

**ARCHITECTURAL IMAGES IN ICELANDIC MANUSCRIPTS
MONASTICISM IN ICELAND REPORT
JENNIFER GRAYBURN, JULY 2015**

REPORT OVERVIEW

While manuscript illuminations can depict architectural motifs and symbols accurately to reflect the real physical landscape, they can also be manipulated to supplement a narrative, create meaning, and organize the page. This report isolates the architecture and architectural details depicted in Icelandic manuscripts to see how these motifs were used and if they convey any information about the physical Icelandic landscape during the middle ages. This list is not exhaustive, but rather includes the most relevant architectural illuminations and marginal doodles from the available digital manuscripts before c. 1550. A few post-medieval manuscripts were consulted, but they generally include less ornamentation relevant to this study. A list of all studied manuscripts appears at the end of the report.

Overall, few Icelandic images include architecture. Architecturally sculpted furniture like thrones are more common, but limited to a small variety of forms. Most architectural depictions stem from English examples and are abbreviated to ornament the narrative and communicate broader royal and Christian authority.¹ While architecture occasionally features in European manuscripts as metaphors and attributes, architectural details in Icelandic illuminations often recede into the background and include foreign architectural forms, including stone towers, crenellation, sculpted mouldings, columns, arcades, and cusped ornamentation. The foreign origin of these forms does not mean that they did not appear on Iceland's buildings; as seen on extant shrines and altar frontals, these general motifs do appear in the physical landscape and may have been reproduced in wood for Icelandic churches and buildings. Nevertheless, it is difficult to prove any direct correlation between the page and landscape. A few unusual depictions show no immediate model, however, and warrant additional research: the castle in AM 673 a II 4to, 5v; the building in GKS 1005 fol., 69v; and the building in AM 147 4to, 54r. Clearly, the building in the latter *Jónsbók* is of native timber construction comparable to the timber church depicted on the earlier *Valþjófsstaður* door.

The following section includes descriptions and images of the manuscripts and architectural details discovered during this research. They are organized by manuscript, yet comparisons within and across manuscripts are made when relevant. The aim is to focus on the Icelandic material, and images of non-Icelandic comparative material are excluded intentionally. These examples can be provided if desired. A cursory introduction to the architectural images on Icelandic signets is included as a comparative medium.

¹ Christine Sciacca, *Building the Medieval World*, The Medieval Imagination Series (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty

IMAGES

AM 673 a II 4to: *This manuscript is one of two Icelandic copies of Physiologus, a classically derived text associating animal characteristics and moral lessons. Such texts were popular during the Middle Ages as bestiaries, and the content was often used in sermons and accompanied by illustrations. Both AM 673 a I 4to and AM 673 a II 4to include illustrations of the morals described in the text. According to Halldór Hermannsson, the images in these manuscripts are the earliest extant in Iceland and probably date from c. 1190-1210. He believes that the images and text point to an English model.² The two architectural images in this manuscript are secular in nature:*



AM 673 a II 4to, 5v: A salamander in front of a castle. Halldór Hermannsson transcribes and normalizes the text: *Er kykvendi er á grísku heitir salamandra, en á látinu stellio, litil ok með sundrleitum lit. Frá því segir Salamon: 'Svá sem stellio byggvanda í konunga húsum. Salamon segir: 'ef þat fellr í eld, þá slokknar, sem vatni sé í hellt, 'Svá eru réttvísir menn, undarligir öllum mönnum svá sem váru í ofni glóandi sveinar iii: Ananías, Azarías, Misael, ok kendu eigi hita, svá sem Daniel propheta segir ok Paulus apostolus váttar: 'Þindir eru vér, ok sakar oss ekki. Braut eru vér veknir, eigi fyrfrumsk vér.'*³ The first reference is to Psalm 30:28, in which Solomon says that the lizard can be caught in the hand, yet dwells in kings' palaces (shown in the image). This description emphasizes its small, but wise nature. The latter reference expands the Christian meaning to show how the meak, like the salamander, can enter the fire and not be burned. Salamander images vary widely between medieval bestiaries, but no comparative example with a castle can be found at this time.

² Halldór Hermannsson, *The Icelandic Physiologus Facsimile Edition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1938), 10.

³ Halldór Hermannsson, *The Icelandic Physiologus*, 20-21.



