

Edsleskog church

– Pilgrimage and spatial power–



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Cover picture from Riksarkivet, same as fig. 13 & 14.

Abstract

During 2019–2021 the ruins of the medieval church in Edsleskog, Dalsland were excavated. Upon unearthing the church, it was concluded that it was most likely the oldest known brick building in Sweden. The church was also huge and shared many architectural similarities with contemporary cathedrals. The small hamlet of Edsleskog is located in the northern forests of Dalsland, a region that historically has been in the periphery of administration, and the church was most likely a difficult travel destination during the medieval era. The main explanation for the existence of the medieval church in Edsleskog is that it was a pilgrimage church. The church was a pilgrimage destination for the local St. Nicolaus, and it was probably built under the influence of the diocese of Skara and connected to the pilgrimage to the grave of St. Olof in Nidaros. Although, this thesis aimed to question if this was the original reason for building the medieval church in Edsleskog. To find the origin of the building this thesis analyzed the church's archeology, history and the relevant map material, and compared Edsleskog church to its neighbouring churches, the other medieval brick churches in Dalsland and other medieval pilgrimage churches. This thesis concluded that the medieval church in Edsleskog was most likely built as a pilgrimage church, but by a private agent and for the local cult. In all likelihood, the connections to the diocese of Skara and possibly the pilgrimage to Nidaros were later additions.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction & foreword

In 2019 archaeologists from the museum of Lödöse found the ruins of perhaps the oldest brick building in Sweden. This extraordinary find had been an early medieval church, in size and architecture comparable to a contemporary cathedral. As the church emerged, old local traditions of a healing well, a slayed saint and a mostly forgotten pilgrimage site were recontextualized. Thus, the mystery of why this church existed began.

One major part of this mystery was not only the building itself, but the peculiar placement of it. The church was located in Edsleskog, a small hamlet in northern Dalsland. The history of the region of Dalsland is not often discussed, and when this church was built in the twelfth and thirteenth century the area was most likely in the far periphery of the known spheres of power. The region of northern Dalsland probably served as a borderland between the Swedish and Norwegian powers. The hamlet of Edsleskog was, with the exception of the small, nearby lakes Edslan and Knarrbysjön, landlocked in forested and hilly terrain. Thus, in all likelihood, the church would have been a difficult travel destination during the medieval era. This is an unusual and difficult location to build a cathedral and the oldest brick building in Sweden.

I was born and raised in Dalsland and witnessed the excavations of the church. I remember the awe it inspired, that something this important and old existed in our forgotten region. When thinking of topics to write this thesis about, I immediately revisited this excavation and commenced my research. I learned that Edsleskog church had been a pilgrimage church, probably built by the orders of the diocese of Skara and it was possibly a part of the pilgrimage to the grave of St. Olof in Nidaros. The inconvenient placement of the church was an unfortunate product of where St. Nicolaus happened to die, or perhaps a convenient place for the diocese of Skara to establish administration in the borderlands to Norway.

There is little doubt that the medieval church in Edsleskog became intertwined with pilgrimage, the cult of St. Nicolaus and the diocese of Skara. However I think it is vital to analyze if this is the full explanation for the existence of this peculiar church. A building like Edsleskog church can reveal plenty about influences, power structures and connections in early medieval Scandinavia. The assumption that these phenomena are always tied to the administrative centre should be questioned. Thus, when asking why the oldest brick buildings in Sweden are located in the periphery, the answer might be that the periphery is more complex than previously thought.

This thesis contains seven main chapters; Chapter 1 Introduction, chapter 2 Background, chapter 3 Results & analysis, chapter 4 Discussion, chapter 5 Conclusion & summary, chapter 6

Bibliography & sources and chapter 7 Appendices. Chapter 1 presents the purpose and aims, the research history, the material, the literature, a critique of sources, clarifications and terms, the theoretical perspectives and the methodology of the thesis. Chapter 2 presents relevant background information on church history, medieval Scandinavian history, the history of church buildings, and the history of Dalsland and the churches of the region. Chapter 3 presents the results and analyses the medieval church in Edsleskog in itself and compared to neighbouring churches, brick churches and pilgrimage churches. Chapter 4 discusses the results through three main lenses: Edsleskog church in itself, Edsleskog church compared to other churches, and Edsleskog church as a theoretical pilgrimage site. Chapter 5 presents the conclusion of the thesis and summarizes the main points. Chapter 6 presents the literary sources, other sources and sources for figures. Finally, chapter 7 houses four appendices: Table of medieval letters, table of maps, table of the neighbouring medieval churches in Edsleskogs vicinity (Tössbo precinct), and a table of medieval brick churches in Dalsland.

1.2. Purpose, aims & research questions

The aim of this thesis is to find the agency and purpose behind the initial construction of the medieval church in Edsleskog. This thesis aims to study the agent or agents behind the creation of the church, its connection to pilgrimage and possibly the specific pilgrimage of St. Olof of Nidaros in Norway. This thesis also aims to study if clear criteria for what makes a pilgrimage church exist and if this is something that can be studied archaeologically.

The research questions are thus:

Was the medieval church of Edsleskog built as a pilgrimage church?

With the added questions of:

Is it possible to archaeologically state that Edsleskog church was a pilgrimage church or when it became one?

Who was the agent or agents behind Edsleskog church?

Was Edsleskog church part of the pilgrimage of St. Olof in Nidaros?

Note that the main question aims to ask if the church was originally founded and built as a pilgrimage church, and not just turned into one. It is generally clear that Edsleskog in all likelihood

was a pilgrimage church, but it is less clear if the initial intention of the church's creation was that of a pilgrimage site.

Another purpose of this text is to question the assumptions of early medieval places of power and administration. This text aims to add to the argument that early medieval boundaries and places of power were complex and sometimes difficult to identify.

1.3. Research history

1.3.1. Church history, pilgrimage, & cults in medieval Scandinavia

The history of the early Scandinavian church is often entangled in the general research of medieval Scandinavian history. The historians Dick Harrison 2002 & 2020 and Thomas Lindkvist & Maria Sjöberg 2003 explored church history through the lens of Swedish history and included church development as a part of culture, politics and societal structures. The historian Gunilla Tegengren 2015 explained the development of the church as a direct cause and structural part of how Sweden was developed as a kingdom. The archaeologist Kristina Carlsson 2007 similarly discussed the institute of the church as a tool for expressing power and borders during the medieval era. Thus, general church history is often discussed through a political and societal lens, and seldom as a strictly religious phenomena. This often results in the history of the church being discussed through a national lens, the church history of Sweden is specifically tied to Swedish history and state development. Sometimes church history is discussed through specific angles, for example the 1992 article about religious continuity by archaeologist Anne-Sofie Gräslund as a part of "Projektet Sveriges kristnande" (own trans. Project Sweden's christianization), edited by historian Bertil Nilsson. Another common angle is the church history of local areas, as seen in the 1995 text on Scanian church history by archaeologist Mats Anglert or the 2009 study on churches in Halland by historical archaeologist Ing-Marie Nilsson.

Another common angle when writing about church history is the history of the church buildings, for example the 1990 study by art historian Christian Lovén about Romanesque grand churches. Many of these texts are often archaeological studies about specific churches, for example the 2021 text about the church of Ringsted in Denmark by archaeologist Thomas Bertelsen, the 2000 text about the church of St. Elin/Helena in Skövde by philologist Gunnar Linde & archeologist Barbro Westrin, and the 1982 report on Maglarp church in Scania done by archaeologist Barbro Sundnér. The study of church buildings is often related to general building archaeology and the study of historical buildings. The history of medieval buildings and the development of new architecture, materials and techniques are discussed in works like the 2013 book by art historian Jan Svanberg and the 1985 book by author Jack Lindgren. The significance, symbolism and landscape context of

historical buildings are also studied, for example in the 2006 & 2011 books by historical archaeologist Martin Hansson and the 1998 text written by architect Thomas Thiis-Evensen. The historical archaeologist Jes Wienberg specifically analyzed the significance and symbolism of round churches in 2014. A common view in studies about church buildings is that they are often early examples of new techniques and materials, and that the designs have political and spiritual significance.

Texts about pilgrimage, saints and the history of the Swedish church are often made by or influenced by the Swedish state church. Sometimes these works are written as academic, theological studies and not necessarily as historical or archaeological ones. Examples of this are the 1995 pilgrimage guide made by the bishops of Sweden edited by authors Hans Bauer and Margareta Widegren, the 1999 text about Swedish saints by theologian Katarina Johansson, the 1999 book about Swedish church history by theologian Sven-Erik Pernler, the 1983 text about Swedish saints by theologian Tryggve Lundén, and the 1997 book about the church of St. Olof in Scania by the priest Nils-Arvid Bringéus. More historical and archaeological works about cult, saints and pilgrimage are often about specific locations or phenomena, for example numismatist Monica Golabiewski Lannbys 1992 text about the holy springs in Ödetofta and archaeologist Lars Andersson 1989 text about Scandinavian pilgrimage badges. Thus, church history is often discussed through a broad lens from a theological or political angle, or from a narrow lens from an archaeological angle.

