

Jón Viðar Sigurðsson: Standardization of bishoprics: Parish churches and book collections in Iceland in the Late Middle Ages

This project is about parish churches and book collections in the two bishoprics in Iceland in the Late Middle Ages. In this presentation, the focus will entirely be on Hólar. Auðunn Þorbergsson (1313–1322), nicknamed *Rauði* (the Red), became the bishop of Hólar in Iceland in 1313 with the intent of centralizing the administration of the diocese. To accomplish this goal he made an important decision in 1318: he became the first bishop in the country to collect *máldagar* (cartularies) from individual churches within his bishopric. He made them into one *máldagar* collection, later known as the *Auðunarmáldagar*. When a church was built and consecrated, a *máldagi* was made, listing the landed property of the church, its income, rights and obligations, inventory, **books**, the number of clerics, and usually the size of the parish. A new *máldagar* collection, *Pétursmáldagar*, was made for Hólar around 1394.

In the *máldagi* for each parish church, all the books it owned were listed. For the bishops of Hólar, it must have been just as important to know which books were available in the diocese as it was to know how many parishes there were, and the number of priests in every parish church. The goal in this part of the project is to create an overview (a list) over these books and the geographical distribution of them in the bishopric. Here it becomes important to reveal which churches had the largest book collections (libraries) – these were always the wealthiest churches in the bishopric. The theory is that these churches were used by priests from other places as a kind of library, and that the priests working in these churches have been better educated than the average priests, and could, therefore, provide help in critical situations. In short; the distribution of books reveals some ideas about the organization of the bishopric.