AM 673 a II 4to, 7v: Seven armed warriors ride on an enclosed platform on an elephant. In Halldór Hermannsson's normalized text, the elephant is described as having a 'kastali' or castle on his back: *Elephans heitir dýr á látinu en á óra fill. Þat er haft í orrustum á útlöndum. Þat er svá sterkt ok máttugt, at þat heldr.....tigum manna okmeð hervápnnum öllum ok virki því, er gort er úr trjám sem kastali sé, er þeir þurfa at hafa, þá er berjask í orrustum, svá sem skrifat er í Machabeorum bók.*⁴ The castle is a palasade fortification and, generally, conforms to other besitaries with this image.

⁴ Halldór Hermannsson, *The Icelandic Physiologus*, 21.

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AM 227 fol.: *This manuscript is richly illustrated and contains Stjórn, a translation of the Old Testament in Icelandic. It dates from c. 1340-1360 and displays clear English influences. According to Selma Jónsdóttir, this English influence was direct from East Anglia and the Tickhill Group. She argues that the fragments of the Icelandic Psalter, which was produced in East Anglia, prove that English models were circulating in Iceland at this time. Despite disagreements over dates, she further argues that AM 227 fol., Íslenska Teiknibókin, and AM 249 e fol. are roughly contemporary and part of this same aesthetic group.⁵ Interestingly, the manuscripts of this school are all linked to Augustinian monasteries or their patrons in the York Archdiocese; the only exception is the Icelandic Psalter, which has the same handwriting as a manuscript from the Benedictine Convent at Carrow outside of Norwich.⁶ The East Anglian psalters to which it is compared include similar, if more detailed, crenelated/turreted buildings and ornamented thrones.*



AM 227 fol., 1v: A initial. God the Father sits crowned on a throne with angels to His right and falling demons below. The throne cushion has a quaterfoil pattern, while the throne has arched and circular ornamentation reminiscent of window tracery.

⁵ Selma Jónsdóttir, *Illumination in a Manuscript of Stjórn*, translated by Peter G Foote (Reykjavík: Almenna Bókafélagið, 1971), 14-31.

⁶ Selma Jónsdóttir, *Illumination in a Manuscript of Stjórn*, 35-36.



AM 227 fol., 23v: Abraham is about to sacrifice Isaac on an altar. According to Genesis 22:1-19, God tested Abraham by demanding the sacrifice of his son. Abraham prepares to fulfill this sacrifice, but God stops him at the last minute and rewards him for his faith and obedience. The altar is shrouded in yellow, green, and red drapery.



AM 227 fol., 23v: A man is leading an animal out of a fortification. Because this image appears beneath the sacrifice of Isaac, Selma Jónsdóttir believes that the lower margin depicts Abraham, Sarah, and a servant leading an ass out of a barn (appearing as a fortification) for a sacrifice on Moriah. The animal, however, bears the horns of a bull or steer. Crenelated walls and towered structures, as seen here, can act as abbreviated symbols of cities. Contemporary settings and clothing are often used for religious narratives in the middle ages.



AM 227 fol., 38r: N initial. Isaac blesses his son Jacob. In Genesis 27, Jacob pretends to be his brother, serves his father Isaac food, and receives Isaac's blessing. Isaac has a halo and sits on a bench with mouldings and a crosshatched seat cushion.



AM 227 fol., 71v: Men carrying the Ark of the Covenant behind a trumpet player. According to Joshua 5:13-6:21, Joshua followed the Lord's instructions to have seven priests carry seven trumpets around Jericho one time for six days straight. On the seventh day, they marched around the city seven times and shouted. The walls of Jericho fell. Two prominent-looking men, one bearing a monk's tonsure, carry the ark. The ark itself has two tiers of arches separated by two blue bands and resembles the architectural features of medieval reliquaries and shrines. To the right, Jericho is depicted as a medieval castle or fortification with crenellation.



AM 227 fol., 88v: Saul resting to the right on a cushion/bed and a crosshatched pillow. David is on a bed to the left looking above to where Samuel anoints him in the initial M.



AM 227 fol., 115r: A initial. King Solomon sits crowned on a throne with an orb in his left hand. He makes a sign of blessing with his right hand. His throne includes arches, mouldings, and a crosshatched cushion similar to that of God the Father in 1v. Selma Jónsdóttir compares this throne to that of David in the Tickhill Psalter.⁷

⁷ Selma Jónsdóttir, *Illumination in a Manuscript of Stjórn*, 41.