1.3.2. Medieval Dalsland & its churches

Some of the research that discusses medieval Dalsland and the church in Edsleskog are included in works about the history of Västergötland, Värmland or western Sweden. For example, in the 1997 anthology about churches in Värmland and Dalsland art historian Anders Åman briefly discussed the ecclesiastical history of Dalsland. Archeologist Rune Ekre mentioned the holy spring in Edsleskog in the 1991 anthology about the county of Älvsborg. Archaeologist Hans Andersson referenced the phenomenon of Edsleskog church and market in the 1997 collective work about the county of Älvsborg edited by Mimi Håkanson.

Some studies are specifically about the history of Dalsland, like the 2004 book by archaeologist Mats Hellgren and geologist Leif Johansson about the prehistory of the region. Another example is the 1983 book about the regional names in Dalsland by linguist and local historian Erland Rosell. A vital source for the history of the region is the 1996 compilation of textual sources regarding Dalsland called "Dalslands diplomatarium" by linguist and language historian Per-Axel Wiktorsson and linguist and latin translator Eva Odelman. An important work about the history of Dalsland, although one that is not utilized in this thesis, is the book "Dalsland historia" from 2018 by

historian Dick Harrison. The choice not to include this source was in service to keep the information about the history of Dalsland short and relevant to Edsleskog church, but the book has been duly studied.

The churches of Dalsland are studied through the project “Sockenkyrkorna. Kulturarv och bebyggelsehistoria”. The project generally took place between 1996 and 2001 and aimed to study every parish church in Sweden from its earliest history to the 1950s in a comparative manner (Dahlberg, Lindahl, Sjöström & Sporrang 2008, 8). The text about Dalsland, being edited by the cultural geographer Birgitta Roeck Hansen, was released as an anthology in 2003.

Another text about the churches in Dalsland is the 1984 book by author Effe Runelid. Runelid's text is one of few that provide an interpretation of why Edsleskog church exists, claiming that the church was built by the diocese of Skara to be a pilgrimage site and to control the area (Runelid 1984, 132–133). An important work to mention is the study of medieval baptismal fonts in Dalsland from 1959 by the art historian Sven Axel Hallbäck. Although this text was not used in this thesis, it is a significant study when discussing church history in the region.

The interest to study the history of the medieval church in Edsleskog can be traced as far back as the 1672 speech by student and later rector Nils Hesselgren called “Lovtal över Hesselkog”¹ (own trans. “Eulogy over Hesselkog”). The speech described the medieval church but provided unclear answers about its history. In 1718 the student, and son of the previous individual, Lars Hesselgren wrote a dissertation about Dalsland. The dissertation generally included the same notions about the medieval church in Edsleskog as the previously mentioned eulogy. The local historian Torsten Fransson compiled three volumes of the history of the parish of Edsleskog, the anthology explaining everything from the geology, nature and history of the region. Part one, which is specifically used in this thesis, was published in 2003.

Most of the archaeological knowledge about Edsleskog church originates from the 2019– 2021 excavation of the building done by Lödöse museum. The resulting report was written by archaeologists Anton Lazarides, Anna Beckman and Christian Mühlenbock and published in 2023. The same authors also wrote three articles related to the report and excavation, one published in 2020 and two in 2023. A related article about the numismatics of the medieval church was published in 2024 by Christian Mühlenbock and the numismatist Kenneth Jonsson.

¹ Note that the only full copy of the eulogy that was found originates from the website for the local historical society of Edsleskog. But all references to the speech done by other sources suggest that the content is accurate <<https://www.hembygd.se/edsleskog/plats/314102/text/58162>>

An earlier excavation of the medieval church in Edsleskog occurred in 1947, led by the antiquarian Nils-Ivan Svensson. The 1947 excavation was limited to a few test pits and yielded little results other than confirming the general size and material of the church (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 A, 3). The excavation concluded that the church had been about 48 meters long and 29 meters broad, and that the nave had three aisles (Hellgren & Johansson 2004, 164).

No excavations of the church occurred between 1947 and 2019, primarily because the currently used graveyard is placed above the ruins. The 2019–2021 excavation by Lödöse museum primarily aimed to confirm the age of the church, due to the scientific value of potentially identifying the oldest brick building in Sweden. The resulting report is one of the few texts that provide an interpretation of the site, suggesting that Edsleskog church was built by the diocese of Skara as a pilgrimage church and to administratively control the area (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 A, 1–15).

According to Lazarides & Mühlenbock, archaeologist Rune Ekre excavated the holy spring in Edsleskog in 1989–1990 (Lazarides & Mühlenbock 2020, 18–19). Lazarides & Mühlenbock remarked in 2020 that the 2019–2021 excavation of the church was inspired by the works of archaeologist Jan Johansson, who had studied the medieval churches in Dalsland and pushed for an excavation of Edsleskog church (Lazarides & Mühlenbock 2020, 13).

Thus, to summarize, research about the history of Dalsland, the churches of the region and Edsleskog church is limited and the archaeological material is generally derived from one excavation.

1.4. Presentation of material

1.4.1. The archaeological material

The archaeological material mainly originates from the 2019–2021 excavation by Lödöse museum. In general the excavation yielded few artefacts, only 617 registered finds.² Although most of the finds were registered in groups, thus there are more individual finds than 617. The main categories of find were brick, glass, coins and nails. The excavation documented 15 graves in Edsleskog church from several different periods (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 A, 1–30) (Lödöse museum, unpublished list of finds given 27-02-26).

The information about the 2019–2021 excavation was provided by the report “Den mäktiga kyrkan i Edsleskog” from 2023 by archaeologist Anton Lazarides, Anna Beckman and Christian Mühlenbock of Lödöse museum. Some of the archeological information was sourced from the

² The list of finds is currently unpublished, it was given by Lödöse museum to author 27-02-26

accompanying articles by the same team, as well as the above mentioned list of finds. The report and articles provide a floor plan of the church and a graph of the coins found in the church (Fig. 4 & 5). The sources did not provide many section drawings or pictures of the material, and the few that exist were not included due to the constraints of the thesis.

1.4.2. The historical material

The main historical material are medieval letters from SDHK Riksarkivet, spanning from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century. The letters are documented in Appendix A in chronological order, detailing the ages, senders, receivers, and contents of the letters. The selection of the letters were solely motivated by the content mentioning Edsleskog.

This thesis refers to the 1583 inventory of the churches in the diocese of Skara, which include the church in Edsleskog, published and commented on by Sven Lampa in 1912. This thesis also refers to the 1672 eulogy “Lovtal över Hesselskog” by Nils Hesselgren, written down in “Encomium Hesselskogie Dalensium”. The last historical source is the 1718 dissertation about Dalsland called “Dissertatio Academica de Dalia” by Lars Hesselgren. The dissertation was originally written in Latin, but the version referenced in this thesis is the Swedish translation published in 1968 by Latin scholars Daniel Bergsten and Sven Blomgren.

1.4.3. The map material

The map material was acquired from Lantmäteriet “Historiska kartor” and Riksarkivet. Only maps from the seventeenth century were selected for this study. Some of the selected maps are not exactly dated but were created during the seventeenth century. If a relevant map had a fully unknown age, it was not selected. This selection was partly done to keep the amount of maps manageable, and partly due to relevance. The aim was to find the maps that could most accurately portray the medieval landscape, which makes the oldest maps most relevant. The maps were also selected if they in any capacity portrayed Edsleskog or the surrounding landscape.

The information about the map material is located in Appendix B, catalogued chronologically and with the names that Riksarkivet or Lantmäteriet used. The appendix presents the ages, creators, and sources of the maps. The appendix also informs how the maps depicts Edsleskog church and the surrounding landscape. A map of Edsleskog and the surrounding landscape from 2026 was also included in this study and the appendix as comparable material.

Note that the term “Älvsborg” is referenced on a few maps. Älvsborg was the name of the county that Dalsland, the western parts of Västergötland and parts of Bohuslän were a part of since the

seventeenth century (Asker 1997, 9). The county was dissolved in 1998 (Håkanson 1997, 175) (Fig. 1). “Skaraborg” is also referenced on the maps, which was the county that contained major parts of today’s Västergötland (Folkräkningar(Sveriges befolkning), Digitala forskarsalen, Riksarkivet 2026).



