help them in their time of need. They also trusted those attending them just as much as the patients did in France, England and Rome. Skriðuklaustur was a centre of religious life and it just so happened to look different and be located an ocean away from what has come to be understood as the Christian ideal. Yet, this does not diminish its importance. It is just as much a part of the cloister life as any other large and well known monastery.

If one idea is taken away from this thesis let it be that while it may appear different, Skriðuklaustur, in all respects, belongs to the Western idea of monastic cloisters. The physical realities do not exclude it from sharing the same symbolic meanings. In the end it is the symbolic that is reiterated again and again in Christian verses. And so, should these same preached lessons not apply to the very walls that house them? Do the lessons within the scripture not resonate as loud because the walls are built with driftwood and not quarried stone? Do the worshipers not venerate as much at an alter because it is on the opposite side of the cloister? Most importantly, is the idea of charity and the work done in this hospital worth less because the space is smaller than most seen on the continent? No. The answer is no. The meaning is there, the symbolism is there and the cloister is as real of a societal importance as those found elsewhere. The exclusion of Skriðuklaustur as a member of the Christian monastic ideal would be a disservice to the religious life that prides itself on basing judgment on meanings and not actions. Skriðuklaustur is as important, if not more so, to those Christians in the North as they relied on monasteries few and far between. This monastery is not isolated as would appear on a map but instead it is a genuine part of a blooming idea, another stitch in the tapestry that is Christian monasticism. It would be wise to look at Skriðuklaustur as an example for Christianity's spread of ideas and use the symbolism and importance of building to see their place within Christianity. Academics must stop looking at purely the physical to create connections. If this isn't done than academia will continue to

miss out on many associations that may show the depth of medieval Christianity and its role in society. The challenge is to use Christianity's emphasis on symbols to understand cultural representation that may give the world an even more inclusive view, one where physicality does not justify the shunning of important religious houses. God was not present only in the lives of those lucky enough to live where academia has deemed historically significant. He was not found only within England, France and Rome. God was present in the hearts of everyone who believed, regardless of location.

Psalms 29:3 *The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; The God of glory thunders, The Lord is over many waters.*