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AM 673 a III 4to: *This sketchbook includes a collection of skillfully drawn images. Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir distinguishes between the hands of four different illustrators and dates it to c. 1330-1500. In many cases, the earlier drawings by Illustrator-A have been touched up or added to by Illustrator-C. Most of the architectural features appear on thrones/benches, which have crosshatched cushions and architecturally sculptured bases like the examples in AM 227 fol. The castle/town image, while larger and more detailed, similarly shows the formulaic fortification characteristics found in AM 227 fol. Interesting religious elements include a temple, two sarcophagi, and a possible font.*



AM 673 a III 4to, 2v: Mary and Christ are crowned and sit on a throne. The throne has the recognizable crosshatched cushion, but lacks architectural details. Two mouldings project from the bench profile, so it is possible that more ornamentation was intended. Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir assigns this page to Illustrator-A, c. 1330-1360.⁸

⁸ Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir, *Íslenska Teiknibókin* (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í Íslenskum fræðum, 2013), 86.



AM 673 a III 4to, 5r: Mary is crowned and sits on a throne with baby Jesus. The throne has the familiar crosshatched pattern and the mouldings on the base now run across the front of the throne. Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir assigns this page to Illustrator-A, c. 1330-1360.⁹



AM 673 a III 4to, 5v: In this Adoration of the Magi scene, Mary is crowned and sits on a throne with baby Jesus. Three kings stand/kneel to the right. The bench shows the familiar characteristics mentioned above, but it is unfinished on the bottom and right sides. Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir assigns this page to Illustrator-A, c. 1330-1360.¹⁰

⁹ Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir, *Íslenska Teiknibókin*, 96.

¹⁰ Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir, *Íslenska Teiknibókin*, 98.



AM 673 a III 4to, 6r: Jesus sits on a bench in the same form as the previous thrones, yet he wears a crown of thorns rather than a royal crown. Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir assigns this page to Illustrator-A, 1330-60.¹¹



AM 673 a III 4to, 7v: Mary is crowned on a tasseled, crosshatched cushion in the middle of a rose. Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir assigns this page to Illustrator-C, c. 1450-1425.¹²

¹¹ Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir, *Íslenska Teiknibókin*, 100.

¹² Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir, *Íslenska Teiknibókin*, 106.



AM 673 a III 4to, 8r: Four scenes with crowned figures on thrones. On the top left, Mary nurses Jesus on two tasseled cushions. On the top right, a crowned king sits on an elaborate architectural throne with crenellation, towers, columns, and arches. On the bottom left, Jesus crowns Mary. On the bottom right, Mary holds baby Jesus. Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir assigns this page to Illustrator-C, c. 1450-1475.¹³

¹³ Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir, *Íslenska Teiknibókin*, 108.



AM 673 a III 4to, 8v: A scene of George slaying the dragon with a castle and town in the background. The castle has seven towers, and a king and queen look over the crenelated balustrade. To the left in the distance is a town with three more towers. Selma Jónsdóttir notes the similarities between the illustrations in this Icelandic sketchbook and *AM 227 fol. 23v* and the distant town here suggest a similar source of inspiration (likely English). Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir assigns this page to *Illustrator-C*, c. 1450-75.¹⁴



AM 673 a III 4to, 9v: Pontius Pilate sits on a throne with a headband and scepter. Jesus is brought before him to be judged. The throne and cushion show similar characteristics as those previously described. Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir assigns these figures to *Illustrator-A*, 1330-60.¹⁵

¹⁴ Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir, *Íslenska Teiknibókin*, 110.

¹⁵ Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir, *Íslenska Teiknibókin*, 114.



AM 673 a III 4to, 10r: Christ sits on a bench as Mary presents souls to him. Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir assigns this figure to Illustrator-A, c. 1330-1360 and Illustrator-C, c. 1450-1475.¹⁶



AM 673 a III 4to, 13v: The burial of Christ, with Christ lying on top of a grave slab/coffin with two mouldings. Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir believes that the three-part division formed by the mouldings is unusual and might relate to the three days before Christ's Resurrection. Yet, the form also appears on thrones in this sketchbook and other manuscripts. This tomb shape appears again, though incomplete, on 14v. Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir assigns these figures to Illustrator-A, c. 1330-1360.¹⁷

¹⁶ Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir, *Íslenska Teiknibókin*, 116.

¹⁷ Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir, *Íslenska Teiknibókin*, 130.