(Fig.1. The yellow coloring shows the 1890 area for the county of Älvsborg. The northern part is today's Dalsland. The southern area are parts of the modern Bohuslän and Västergötland. Folkräkningar(Sveriges befolkning), Digitala forskarsalen, Riksarkivet 2026.)

1.5. Literature

A major part of the literature used in this thesis contains information about Swedish medieval history and ecclesiastical history, like Harrison 2002, Lovén 1990, and Lindkvist & Sjöberg 2003. Some of these texts are either historical, theological or archaeological studies about pilgrimage, cults or church buildings, for example Andersson 1989, Anglert 1995, Bringéus 1997, Dahlberg 2002, Golabiewski Lannby 1992, Lundén 1983, Nilsson 2009, and Håkanson et al. 1997. A significant part of the literature about church history, pilgrimage and cults have a connection, or have been written by, the Swedish state church. This group can be interpreted as theological studies and are generally supported by academic texts. This includes Bauer & Widegren 1995, Johansson 1999, Pernler 1999, and Linde & Westrin 2000.

A significant part of the literature in this thesis is about Dalsland and the region's churches. This includes the book by Runelid 1984 and the anthology by Roeck Hansen et al. 2003, especially the text written about medieval churches in Dalsland by art historian Ann Catherine Bonnier. Books about the history of Dalsland also include Rosell's 1983 text about the regional names, Hellgren & Johansson 2004 study about the prehistoric finds in Dalsland, and Wiktorsson & Odelman's 1996 collection of the historical sources that mentions the region. Some of the literature about the history of Dalsland discusses the region in conjunction with Västergötland or Värmland, like Aarsrud et al. 1991, Bredin et al. 1997, and Ernvik 1983. There are a few texts about Edsleskog and the church, one example being Fransson 2003. The 2023 report from the 2019—2021 excavation and the accompanying articles by Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock are significant texts about the church in Edsleskog. Some historical material could be included as vital literature about Edsleskog, for example the 1672 eulogy by Nils Hesselgren, the 1718 dissertation by Lars Hesselgren and the 1912 publication of the 1583 inventory of the diocese of Skara by Sven Lampa.

Lastly, some of the literature were selected for the theoretical or methodological perspectives presented in the texts, for example Carlsson 2007, Eriksdotter, Gardelin & Wallin 1998, Hansson 2006 & 2011, Thiis-Evensen 1998, Janken Myrdal 2012, Tegengren 2015, and Nordin 2021.

1.6. Critique of sources

It can be argued that sources written or influenced by the Swedish state church might not be objective due to them possibly being written from a religious perspective instead of a scientific one. There might also be a bias to make church traditions seem more established than they are. Several of these sources are also not academically cited, and have a tendency to claim certainty about facts that are probable or possible. Thus these sources have been used sparingly in this thesis, and with great care. Examples of this include Bauer & Widegren et al. 1995, Johansson 1999, and Bredin et al. 1997. The text by Bauer & Widegren 1995 is also written in collaboration with the Swedish association of tourism, which might make the source more prone to idealize and simplify history. This thesis references a text about pilgrimage from Bauer & Widengren et al. written by bishop Bengt Wadensjö, who might write from a religious and modern perspective since the book is a guide for modern pilgrimage. The text references historical phenomena with an unknown amount of academic sourcing. The studies by Lundén 1983, Linde & Westrin 2000, and Pernler 1999 might also be more theological than historical but they are academically written and sourced.

Sources that write about Dalsland or Edsleskog as a part of a greater context, like Aarsrud et al. 1991 or Bredin et al. 1997, might simplify the history of the region to fit the narrative of the work. For example if Dalsland is presented as having the same general history as Västergötland, the possible differences between the history of Dalsland and Västergötland might not be considered.

Due to lack of sources about Dalsland or Edsleskog this thesis contains a lot of analogies. Many sources were selected as comparative works. This includes general history and ecclesiastical history, for example Anglert 1995, Lovén 1990, Harrison 2002, Nilsson 2009, and Lindkvist & Sjöberg 2003. This also applies to Bringéus 1997 who wrote about the pilgrimage church St. Olof in Scania, which was used as a possible analogy for the church in Edsleskog. The history of the region of Värmland written by Ernvik 1983 was also used as a possible parallel to the history of Dalsland. The text by Golabiewski Lannby from 1992 about the holy spring in Ödetofta was used as an analogy for the holy spring in Edsleskog. It is important to acknowledge that these analogies and parallels were carefully selected and analyzed, but there is always a risk that they are irrelevant or too dissimilar.

Sources that are used for theory or method can be criticized for paralleling phenomena that could be dissimilar, for example, Carlsson 2007, Thiis-Evensen 1998, Eriksdotter et al. 1998, Hansson 2006 & 2011, Myrdal 2012, Nordin 2021, Gräslund 1992, Mann 1986, Hodder 1999, Tegengren 2015, and Renfrew & Bahn 2020. The theoretical and methodological perspectives that these sources present could possibly not apply to the case of Edsleskog church, but the ones selected for this study are generally broad and established.

Some of the literature about Dalsland and the region's churches are written by local patriots, like possibly Rosell 1983 and Fransson 2003, which can be detrimental to the interpretation of Dalsland and the importance of the region. Arguably, the text by Håkanson et al. 1997 might also be interpreted as patriotic, since the book was made by the county of Älvsborg to explain its own history. Although the authors' statuses as patriots might also be positive, since they might have had better access to local information and opinions. The 1672 eulogy by Nils Hesselgren and the 1718 dissertation by Lars Hesselgren are good examples since they are patriotic and romanticise the church in Edsleskog, but contain information only the local population could provide. Also, for the aims of this thesis, opinions about the church are also an important source of information. Also, it should be noted that the 1718 dissertation was originally written in Latin, and that the text that was read for this study is a translation. Translations are always interpretations and could thus be faulty.

Another example of a text written by a local patriot is the book by Runelid 1984 about the churches of Dalsland. Sjöström & Dahlberg 2003 note that Runelid originated from the region and was not a researcher (Sjöström & Dahlberg 2003, 9). This does not necessarily signify that the text is unreliable, although the book has a tendency to focus as much on local traditions and stories as archaeological and historical sources. To write about local traditions and stories is a valid perspective, but should be analyzed heavily as factual sources. Runelid 1984 is often featured in the

results chapter, but is compared to the Roeck Hansen et al. 2003 study of the churches of Dalsland. If the two sources disagree, Roeck Hansen et al. takes precedence. All information from sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth century texts or oral traditions that are featured in Runelid will be described as “possible” or “traditions”.

The 2003 anthology by Roeck Hansen et al. about the churches in Dalsland is another main source that was used for the results in this study. The text is part of “Sockenkyrkoprojektet”, a project that aimed to research and compile the information on all the churches in every region of Sweden. This source takes precedence over Runelid 1984 in the results, mainly because it is an academic study with more transparent aims, references and sources. Also, since the anthology is a part of a grander project it might be more objective.

The medieval letters referenced in this study were translated, either from Latin or older Swedish, by Riksarkivet. Also, in some cases rather complex ecclesiastical and juridical words had to be translated from Swedish to English. As mentioned above, translations are always interpretations and could be faulty. Especially since many of these letters were thus translated twice, once by Riksarkivet to modern Swedish and then to English for the study. Although this is not a major issue, since the exact usage of certain words are not essential for the results of this thesis. The work by Wiktorsson & Odelman 1996 is a compilation and translation of historical sources, and might be critiqued for possible mistranslations or misinterpretations.

The archeological material is mainly provided from the excavation of the medieval church in Edsleskog 2019–2021 by Lödöse museum, and thus the report and accompanying articles. Most of the results from this excavation are unpublished, for example the osteological report, the list of finds and several scientific reports. The excavation report and articles are thus in some cases second hand sources, although mostly done by the same team. Also, the site could not be fully excavated since the church is placed under the current graveyard, which makes the results incomplete. Also, some of the dating might be worth questioning since several of the ^{14}C results were quite broad. The church, as well as the surrounding area, are not well researched except for this excavation, which gives the archaeological material less comparative data (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 A, 1–13) (Fig. 2). Also note that since the ground above the church is used as a graveyard, some stratigraphy, contexts, finds and distribution patterns might be destroyed due to digging and graves (Jonsson & Mühlenbock 2024, 5–6). The archeological results are supported by the 1583 inventory of the church by the diocese of Skara, which is a good source on how Edsleskog church might have appeared at the time. But the source should be analyzed under the assumption that it is a representation of Edsleskog church during the sixteenth century, and not a perfect representation of the medieval church (Inventarium för kyrkorna i Skara stift 1583, 38).