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Appendix 0-1

Map of Medieval Icelandic Monasteries and Convents

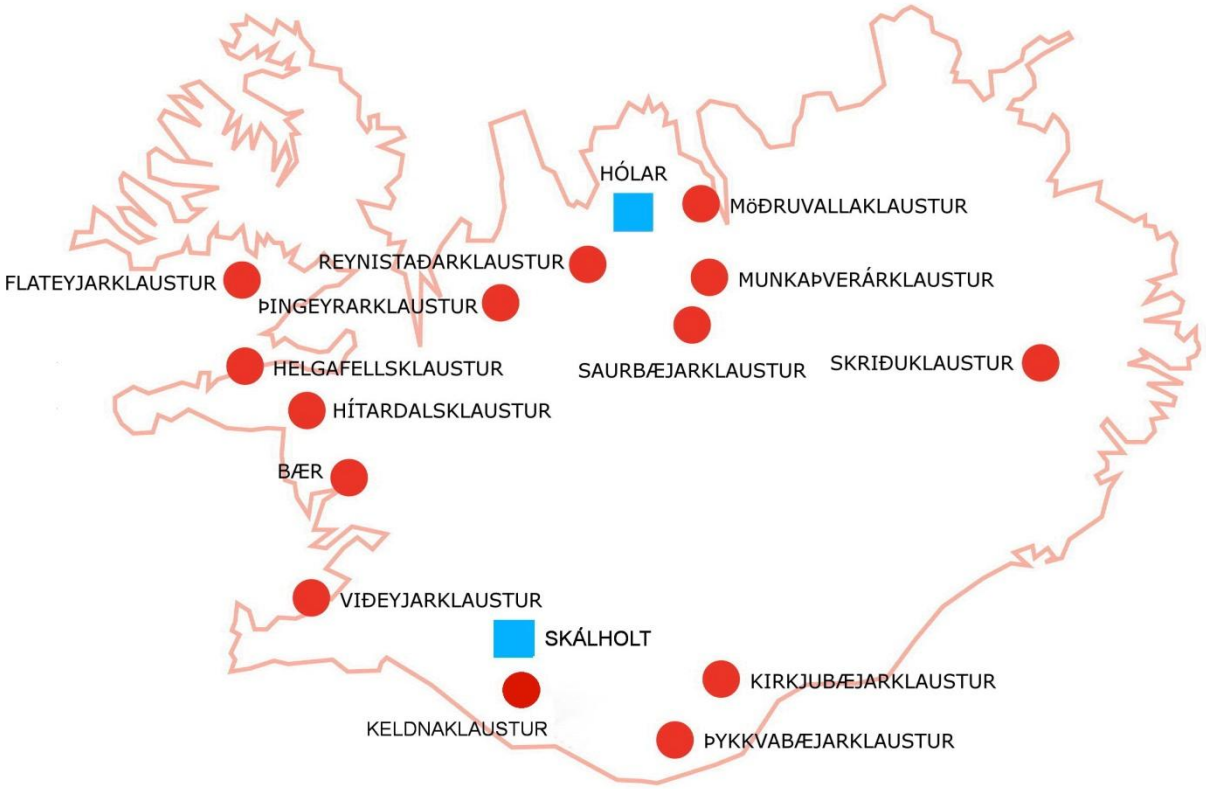


Photo by Per Åsen
Acquired via Dr. Steinunn Kristjánsdóttir

Appendix 1-1

"Rievaulx Abbey," English Heritage, accessed March 22, 2015,

http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/rievaulx-abbey/history/description/

Appendix 1-2

Skriðuklaustur Floor Plan.

Acquired via Dr. Steinunn Kristjánsdóttir

Appendix 2-1

Church at Byland Abbey

"Building Phases," The Cistercians in Yorkshire, accessed May 24, 2015, http://cistercians.shef.ac.uk/byland/buildings/church/church2.php.

Appendix 2-2

Rievaulx Abbey Church

"Rievaulx Abbey," *English Heritage*, accessed May 24, 2015, http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/rievaulx-abbey/.

Appendix 2-3

Rievaulx Abbey Tiles

"Rievaulx Abbey tiles protected from wintry weather," *The Press*, 16 January, 2009, http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/4052690.display/.

Appendix 2-4

Wooden Portal of Urnes Church in Norway

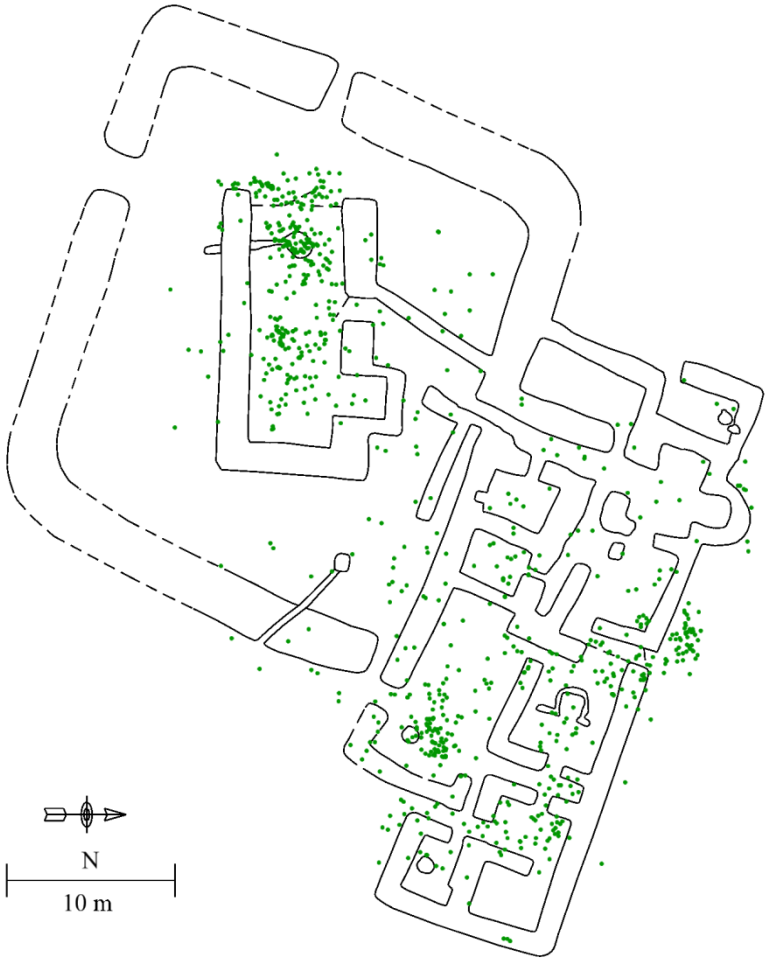
Fred S. Kleiner, *Gardener's Art Through the Ages: A Western Perspective 14th Edition* (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2013), 311.