AM 673 a III 4to, 14r: In this Nativity scene, Mary is crowned and lounges on a bed with baby Jesus and Joseph. The bed has a high spokes with knobs and turnip shaped finials. Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir assigns these figures to Illustrator-A, 1330-60.¹⁸



AM 673 a III 4to, 14r: A Nativity scene is in the foreground, while a cow and donkey stand behind an object in the background. The perspective is odd, however, and the animals appear to project from inside the basin. Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir proposes that it is an empty manger that intentionally evokes an empty tomb, thereby associating Christ's birth and death. It is interesting to note that the object does not resemble any of Christ's tombs in the same sketchbook. Another possibility is that the manger is supposed to represent water trough or symbolic font, for the basin form and proportions in the drawing resemble extant medieval fonts. In this case, the embodiment of baptism could equate the birth of Christ with the ritualistic birth into the Christian faith. Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir assigns these figures to Illustrator-A, 1330-60.¹⁹

¹⁸ Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir, *Íslenska Teiknibókin*, 132.

¹⁹ Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir, *Íslenska Teiknibókin*, 132.



AM 673 a III 4to, 14v: A crucifixion scene with Jesus surrounded by the *Arma Christi*. Among these objects is a *velum temple* (or curtained temple) in the center of the bottom border. The tent is pointed and capped with a sphere, like previous illuminated towers. Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir assigns this figure to Illustrator-C, c. 1450-1475.²⁰



AM 673 a III 4to, 17r: Resurrection scene with Christ stepping out of a tomb. The tomb resembles the tomb on 13v, but is unfinished. Two architectural mouldings are suggested by the projections on the tomb profile. Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir assigns these figures on the page to Illustrator-C, c. 1450-75.²¹

²⁰ Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir, *Íslenska Teiknibókin*, 134.

²¹ Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir, *Íslenska Teiknibókin*, 146.



AM 673 a III 4to, 17v: A death scene showing a woman laying in a bed as her spirit rises to heaven. The bed itself is elaborate with cutouts and cusped arches along its base. She rests her head on a crosshatched pillow with tassels. Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir assigns these figures to Illustrator-C, c. 1450-1475.²²



AM 673 a III 4to, 18v: Two men drink at a table. These men are part of a larger scene showing the vice of overdrinking with the devil. The table is sculptural, even column like with a base, moulding, and top. Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir assigns these figures to Illustrator-C, c. 1450-1475.²³

²² Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir, *Íslenska Teiknibókin*, 148.

²³ Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir, *Íslenska Teiknibókin*, 152.

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AM 350 fol.: *This fourteenth-century manuscript includes an assortment of texts, including Jónsbók, Kristinréttur Árna Biskups, and other laws. Jónsbók is frequently accompanied by illuminations, many of which narrate the laws or reinforce the authority of the king. The throne depictions are significant, because they identify the king and represent his authority. Images of enthroned kings also mirror those of God and Christ enthroned.*



AM 350 fol., 2r: F initial. An offering illumination, with God making the sign of blessing in His high seat and a kneeling man to His left offering a book. God is sitting on an elaborate lion-headed throne, His legs projecting under His red cape in front of Him. A crucifixion image also appears in front of Him. This small image recalls crucifixion sculptures and shrines placed on church altars. It is possible that this association is intentional; the high altar, then, literally becomes the throne of God.



AM 350 fol., 91r: P initial starting Hirðskrá. A crowned king sits in this initial, the hint of a throne beneath him. The king and a kneeling man to the right both hold a book and a sword, though it is not clear which figure is giving and receiving either.



AM 350 fol., 107v: An A initial with a priest baptizing a child as the child's parents stand to the right. The font is decorated with cusped arches and a trefoil design, both frequently found in gothic architecture and illumination.

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GKS 1005 fol.: *Flateyjarbók* is unquestionably one of the largest and most elaborately illustrated Icelandic manuscripts. Jón Hákonarson of Viðidalstunga commissioned it, and it was likely written there or in Þingeyrar or Skagafjörður. It was started by the priest Jón Þórðarson in 1387 and finished by Magnús Þórhallsson. Magnús also worked on the illuminations. It was likely intended as a gift for King Olaf Hákonarson to encourage the king to rule in a manner akin to his namesakes.²⁴



GKS 1005 fol., 3v: A man presenting an open book to the reader in an initial starting the account of Norway's settlement. Scribes commonly used sloped desks, and this scene is often interpreted as a scribe at a desk, perhaps writing or presenting this very book.