(Fig. 2. The black outlines show the placements of trenches in the excavations of Edsleskog church 2019–2021, photo by Lödöse museum. North is up. Note the focus on the walls and outline of the church, leaving considerable parts of the interior unexcavated. Mühlenbock, Lazarides & Beckman 2023.)

The seventeenth century maps are often geographically incorrect or drawn slightly skewed (Appendix B). Although the maps were not used as sources for correctness on geography, but mainly for the depiction of the church and the surrounding landscape. But sometimes, when for example discussing the roads, accuracy is important. The possibility that the maps can be faulty were thus under consideration when analyzing the material. The aim was not to locate exactly where the road went, but to study between which locations roads were drawn, which is generally more difficult to draw incorrectly.

Another critique of the map material is that a lot of the maps were drawn by the same person, Kettil Claeson Felterus, which might imply that they are different results from the same study. Felterus was from Dalsland and served as the official surveyor and cartographer of the region, so the maps made by him are most likely quite accurate since he knew the area (Gustafson, 2026, SBL). Also, a lot of the maps, especially 007 a, b, c, and e, are probably drawn from on the same survey based on the contents and naming conventions, but all are present for methodological continuity

(14A Västergötland och Dalsland, generalkartor”“Sveriges topografiska kartor 1580–1990” Riksarkivet) (Appendix B).

A general but important critique of the map material, the historical sources and the archaeological sources is that there is always a bias towards what survives and can be accessed. There is always a possibility that a previously unknown source or a new source will change the interpretation of this church.

1.7. Clarifications & terms

This thesis is about Scandinavian medieval history and thus uses the periodization term “medieval” often. There are many ways to define and periodize the medieval era due to what the criteria are. The argument can range from what the definition of the medieval era is, when it starts and ends, and what the internal periodization is. Sometimes the Scandinavian medieval period is split into two periods, “early medieval” and “late medieval”, and sometimes three after the European model; “Early-”, “High-” and “Late medieval”.

One definition of the medieval period is that it took place 1050–1550 with two subperiods, early medieval being 1050–1250 and late medieval being 1250–1550. This periodization acknowledges the possibility of a “high medieval period” 1250–1350, but chooses to ignore it. This presented periodization is mostly convenient for church history, since it encapsulates the Romanesque and Gothic architectural periods (Nilsson 2009, 13). This thesis has followed the same argument, and thus defined the medieval period as about 1050–1550, with the “early medieval period” being 1050–1250 and the “late medieval period” being 1250–1550. The exact year something occurred has been stated when possible, but when needed the terms “early medieval” and “late medieval” were used.

There are some ecclesiastical, archaeological and juridical words that were translated from Swedish and certain choices were made on how they would be presented to best communicate the original meaning. The words are written in Swedish to contain their original meaning, and then the author's own translation is added in parentheses. Some examples of words that require some explanation for their translation are: “Domarringar” (own trans. Stone circles), a type of grave typically from the Iron age that was formed by a circle of stones (Domarring, 2026, NE), and “Fångstgropar” (own trans. hunting pits), pits dug to entrap animals (Fångstgrop 2026, NE). Another example is “Prostskäppa”(own trans. tax in kind) which was a historical parish tax in goods or service, often to support building, renovating or housing when for example the bishop visited (Jonsson & Mühlenbock 2024, 5). Another word that should be explained is “Biskopsgärdet”(own trans. bishop tax), which was a tax specifically taken by the bishop

(Förvaltningshistorisk ordbok, 2026, "Biskopsgängård"). Also "kyrkohegman", pieces of land given to the church (NE, 2026, Kyrkohegman), "prebendehemman", land gifted to an institution to provide income, (Förvaltningshistorisk ordbok, 2026, Prebendehemman), and "mantal"(units for taxation) (Förvaltningshistorisk ordbok, 2026, Mantal) are words that were used in this text.

It is also worth mentioning that many of these words were originally translated from Latin texts, and are thus twice interpreted. Since the author does not read latin, the original meaning of the word cannot be fully reached. One such word is "indulgence" and "letter of indulgence". This term was required to be translated for the interpretation of letter 388(SDHK 388), which was written in Latin and used the word "indulgentiam". The Swedish translation and interpretation used the word "avlat". This study thus chose to translate this to the English "indulgence" with the motivation of the word meaning "deliverance of sin" or "get rid of punishment of sin"(Cambridge dictionary).

1.8. Theoretical perspectives

In her 2015 book about the medieval colonisation of the northern parts of Sweden, historian Gunilla Tegengren discusses territory and the control of territory when there is no unified central power or state. Tegengren argues that power over territory in this situation stems from a legal argument, that an agent controlled the area by imposing their laws. Specifically from the thirteenth century forward, power over territory came from organisational agency over areas and the land. This organisational power often stemmed from the collaboration of several agents, for example the monarch and the church. The organisational and administrative agency of the church, like for example the ability to create dioceses, were ultimately a show of power over the landscape and the population. Thus, Tegengren argues that the establishment of administrative and legal control of an area, often with the goal to tax and benefit from the inhabitants income, is a form of colonisation (Tegengren 2015, 9–17).

In her text about agency and power in western Sweden during the eleventh to the fourteenth century, archaeologist Kristina Carlsson 2007 discusses how agents can establish power over a landscape through placing of a building. These buildings were often big, with expensive decorations and materials and advanced technical details to show presence in the landscape, wealth and connections. Building an impressive structure, especially an administratively important one, was a good way to show dominance over a landscape and, before clear borders, show who controls the area. But the reverse relationship is also important to consider, the practice of tying politically powerful agents to a building to give it more agency over the landscape. One example of this might have been early churches in Scandinavia. Possibly, the institution of the church did not have much power and agency in the establishing phases of Christendom in Scandinavia. The early medieval

church building might not have been as dominating in a landscape as it would become. Church buildings were thus often tied to elite families or politically powerful individuals. In this case, the elite give agency to a building through social, economical and political power. This practice might have developed into the relationship between royal power and the church in the late medieval period. Churches also contain international and spiritual power, since even though they might be connected to private agents they still represent the religion and the presence of God. Thus, establishing a church in a landscape is also to establish an international and divine power (Carlsson 2007, 19–24).

The terms “power” and “agency” are vital to define for this study. “Power” in this context is defined as material wealth, as well as control over people and the landscape. Someone with power can enact political as well as personal control over people, through administrative or economic means. The ability to control land and its population is especially relevant for this thesis definition of power. “Power” might also be defined as control over ideas, politics and religious beliefs. The most useful definition of “power” for this thesis is a combination of all mentioned criteria. “Power” is political, religious, administrative and economic control over the landscape, the yield of the landscape and people in it (Carlsson 2007, 19).

Another definition of “power” that was utilized is sociologist Michael Mann’s exploration of “societal power”, partially to further develop the complexity of the term but also to explore the changing notion of what “power” meant in medieval Europe. “Societal power” can be argued to stem from four factors. The first factor is ideological power, the ability to control social norms as well as the aesthetics and traditions of a society to shape how people view and act in the world. The second factor is economical power, one can gain power by being a part of the higher social class and being able to control the social organization and the economy. The third factor is military power, the ability to organize a physical force and control violence. The fourth and last factor is political power, which can be defined as both the ability to control one’s own territory as well as affect the world outside it. Mann argues that the definition “power” changed over time in medieval Europe. In the early medieval period “power” stemmed from the ability to tie interactive networks based on economic, militaristic and ideological control. In the later medieval period, territorial and political control over territories were more established, partially due to the aid of the institution of the church. “Power” was tied to the building of the state, which provided a unified ideological and economic identity (Mann 1986, 22–446).

“Agency” can be defined as the ability or inability to control or affect the world, often by the individual or the “agent”. An “agent” is someone with “agency”, thus someone who can to various degrees make their own decisions and change circumstances based upon that decision. Notably this “agent” can be an individual person, but can also be social structures. The ability or inability to

enact agency for the individual agent is connected to social structures and context. In the case of this thesis, “agency” also applies to material engagement, the ability or inability to affect the physical world and landscape through one's actions (Renfrew & Bahn 2020, 503).

The placements of important buildings have historically been used to control the landscape, and by extension its population, since they symbolise the power of the agents. The control of land due to establishments of buildings thus serves as a form of colonisation (Hansson 2006, 129–139). An agent might also control the landscape by shaping it around the building, for example constructing roads leading to it (Hansson 2011, 187).

Architect Thomas Thiis-Evensen discusses the architectural design of buildings of power and generally concludes that communication of power is dependent on the viewer, but that there are some elements that are common. He finds that buildings of power, whether political, religious or both, often hold similar elements like size, privacy, weight, symmetry, verticality and distance. The weight, size, symmetry and verticality of a building are all elements that provide a powerful presence. The verticality is often important for religious buildings since it signifies a closeness to the sky and often thus the divine. These architectural elements display ability and skills, as well as the importance of the building by being overwhelming in the landscape. The distance to and privacy of a building controls how to approach the construction and how much “personal space” the building seems to have. This gives the building its own agency (Thiis-Evensen 1998, 5–14).