Appendix 2-5

Nails at Skriðuklaustur

Davíð Bragi Konráðsson, "Naglar í byggingu Skriðuklausturs," (Reykjavik: Skriðuklaustursrannsóknir, 2007), 1.

Appendix 2-6



Location of Copper Remnants

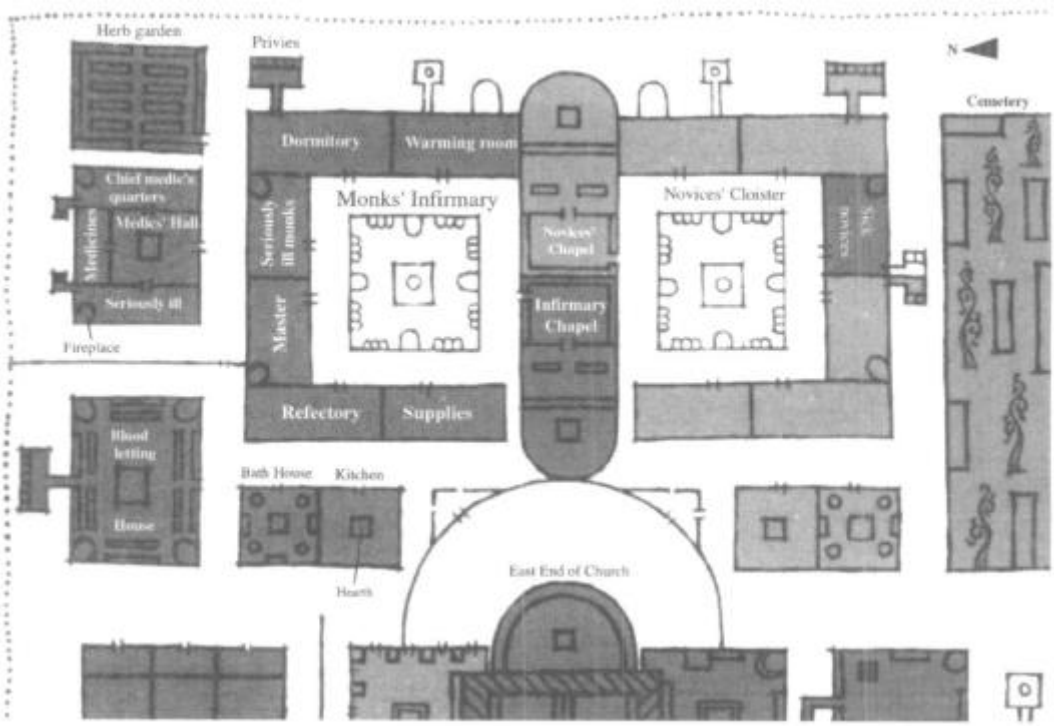
Steinunn Kristjánsdóttir, Haskoli Islands, February 20 2014.

Appendix 2-7

Copper Pieces Found at Skriðuklaustur

Steinunn Kristjánsdóttir, Haskoli Islands, February 20 2014.