²⁴ Elizabeth Ashman Rowe, "Cultural Paternity in the *Flateyjarbók Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*," *Alvísmál* 8 (1998): 3-4.



GKS 1005 fol., 69v: H initial with a large building. A man carrying a large object flanks the initial on the left, while a hybrid beast with a crown stands on the right. This image begins *Orms þáttur Stórólfssonar*. The elaborate structure might be a king's castle with classical column and arch ornamentation. The brick pattern on the bottom part of the structure resembles stone, while the horizontal bands on the gable resemble timber. The direct frontal view of the structure is rare, but appears again in the flattened perspective on a seal from Pingeyrar (below).



GKS 1005 fol., 75r: H initial with Haraldr hárfagri cutting the bonds of Dofri the Giant. H initial for [Hálfðan] in *Hálfðanar þáttar svartar*. A highly stylized and crenelated tower appears in the background, suggesting his father's castle as the setting.



GKS 1005 fol., 76r: This A initial begins a story about Haraldr hárfagri. A king is crowned and sits on an elaborate throne. He takes the hand of a man in front of him. The throne is red with arches along the bottom. A floral extension extends behind the king.



GKS 1005 fol., 145r: H initial beginning the preface to *Sverris saga*. The king is crowned and armed with an axe. He sits on a throne with an armrest visible to the right.



GKS 1005 fol., 164r: H initial in *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*. King Hákon Hákonarson and Earl Skúli Bárðarson grasp a sword and paper [perhaps representing law]. Both are crowned and sit on a shared throne. The throne is similar to that in 76r.

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AM 147 4to: *This manuscript contains an elaborately illustrated Jónsbók, as well as other texts like Kristinréttur Árna biskups. In many of these images, the laws are narrated and expanded in unexpected and humorous ways. The images are sketched in ink in the margins and show characters not common in manuscript illumination.*



AM 147 4to, 54r: A man rows a boat over a body of water, leaving a timber house or gable to his left to meet a man with a sheep on his back to the right. In the bottom, the text says, “Viltu flytja sauð?”

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AM 343 fol.: *This is another fourteenth century manuscript of Jónsbók. Like other copies of Jónsbók, the law is central and authority figures are often represented with a crowned God or king figure on a throne.*



AM 343 fol., 1v: M initial for [Magnús] to begin the book. The king hands his laws to a citizen/subject. The crowned king sits on an elaborate dragon-headed chair. The middle staff of the M resembles a column of an interior arcade.



AM 343 fol., 2v: Initial F for [Friðr]. God sits on a throne. The throne is red and topped with a gray cushion. The architectural ornamentation on the throne includes black circles, a scalloped moulding, and arches.

Possible Architectural Details: *The scrolling acanthus vine was a popular motif in art and architectural sculpture in Europe, and many Icelandic examples incorporate this trend. The acanthus leaf was clearly an important motif for some Icelandic illuminators, and practice sketches of such ornamentation appear frequently throughout the margins. Nevertheless, such ornamentation does not suggest architecture or architectural inspiration in itself. This section includes the sketches most likely derived from architectural inspiration. It is doubtful that they can inform us further about the ornamentation of specific buildings in Iceland, but they are nevertheless interesting in their singularity and a testament to European stylistic ties.*



AM 586 4to, 12v: Some early European manuscripts include ornamental line fillers to complete lines otherwise not filled with script. The result is a unified column design with aligned endings. While such fillers often include scrolling vegetation and geometric lines, this example is interesting in its length (an entire line, perhaps a section break) and the rectangular containment. The vine is not formed with ink, but rather by the ink's absence; it is the darkened background that shapes the foreground. The result is sculptural, reflecting the fall of light on architectural mouldings.



AM 720 a VI 4to, 2v: While Icelandic sagas frequently feature acanthus leaves as marginal doodles, this one is unique in its symmetry and the upward orientation of its leaves. Such designs often form or decorate columns capitals and pillars.



GKS 1005 fol., 131r: This O initial is divided into four equal quadrants, each with a hybrid beast contained under an arch. Arcades are frequently used in art and architecture as a framing device or spatial divide. Such arcades and canopies are common in sculpture and church furniture like reliquaries.