Archeologist Mats Anglert discusses the placement of churches in the landscape. He argues that churches are both dominant factors in an area, a centralized point that shapes the settlement and communications around it, as well as being the constant subject to a changing landscape and the settlement it belongs to. A church might be placed with specific intention, close to power, on meaningful topography, or on a location with pre-Christian importance. A church might also be moved due to settlements, roads or powers moving. Churches simultaneously have agency over the landscape, whilst being the subject to whatever the landscape requires (Anglert 1995, 17–18).

Churches' relationships to pre-Christian cult or pre-Christian places of importance are a theoretical perspective that should be discussed. Archaeologist Anne-Sofie Gräslund argues that there are many examples of churches being placed on important pre-Christian sites, but no true connections can be drawn between church placements and places of cult. The assumption should not be that every church is placed to replace an old pre-Christian cult location. The broader and probably more correct theoretical perspective is settlement continuity and that important locations tend to stay important. The religious shift to Christianity was slow and it would probably be incorrect to assume that the new religion perfectly replaced pre-Christian cults. There are significant connections between pre-Christian places of importance, both religious and non religious, and

churches. There is also possible continuity between places of burial. Thus to summarize, continuity of landscape is very probable, churches are often built on places of pre-Christian importance. But it is not possible to draw a clear parallel between a church and a pre-Christian location, nor assume that continuation of landscape is always correct (Gräslund 1992, 129–147).

To summarise, colonisation of land could happen through landscape agency and administrative power, landscape agency might be provided through the establishment of buildings of power and the church building is a building of power. An important relationship exists between buildings of power, landscape dominance and powerful agents. Lastly, some continuity of the landscape is probable but should not be assumed.

1.9. Methodology

Historian Janken Myrdal argues for the value of the “källpluralistiska metoden” (own trans. source pluralistic method) where the usage and comparison of several different groups of source material can create a stronger result. This method is useful for topics that are difficult to research, especially from only one perspective, and thus requires several comparative sources to be approached. If several different groups of sources agree on similar results, then the result is more certain.

Although, if the groups of sources disagree, then the topic again becomes unanswerable. The strength of using this method is thus that if several independent sources agree then the result is most likely to be correct, which is also a foundational factor in general criticism of sources.

Although, the ability to choose material might inspire a search for wanted results, instead of being forced to study all of the aspects of one group of sources. One might choose to select a certain part of the material that best fits the goal of the study, only to accidentally reject material that would challenge it. To combat this, source criticism must be thoroughly applied to all material as well as a strong motivation for the choice of material. Also, when using the method it is important to acknowledge unchosen material, as well as applying transparency when material contradicts each other or is unclear. Myrdal proposes to apply the fundamental source criticism that are used in historical research, which is temporal and spatial closeness to the topic, tendency of the source, and dependency of the source. Although he acknowledges that these criteria should be adapted in other subjects outside of history (Myrdal 2012, 13–19).

Anglert 1995 discusses the source pluralism that is needed for landscape archaeology. Since landscape archaeology is the study of the entire landscape, with all its different components, source pluralism is per definition needed. One needs to study archaeology as well as the topology, etymology and geography (Anglert 1995, 19).

In archaeology, especially historical archaeology, the pluralism of sources and the comparison of archaeological material and historical material/textual material, is the common methodology. Archeologist Jonas Monié Nordin expands on source pluralism and describes methodological and material triangulation. Material triangulation is to study three groups of source material, most often textual, archaeological and artistic sources, to find a common result. Nordin also expresses that the use of methodological triangulation in historical archaeology is important due to the developing importance of the landscape and the spatial components of archaeology. As acknowledged above, landscape archaeology requires source pluralism (Nordin 2021, 11–28).

Thus, the main methodology of this thesis can be described as source pluralism applied with methodological and material triangulation. The three groups of material sources that were used were textual/historical material, archeological material and map material. The motivation for the last group is due to the landscape archeological components of this study, since Edsleskog church's relationship to the surrounding landscape is a vital factor for understanding the building. The maps also filled the role of the often used artistic source material, since the maps depicts the church and its surroundings. The selection of material for each group was not complex. For the textual/historical material everything that mentioned Edsleskog church was studied, mostly within the medieval period due to relevance. The same general motivation applied to the selection of the map material, the oldest maps that depicted Edsleskog were chosen. All of the archeological material that could be found were included. Thus, since few sources on the topic exist, the potential problem of selectiveness to support a wanted result was avoided.

Researchers in historical buildings Gunhild Eriksdotter, Gunilla Gardelin & Pia Wallin provide three main methods when analyzing historical buildings; typology, stratigraphy and technology. The typological angle in building archaeology is defined as identifying the age and type of a building due to architecture and art. Typology can not only aid with dating but can provide information on the different phases of the building, especially when implemented on churches and the typologies of Romanesque and Gothic architecture. Although it is noted that typology is limited, especially for buildings, since when trying to date a building using only this method, transitional styles and deviations are common and might hinder exact dating. It is more probable that typology will bring an approximate answer. Thus usage of technical methodology, analysing the building technique and the material, might be more helpful. This method specifically applies to brick, both as a building material and a technology. The stratigraphical method might be to analyze both the horizontal stratigraphy, the phases of the building, or the vertical stratigraphy, the result of a potential excavation that has been performed in or outside the building. The stratigraphical method, both the vertical and horizontal, can create a relative biography of the building (Eriksdotter et al. 1998, 70–72).

This thesis also uses a lot of analogy and comparison, simply because there are few sources about Edsleskog church, medieval Dalsland and its churches. Archeologist Ian Hodder defines the use of archaeological analogy and comparison. Archeological analogy is, in its simplest form, the assumption that two phenomena that are similar in some aspects can be similar in others, and can thus be compared. If an archeologist has knowledge about a phenomena, and another more unknown phenomena has similarities, then the researcher can make the assumption that the more unknown phenomena might share more similarities. Hodder remarks that this method is mostly viable when comparing physical and natural characteristics, since one can make assumptions based on how nature should work. But assumptions become more complicated to make when it involves human culture, since even if two cultures have similarities, they can have vastly different influences and developments that make them difficult to use as analogies to each other. Temporal and spatial closeness are important for a functional analogy, and the possibility for cultural transfer between the two phenomena that can signify that they have similar influences. But Hodder remarks that analogy should always be done with care, since even if these criteria are met there is always the possibility that two phenomena are not full analogies. Two phenomena that seem very similar can have different meanings. Also, the identification of what is a “difference” and what is a “similarity” is an interpretation, and this interpretation can be based on faulty criteria (Hodder 1999, 45–49). This thesis aimed to compare phenomena that are close in cultural influence, space and age. Analogies are used for comparison and theorizing, but with the acknowledged possibility that the similarities and differences might be more complex.

To summarise, the core methodology is source pluralism by analyzing archaeological material, historical material and map material in conjunction with the practice of material triangulation. The basics of building archaeology, landscape archeology, and interpretation through analogy were also applied through the study.

2. Background

2.1. Church history, pilgrimage, & cults in medieval Scandinavia

2.1.1. Church history of medieval Scandinavia

The Christianization of what would become Sweden, and the rest of Scandinavia, was a long process that started around the eighth century and that generally had taken hold by the eleventh century. Christianization was not only a religious shift in Scandinavia, but also a tool for establishing power. The christianization of Scandinavia is in direct relation to the start of the formation of the kingdoms of Sweden, Norway and Denmark, which before had been generally undefined and local spheres of powers and not truly united kingdoms. Olof Skötkonung is often identified as the first king of Sweden, which at the time was the area by the lakes Vättern, Vänern and Mälaren. At the end of the tenth century and beginning of the eleventh century the growing kingdoms, the establishment of Christianity and the competition against the neighbouring kingdoms grew in relation to each other. The region of Västergötland in Sweden was early to fully embrace Christianity and Olof Skötkonung had himself baptised in the regional church of Husaby. This made his influence over the area stronger than it seemed to be in other parts of the new kingdom, which were generally more resistant towards the new religion (Harrison 2002, 82–90). Early churches could be built by private agents, often local landowners and rich individuals who showed their personal connection to the building by being buried in an honorific place in the church (Anglert 1995, 15).