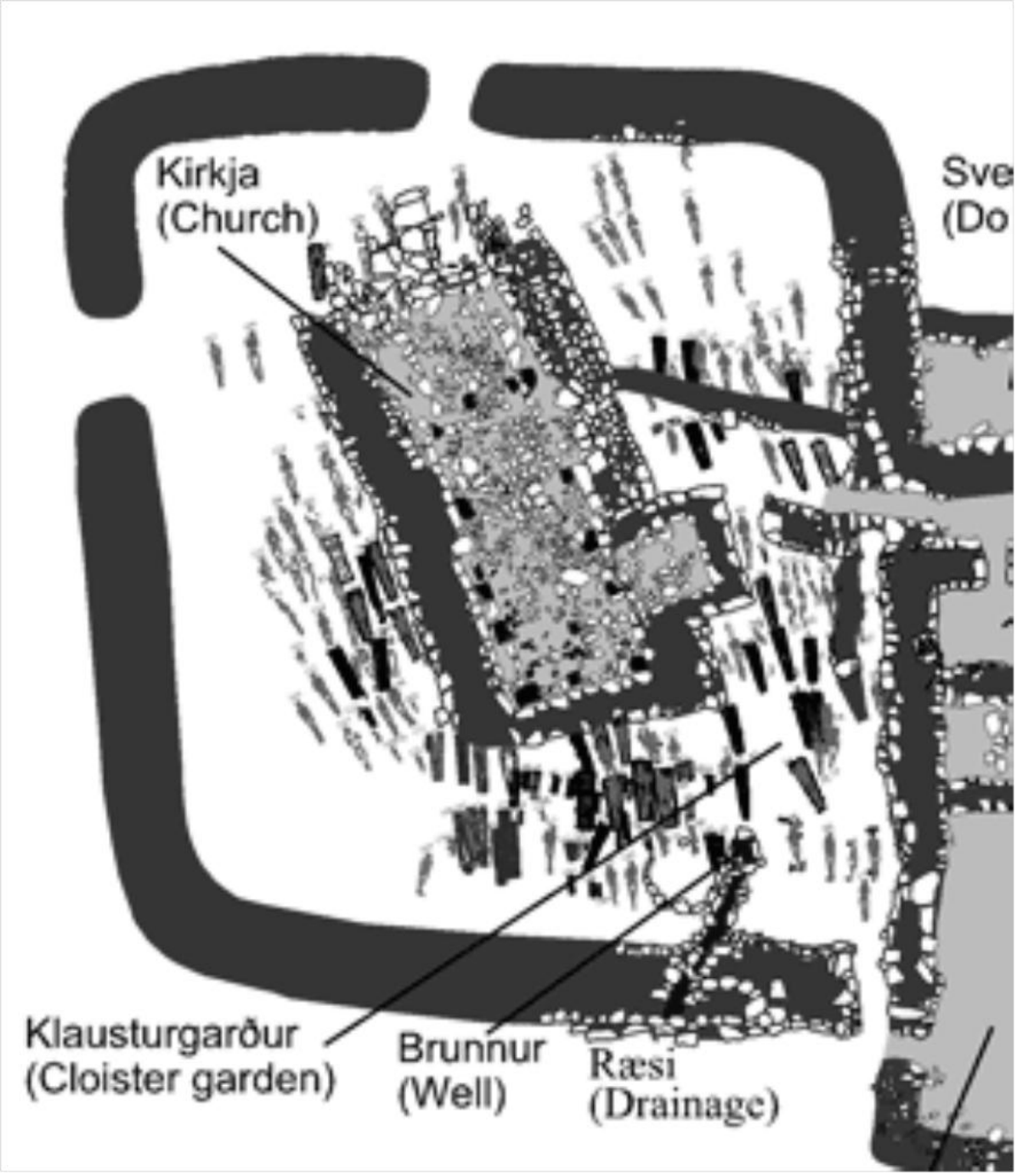
Appendix 3-1



Floor plan of St. Gall

Audrey Meany, "The Practice of Medicine in England about the Year 1000," Social History of Medicine 13, no. 2 (2000): 223.

Appendix 3-2



Túlkun fornleifafræðinga á rústunum að Skriðuklaustri.
http://www.skriduklaustur.is/~skridukl/index.php/en/archsite/research/97-fornleifarannsokn

Appendix 3-3

Case of syphilis found at Skriðuklaustur

Steinunn Kristjánsdóttir, "Skriðuklaustur Monastery: Medical Centre of Medieval East Iceland?," ACTA Archaeologica, issue 79 (2008): 211.