DIGITAL MANUSCRIPTS CONSULTED:

AM 73 b fol
AM 84 8°
AM 99 a 8°
AM 105 fol
AM 108 fol
AM 110 fol
AM 111 8vo
AM 111 fol
AM 112 8vo
AM 113 8vo
AM 113 a fol
AM 113 b fol
AM 113 c fol
AM 113 f fol
AM 113 k fol
AM 114 8vo
AM 119 fol
AM 121 fol
AM 126 fol
AM 126 fol
AM 129 fol
AM 132 4° (*Jónsbók athuga nánar*)
AM 132 fol (*Möðruvallabók*)
AM 133 fol (*Kálfalækjarbók*)
AM 134 4°
AM 135 fol
AM 136 fol
AM 136 fol
AM 137 fol
AM 139 fol
AM 140 fol
AM 147 4° (*Heynesbók Jónsbókar*)
AM 154 4°
AM 156 4°
AM 162 A α fol (alpha)
AM 162 A β fol (beta)
AM 162 A δ fol (delta)
AM 162 A ζ fol (seta)
AM 162 A θ fol (theta)
AM 162 A ι fol (iota)
AM 162 A κ fol (kappa)
AM 162 B γ fol (gamma)
AM 162 B kappa fol
AM 162 B α fol (alpha)
AM 162 B β fol (beta)
AM 162 B δ fol (delta)
AM 162 B ϵ fol (epsilon)
AM 162 B ζ fol (seta)
AM 162 B η fol (eta)
AM 162 B θ fol (theta)
AM 162 B ι fol (iota)
AM 162 E fol
AM 162 H fol
AM 162 K fol
AM 162 M fol
AM 173 d A 29 4°
AM 173 d B 2 4°
AM 173 d B 7 4°
AM 227 fol (*Stjórn*)
AM 232 8vo
AM 235 fol.
AM 235 fol.
AM 237 a fol
AM 238 II fol.
AM 249 I fol
AM 279 a 4°
AM 311 4to
AM 315 b fol
AM 315 c fol
AM 325 II 4to
AM 334 fol
AM 335 4°
AM 343 fol (*Svalbarðsbók Jónsbókar*)
AM 350 fol (*Skarðsbók Jónsbók*)
AM 371 4to
AM 382 4to
AM 386 I 4°
AM 386 II 4°
AM 394 4to
AM 396 4°
AM 420 b 4°
AM 432 12°
AM 433 a 12°
AM 434 d 12mo
AM 445 c I 4°
AM 445 c II 4°
AM 466 4°
AM 471 4°
AM 489 4°
AM 510 4°
AM 551 a 4°
AM 551 d β 4°
AM 556 a 4°
AM 561 4to
AM 564 a 4to
AM 564 a 4to
AM 567 I 4to
AM 567 III 4to
AM 567 VI alpha 4to
AM 567 VIII 4to
AM 567 XVI 4to
AM 567 XXIV 4to
AM 571 4°
AM 577 4°

AM 586 4°
 AM 589 d 4°
 AM 589 f 4°
 AM 593 b 4°
 AM 604 a 4to
 AM 604 b 4to
 AM 604 c 4to
 AM 604 f 4to
 AM 604 h 4to
 AM 625 4to
 AM 640 4°
 AM 641 4°
 AM 643 4°
 AM 653 a 4to
 AM 657 c 4°
 AM 666 b 4to
 AM 667 I 4to
 AM 667 IX 4to
 AM 667 V 4to
 AM 667 XI 4to
 AM 673 III 4to (*Teiknibókin*)
 AM 673 a I 4°
 AM 673 a II 4°
 AM 677 4to
 AM 687 d 4°
 AM 713 4°
 AM 720 a I 4°
 AM 720 a II 4°
 AM 720 a III 4°
 AM 720 a IV 4°
 AM 720 a IX 4to
 AM 720 a V 4°
 AM 720 a VI 4°
 AM 720 a VII 4°
 AM 720 a VIII 4°
 AM 720 a X 4°
 AM 720 a XI 4to
 AM 721 4°
 AM 732 a VII 4°