Sweden became its own archdiocese under Rome and the Pope in 1164. Although Sweden was under the Pope's jurisdiction, it was generally not in much contact with Rome and its rules until about 1220. From 1220 and onwards especially the dioceses of Skara and Linköping started to get more direct influence from the Pope, the then bishop of Skara personally went to Rome in the years 1220–1221. Sweden was, during the 1220s, in a period when the dynasties of Erik from Västergötland and Sverker from Östergötland fought for the throne. During the years 1219–1222 Johan Sverkersson was the king. During the reign of Johan, and the simultaneous new connection with the Pope, Sweden started a wave of crusades towards the east. After Johan's reign ended in 1222 a period of political strife followed, which ended with the battle of Sparssätra 1247. The consequences of this became the rise of Birger Jarl, which would eventually lead to his family becoming the royal dynasty in 1250 to 1364 instead of the dynasties of Erik and Sverker. Birger Jarl immediately changed the system of taxes. This upheaval of established tax laws, that in many ways were strongly interconnected with the church, made the Pope intervene. What followed was the meeting in Skänninge 1247, which reformed the Swedish church. The new Swedish church was now formally under the Pope, and was not controlled by regional or royal rulings. Sweden was now under the full organisation of the Catholic church and its expansion (Tegengren 2015, 1–5). One

of these organisational laws that were established in the thirteenth century was the rules for the canonisation of saints. Before 1234 “canon” saints were established by the local bishops, and the rules and regulations of who could become a saint were more unclear. After 1234 only the Pope could declare sainthood and had stricter standards on what a saint was (Lundén 1983, 7).

2.1.2. Church buildings in medieval Scandinavia

The periodization and design of the church building is its own manner of research. One important factor in the dating and periodization of church buildings is building material, since different materials were generally used in different periods. The oldest churches were generally made of wood, later to be rebuilt into stone. Brick as a building material appeared in the end of the twelfth century in Scandinavia, generally imported by Benedictine monks. The oldest known brick building in Scandinavia is St. Bendst church in Ringsted, Denmark, a Benedictine monastic church from 1161. In Scania, Gumlösa church was built by archbishop Absalon in 1191, making it the oldest brick building in today's Sweden, but then Denmark. The oldest known brick buildings in Sweden, except now Edsleskog, are St. Maria in Sigtuna and the monastery in Sko, both being built in the early thirteenth century. To build in brick did not become common in Sweden until the end of the thirteenth century when many of the churches by lake Mälaren were rebuilt in the material. Notably, the churches in Västergötland were not generally rebuilt in brick and often continued being built in stone. The churches that were rebuilt in brick were generally tied to a bishop, like cathedrals, or monasteries, like the ones in Vadstena and Varnhem. Brick was never a popular material in Norway. The early bricklayers in Scandinavia were either hired from a different country, for example St. Bendst in Ringsted was built by Italian bricklayers and Uppsala cathedral was built in the late thirteenth century by French bricklayers, or they were stonemasons who had learned how to work with brick. Local specialization in the craft appeared at the end of the medieval period (Svanberg 2013, 29–95).

The church of St. Maria in Sigtuna, as well as the later church of St. Maria in Strängnäs, are some of the oldest brick buildings in Sweden and had the same general architectural designs as northern German churches. Their naves had three aisles and the chancel ended in a rounded apses. The Greyfriars utilized bricklaying when building Riddarholmskyrkan in Stockholm in the 1290s. The common method to burn bricks in this time was with the use of temporary ovens that were built on sight. Generally it would take 11–14 days to burn bricks in this kind of oven. During early brickbuilding the general technique was “monk bond”, which is the pattern of two stretchers and one header. Although before monk bond was established people used “wild bond”, which had no established pattern (Lindgren 1985, 19–131).

During the thirteenth century many churches in western Sweden were rebuilt. A potential trend in Sweden during the thirteenth century was to add transepts to churches when they became more popular for pilgrimage, most often to add more altars and space for advanced liturgy. One church that was rebuilt like this was the church of St. Elin/Helena in Skövde. Another potential trend during this time was to rebuild the sacristies in stone to make them more permanent, but most churches in western Sweden only had sacristies of wood until the end of the thirteenth century. Only a few churches already had established stone sacristies, for example the church of St. Olof at Falköping (Dahlberg 2002, 57).

The floorplans of churches are also something that changed during the medieval period. During the early medieval Romanesque style, the churches generally had a distinct chancel that was small and closed off from the nave. The chancel could have an apse or not, but generally the nave and the chancel were two different building parts and spaces. In the late medieval period, during the Gothic style, it became more common with open floorplans where the nave and the chancel were the same space. This could be due to the change in liturgy, that late medieval sermons required more active participation from the attendees, or more interest from the elite to be buried in the chancel which required more space. The establishment of a western tower during the Romanesque period might be a sign of the private agency of the elite, but should not be assumed to always signify this. The Romanesque western tower was quite common in Sweden, but not in Norway (Nilsson 2009, 49–99).

More uncommon floorplans like Scandinavian round churches, which were generally built during the twelfth and thirteenth century, might be the product of the elite purposefully building in unusual styles to stand out. Unusual floorplans like round churches might have been built to show power and distinction from other members of the elite by being conspicuous. It might also be a reference to churches that the common person had not seen but the elite might know of, and thus the agent that established the church seems well-traveled and connected. The round churches, for example, might be a reference to the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, which members of the elite might have seen during crusades or pilgrimages (Wienberg 2014, 215– 244).

2.1.3. Cults in medieval Scandinavia

The early Scandinavian church was characterized by missionaries and the creation of new saints, especially localized saints. The earliest missionaries and saints were often not from Scandinavia, but in the twelfth and thirteenth century it became more common with local saints and cults. Most saints from this period were local members of the elite that established a new church, and a cult was formed around them as they died. An example of this phenomenon is St. Elin/Helena of Skövde who most likely was a local member of the elite who financially contributed to the building of

Skövde church and was then killed by the family of a man she probably had murdered. There are few sources about her, except the then bishop of Skara Brynolf Algotsson, who himself became a saint later. St. Elin/Helena would become important in the thirteenth century, as she was established as the official saint of Västergötland. The connection between the elite and cult in early medieval Scandinavia are also apparent in the kings that became saints, like St. Erik of Sweden, St. Canutus of Denmark and St. Olof of Norway. Although many early saints became failed cults, and only survived locally to later disappear (Lundén 1983, 9–470).

St. Olof was a popular saint in Scandinavia, especially during the late medieval period. He was buried in Nidaros, today's Trondheim, which became a popular pilgrimage site almost immediately upon his death. There was a holy spring in Nidaros connected to St. Olof. The churches dedicated to St. Olof generally had depictions of him, especially depictions of his axe. Holy springs dedicated to St. Olof were common, for example hundreds of them could possibly have existed in Bohuslän alone. Although holy springs are not exclusive to St. Olof, it is also a common phenomena in other cults. The general ritual tied to these springs seems to have been drinking and bathing in the water, as well as giving offerings of food and objects like needles, money and cutlery. The offering of food was also common inside the pilgrimage church, often by the many altars. The springs are also often connected to pre-Christian holy springs, some theories tying certain St. Olof springs to the worship of Tor. It is probable that some of these pre-Christian holy springs were “taken over” by the church (Bringéus 1997, 9–25).

The holy spring dedicated to St. John the Baptist in Ödetofta seemed to have been mainly visited around midsummer to provide better health. The offerings seemed to generally have been coins, needles, nails and rings. These sites for cults were sometimes made into pilgrimage churches to collect the offerings that visitors would bring to the holy spring (Golabiewski Lannby 1992, 14–16).

The most important saint in late medieval Sweden became St. Bridget. She was born in the beginning of the fourteenth century in Uppland, being part of the elite and related to king Magnus Eriksson. During her lifetime she did acts of charity as well as pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela in Spain, Rome, Jerusalem and the grave of St. Olof in Nidaros. After becoming a widow, Bridget started seeing visions from God and became known in the church as a holy woman. She was the founder of the monastery of Vadstena and her own monastic order. After her death in the late fourteenth century the process of officially making her a saint began. During this time, only the Pope could grant sainthood and extensive proof of the person's virtue needed to be presented. Bridget was canonized in 1391 and would become not only the most important saint in Sweden during the rest of the medieval era, but became an important saint in Europe overall (Lundén 1983, 366–475).

2.1.4. Pilgrimage in medieval Scandinavia

Pilgrimage was the act of traveling to a holy place. The pilgrim would then pray and give offerings, to then be rewarded by being cured of illness, receive a blessing or special indulgence. An important pilgrimage site was Santiago de Compostela in Spain, famous for the scallops, known as pilgrim scallops, which pilgrims brought home after a visit to show that they had indeed performed the trip (Bringéus 1997, 9). The most famous pilgrimage sites, which people generally traveled to from other countries, were graves of saints or important places for Christianity like Rome and Jerusalem. Although most pilgrimage sites were local. The many offerings and gifts that the sites were given by pilgrims became an important economical factor for the church. Pilgrimage sites often sold pilgrimage badges, a type of decorated brooch pilgrims wore to display that they had completed a pilgrimage, relics, ampoules of holy oil or water, and letters of indulgence. A pilgrim could get reduced time in purgatory or a pardon for sins for visiting a site (Andersson 1989, 11–137)

To take care of the pilgrimage routes by removing forests and swamps and building bridges and hostels was a pious act for both locals and the monarch. Many pilgrimage routes were probably established on old roads, often connected to trade roads and important places. The pilgrimage routes were vital for establishing infrastructure and communication inside the kingdom and connecting to other kingdoms (Svenska kyrkan 2005, 15–17). Although the pilgrimage roads in Scandinavia were probably quite underdeveloped, trampled roads for walking with some landscape markers and sometimes graves by the road. There were also often small hostels by the road, called “själästugor” (Own trans. “soul cottages”) (Andersson 1989, 13–14).

Several paths to the grave of St. Olof in Nidaros existed during the medieval period, one probably went through Värmland and Dalsland. The proposed pilgrimage route that went through Dalsland and Värmland could have passed through Järnskog and Karlanda in southern Värmland, and Laxarby in northern Dalsland. This suggestion is based on the naming convictions in these locations often being connected to the word “pilgrim” (Wadensjö 1995, 14). Possible pilgrimage routes through Värmland towards the grave of St. Olof in Nidaros might have existed as early as the 1050s, inspired by the route the saint himself once traveled (Ernvik 1983, 45–46).

St. Olofs day was the 29th of July. Pilgrimage sites were most often tied to yearly celebrations, festivals and markets (Bringéus 1997, 20–24). After the Reformation in the sixteenth century, pilgrimage and cults, especially the spring cults, were officially removed and banned since Protestantism generally thought of it as superstitious and in some instances false idolization (Golabiewski Lannby 1992, 16).

2.2. Dalsland & the churches of the region

2.2.1. Medieval Dalsland

The oldest probable mention of Dalsland is in relation to the Norwegian king Magnus, who in 1180 proclaimed war against Götaland and claimed certain areas including Dal. The earliest mentions of the region of Dalsland are in relation to conflicts about the border between Götaland, thus Sweden, and Norway. These conflicts continued until the early thirteenth century (Wiktorsson & Odelman 1996, 25–35).

The kingdom of Sweden had very different borders in the twelfth and thirteenth century than today. The regions of Skåne, Halland and Blekinge were considered parts of Denmark and Bohuslän, Jämtland and Härjedalen were parts of Norway. Sweden by the early thirteenth century generally consisted of the land around Mälaren and Vättern, as well as the southern and eastern lands by lake Vänern. The kingdom of Sweden also included the land around the gulf of Bothnia including the today's Finish side. By this time, Sweden had seven dioceses, that of Uppsala, Linköping, Skara, Strängnäs, Västerås, Växjö and Åbo, with some of these reaching over the technical borders of the Swedish kingdom. For example, the region of Jämtland was a part of Norway but also the archdiocese of Uppsala and Gotland, which was not under clear Swedish rule at the time, were a part of the diocese of Linköping (Pernler 1999, 9).

When comparing Dalsland to its neighbouring region Värmland, both regions seem to have been “buffer zones” between Sweden and Norway during the early medieval period, and might have been under partial and periodical Norwegian influence. Dalsland seems to be included in Sweden together with Värmland by the end of the thirteenth century. Värmlands inclusion in the Swedish kingdom is noticed by more juridical establishments and clearer regional laws made by the Swedish king, as well as more organised courts, known bailiffs and the building of several castles and roads. Värmland might also have had an early connection to pilgrimage, and there might have been a pilgrimage from Västergötland to Nidaros that went through Värmlands as early as the eleventh century. By the end of the thirteenth century much forest and land for fishing and agriculture in Värmland was donated to important monasteries in mainly Västergötland, including the monasteries Varnhem, Riseberga, Gudhem and later Vadstena (Ernvik 1983, 11–127).

There are very few sources about early medieval Dalsland, and the region was seemingly split into two areas during this time. One of the areas was called “Dal” and seemed to have been the southeastern, more agricultural region by lake Vänern that probably had closer cultural ties with Västergötland. The rest of Dalsland, which were the more forested northern and western parts, was called “Markerna” (Fig. 3). The name “Dalsland” and the clear definition of the region were not confirmed until the sixteenth century. Although it is likely that Dalsland is comparable to

Värmland and became a clear part of the Swedish kingdom in the late medieval period, for example the fort Dalaborg was built by Swedish rule in the fourteenth century (Harrison 2002, 230–245).

The development of the juridical control of Dalsland becomes more apparent when comparing Äldre and Yngre Västgötagarna (own trans. Older and Younger laws of Västergötland). Äldre Västgötagarna was written in the beginning of the thirteenth century and only applied to Västergötland and Dal. Notably, the jurisdictional precinct of Tössbo that otherwise geographically and environmentally would be a part of Markerna, is also included in Äldre Västgötagarna. In Yngre Västgötagarna, written about a hundred years later in the beginning of the fourteenth century, Dalsland and Värmland are fully under the jurisdiction. This coincides with when the Bjälbo family became the monarchs and made great efforts to change Sweden into a more unified kingdom. Thus, many regional laws and courts were established during the late thirteenth century (Lindkvist & Sjöberg 2003, 125–150).

2.2.2. Churches in Dalsland

Dalsland seems to have been a part of the diocese of Skara since at least the thirteenth century. The Pope wrote in a letter from 1220 that a church dedicated to St. Nicolaus is being built in the diocese of Skara. This church was probably the one located in Edsleskog (SDHK 388). An administrative letter regarding the church in Edsleskog was written by the bishop of Skara in 1308 (SDHK 2259).

The christianization of Dalsland occurred notably late, and the oldest churches probably date to the twelfth century, perhaps with earlier churches in wood. The earliest churches in the region were generally built in the south, especially in the southeastern part. An example of an early, southeastern church is the church in Ör, that due to a memorial tablet in the wall is dated to 1219. Another example is the church in Bolstad, which was built in a similar style as churches in Västergötland and has the only preserved medieval tower in Dalsland. Bolstad church has a baptismal font that is dated from the late twelfth to early thirteenth century, and is stylistically similar to fonts in Västergötland. The medieval churches in Dalsland were generally rebuilt in the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth or nineteenth century, since they were neglected during the Reformation. The vast majority of the ecclesiastical inventory of Dalsland are from after the Reformation, and the medieval churches are often poorly researched (Runelid 1984, 7–85).

The churches in the northern parts of Dalsland were in general built late. Mo church was mentioned for the first time by the end of the fourteenth century. Tösse church has been dated to the thirteenth century, and seems to have been built in a mixed material of stone and brick. The original type of stone that was used is unknown, but the church was restored after the medieval