AM 748 I b 4°
 AM 754 4to
 AM 757 a 4to
 AM 921 III 4to
 AM 924 4to
 AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. I,10 - Máldagi.; Iceland, 1344
 AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. II,13 - Máldagi.; Iceland, 1363
 AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. II,19 - Samningur.; Iceland, 1371
 AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. II,20 - Kaupbréf.; Iceland, 1371
 AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. II,8 - Kaupbréf.; Iceland, 1358
 AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. III,1 - Kaupbréf.; Iceland, 1372
 AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. III,10 - Kaupbréf.; Iceland, 1385
 AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. III,12 - Falsbréf.; Iceland, 1470-1515
 AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. III,13 - Dómur um skuldaskipti.; Iceland, 1380
 AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. IV,1 - Kaupbréf.; Iceland, 1385
 AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. IV,11 - Rekabréf.; Iceland, 1386
 AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. IV,14 - Kaupbréf.; Iceland, 1388
 AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. IV,17 - Kaupbréf. Transskrift á skinni frá 22. október ...; Iceland, 1487
 AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. IV,18 - Kaupbréf.; Iceland, 1390
 AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. IV,19 - Jarðabréf.; Iceland, 1388
 AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. IV,20 - Falsbréf.; Iceland, 1500-1600
 AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. IV,4 - Kaupbréf.; Iceland, 1385
 AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. IV,5 - Kaupbréf.; Iceland, 1385
 AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. LI, 23
 AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. V,1 - Jarðabréf.; Iceland, 1391
 AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. XL,VII 12
 GKS 1005 fól (*Flateyjarbók*)
 GKS 1157 fól
 GKS 1812 4°
 GKS 2365 4°
 GKS 2367 4°
 GKS 2845 4°
 GKS 2870 4°
 GKS 3268 4°
 GKS 3270 4°
 GKS 3274 a 4to

ARCHITECTURE IN ICELANDIC SIGNETS

This section expands the study on architectural images in Icelandic manuscripts by considering architectural depictions in a different medium. In these signets, most architectural details frame a religious figure within a canopy or church cross-section. The distinction between buildings and elaborate canopies is often not clear, though both are equally condensed and generalized. Historical research is still needed to complete this study, but cursory observations suggest that most signets use formulaic architectural compositions found in other countries. A signet for St. Magnus Cathedral in Orkney best displays this use of formulaic compositions, as the gothic features on the seal do not appear anywhere in the Romanesque architecture of the extant cathedral. The only accurate part of this signet is the tripartite division of the church into a nave and two flanking aisles, though this is a standard basilica plan and likely also formulaic. While artistic conventions dominate the architectural images in both manuscripts and signets, there are a few images that appear unique. The first is the signet of Þingeyrar with a frontal, symmetrical church similar to the building on GKS 1005 fol, 69v. If this flattened perspective are unique, it could suggest a form developed in northwest Iceland, possibly incorporating local building characteristics. The other signet is for Reynistaður, which some scholars believe shows the stave-construction of the church itself.

Since historical research is excluded from this study, the following descriptions are listed according to content and aesthetic similarities rather than by owner, institution, or chronology. Such considerations would doubtlessly reveal interesting institutional relationships in Iceland, as well as cross-sea relationships with Britain and Norway.

All images are from AM 217 8vo, which is preserved in *Sigilla Islandica*, vol. 2. Source page numbers are listed in parentheses with each image.

CHURCHES



(165): The front of a building, presumably a church with lobed crosses projecting into the signet border from the gable and two flanking towers. The door is topped by a round-headed arch.



(223): Some scholars believe that this image shows the stave-construction of Reynistaður.²⁵ It could also be a reliquary or shrine using those same architectural motifs.

²⁵ Guðmundur St. Sigurðarson, et. al., *Fornleifaskrá Reynistaður*, Rannsóknarskýrsla 49 (Skagafjörður: Byggðasafn Skagafirðinga, 2006), 15.

STYLIZED GOTHIC CHURCH CROSS-SECTIONS



(11): St. Peter, with his keys and a book, in the larger center space of a three bay cross-section. The roof is topped with trefoil finials, while the smaller side sections contain two arches.



(17): A crowned Mary sits enthroned in the center section of this cross-section. She holds baby Jesus on her lap under a cusped arch. The smaller flanking sections contain two praying figures, the one on the right a bishop. Above the cross-section, towers and finials extend into the signet border. The brick pattern on the towers recall stonework.



(21): A bishop stands in the center space with a mitre and book. Similar to the seal with St. Peter, he is flanked by two smaller aisles with arches. The roof has small trefoil finials.



(320): St. Peter in the center section holding crossed keys. Two smaller aisles flank the nave while finials extend from the roof.

ELABORATE THRONES/POSSIBLE ARCHITECTURAL STRUCTURES

The seals below all feature elaborate compositions that merge architectural features within ambiguous spatial compositions. Although the forms derive from church architecture, the results are flattened and more stylized. It is possible that they aim to show altarpieces and shrines for the saints they honor, rather than a building proper. Occasionally, the owner of the seal appears at the bottom and prays up to the central figure.



(13)



(321)



(319)



(73)



(297)

ARCHITECTURAL THRONES AND CANOPIES

Similar to the Icelandic manuscript illuminations, thrones and canopies are common in Icelandic signets, and many of the forms that appear in manuscripts also appear here. Architectural forms are common on the thrones themselves, as well as on the canopies accompanying them. Like real thrones, they visually increase the prestige and honor of the person seated. In most of the examples below, Mary is shown crowned and enthroned with baby Jesus on her lap. This motif, known as *sedes sapientiae* or Seat of Wisdom, is common in later medieval art. Canopies can also appear above standing figures; such compositions are frequently found on portals and church sculpture in medieval Europe as a way to frame and honor the figure below.



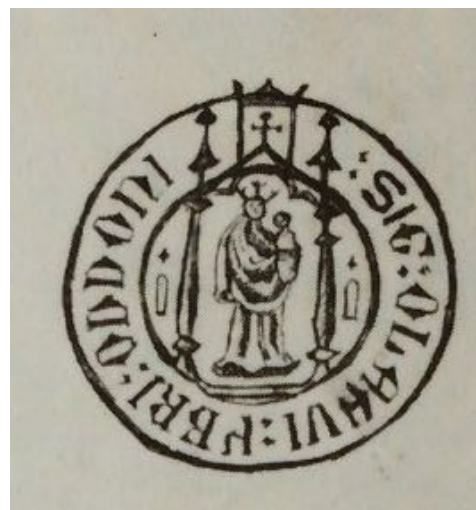
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(161)



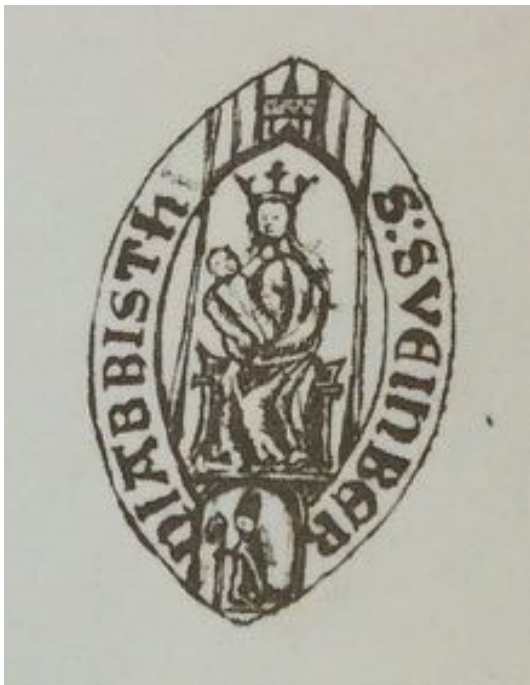
(250)



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(247)



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(324)



(326)



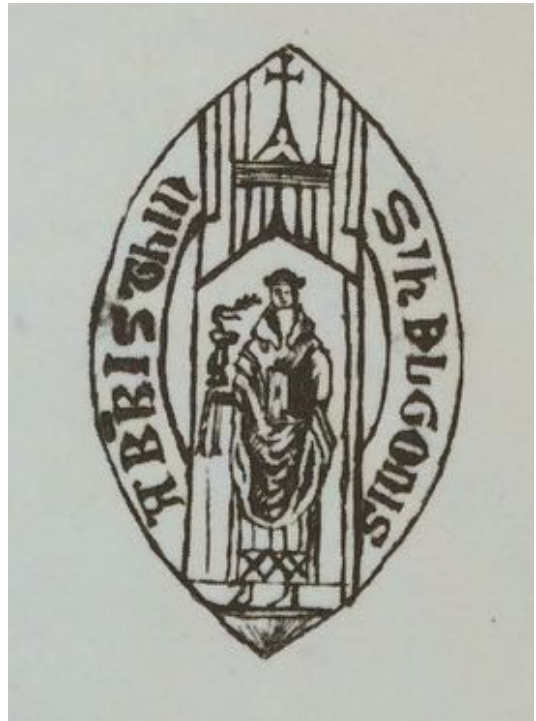
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