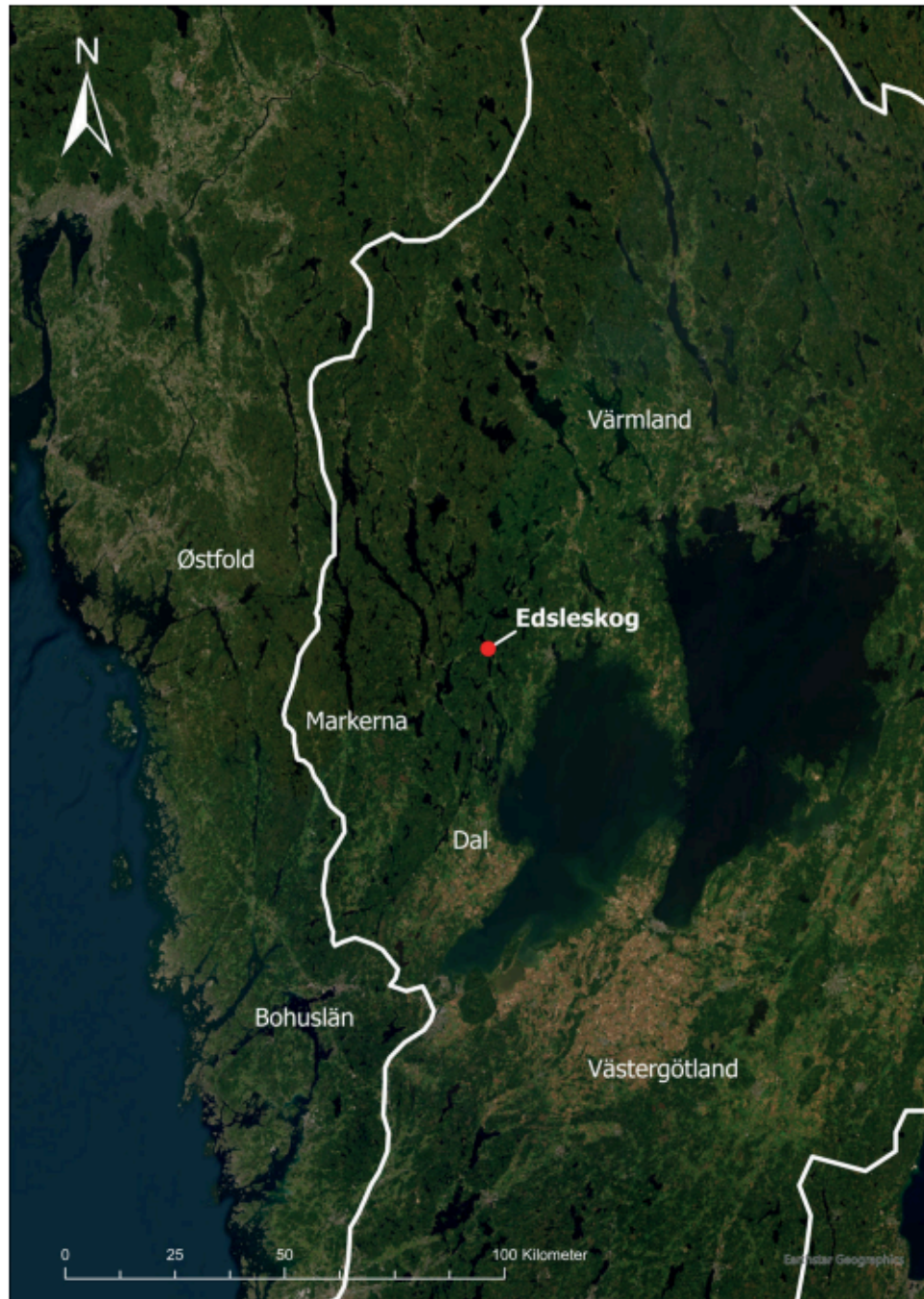
period using greystone. Ånimskog church is probably from the early thirteenth century and was built in greystone. It has been remarked that Ånimskog church probably is one of the oldest churches in northern Dalsland and it was built on a possible pre-Christian grave field.

Neighbouring churches like Fröskog, Värvik and Laxarby were heavily rebuilt after the medieval period, but surviving inventory might generally date them to the late twelfth or thirteenth century. Other churches in the area can be dated to around the thirteenth century, like the churches in Ärtemark and Torrskog, the last a theorized former cult place for Tor. Steneby church is probably from the late twelfth century and might have been a part of the pilgrimage to St. Olofs grave in Nidaros (Runelid 1984, 99–166). Art historian Ann Catherine Bonnier notes the lack of imagery of St. Olof in churches in Dalsland, even though many traditions claim a regional connection to the pilgrimage. She argues this could possibly be because of the fire in Åmål 1901, which burned down the city's museum along with a lot of medieval inventory from churches in Dalsland (Bonnier 2003, 26).

About 50 churches in Dalsland are left from the medieval era, half of these are made of wood and most others of stone. The majority are heavily rebuilt. Bolstad church, from the early twelfth century, seems to be the oldest left (Bonnier 2003, 15–22). The surviving early medieval ecclesiastical inventory from Dalsland seems to be stylistically very similar to inventory from Västergötland, England and Norway. Only six medieval churches in Dalsland were made out of bricks, the churches in Edsleskog, Tösse, Gestad, Grinstad, Ör and Frändefors (Appendix D). A few churches were partially made with bricks, like the churches in Murängen, Gunnarsnäs and Järbo. These bricks are generally poorly dated. Four of the medieval brick churches were located in the southeast of Dalsland and might have been built due to lack of other materials (Bonnier 2003, 15–27). The shores around Vänern are one of the muddiest places in Sweden, which makes bricklaying as a practice both cheap and easy in these areas (Lindgren 1985, 19).

2.2.3. Edsleskog church

The hamlet of Edsleskog is located by several small lakes, one of them called Edslan, in the northeastern part of Dalsland. Edsleskog is not close to the shore of Vänern, and is, with the exception of the small lakes, landlocked (Lantmäteriet 2026)(Fig. 3) (Fig. 31).



(Fig. 3. The placement of Edsleskog in relation to the borders in the early thirteenth century. The white border shows the extent of the diocese of Skara at the time, and where the border to Norway was. The map also shows the approximate placement of Dal and Markerna. Note the considerable distance between Edsleskog and lake Vänern. Photo: Lödöse museum. Mühlenbock, Lazarides & Beckman 2023)

The name Edsleskog and the lake Edslan can be found from the early fourteenth century, and the word “edslan” might be related to an old Norwegian word meaning “roaring water”. Edsleskog is

probably named after the lake. The suffix “skog” (Own trans. “forrest”) in placenames is common in the area around Edsleskog, and often seems to indicate important pre-Christian locations. For example, the hamlet Torrskog could have been a place of worship for the god Tor. Ånimskog was mentioned as a notable church in the early fourteenth century. From at least the fourteenth century forward Åmål, which would later become the only city in Dalsland, is situated just east of Edsleskog as an important trading place next to the lake Vänern (Rosell 1983, 33–40). The area around Edsleskog has some documented but less researched archeological remains from the Iron age, like burials, “domarringar” (own trans. stone circles) and “fångstgropar” (own trans. hunting pits) (Nilars 2003, 14–18).

The prehistoric archaeology of Dalsland is generally not well researched. The placements of Iron age gravefields seem to indicate that most people lived in the south, mostly in the southwest. In the north most people lived by the shore of Vänern or in the region around the modern hamlet Steneby. The hamlets of Laxarby and Torrskog also have prehistoric grave fields, although not as big as the one in Steneby. Fröskog contains some stone settings and cairns, and also has something that has been identified as a “prehistoric fort” (Hellgren & Johansson 2004, 40–184).

Edsleskog church was first indirectly mentioned on the 4th of November 1220, in a letter between the Pope and the bishop of Skara. The letter discussed the establishment of the new cult of St. Nicolaus and the construction of the accompanying church in the diocese of Skara. The name Edsleskog is not mentioned (SDHK 388). The first true mention took place in 1308, when the bishop of Skara proclaimed a church tax and a caretaker for Edsleskog church (SDHK 2259). Edsleskog church was mentioned a few times in the early fourteenth century, to be generally forgotten by the end of the century (SDHK 2294; 2319; 2370; 2503; 5844; 11523; 13906; 22172) (Appendix A). The original church burned down in 1568 after being struck by lightning, and was eventually rebuilt on the same place (Runelid 1984, 130–135).

Edsleskog church burned down in 1902 (Hellgren & Johansson 2004, 164). After the 1902 fire the old church was abandoned and a new church was rebuilt a few hundred meters to the southeast (Runelid 1984, 135). The 2019–2021 excavation established that the church had been approximately 41 times 30 meters (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 A, 5). This might have been one of the biggest churches in Sweden at the time, only to be compared to the cathedral in Skara and the monastery church in Varnhem (Åman 1997, 20).

2.3. Criteria for pilgrimage churches

A pilgrimage church is often bigger than needed for the local population in service of being able to contain many visitors (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 A, 12). A pilgrimage church often has expansive and valuable inventory, and shows signs of building expansion over time. The

inventory also often includes extensive ownership of land and farms. Pilgrimage churches often contain depictions of the saints and their symbols, like St. Olof's and his axe, graffiti from visiting pilgrims and pilgrim badges. Pilgrimage churches might also have sacrificial coffins or generally more room for sacrifice and inventory (Bringéus 1997, 20–45). The size of the chancel might indicate the size of the priesthood, and many priests might indicate that the church was administratively important (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 A, 9–15). The early adage of transepts and a permanent sacristy, to house more altars and the inventory respectively, might also be an indication of a pilgrimage church (Dahlberg 2002, 57).

The landscape around the church might be adapted to the pilgrimage site and the cult. The presence of a pilgrimage road with accompanying hostels and road markers might indicate a pilgrimage site (Andersson 1989, 13–14). Also the presence of cult, like a holy spring and even pre-Christian cult continuity might indicate a pilgrimage site (Bringéus 1997, 9–25).

Regional place names that often contain ecclesiastical words might be a reference to a nearby pilgrimage site (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 A, 9–15). Names that indicate pre-Christian cult might also be a sign of a pilgrimage site due to cult continuity (Nilars 2003, 14–18). The area around a pilgrimage church tends to have annual markets and celebrations (Bringéus 1997, 21).

The church of St. Elin/Helena in Skövde from the twelfth century was noted to have a three-aisled nave with transepts, but no apse nor tower. The church was built in sandstone. The saint herself was buried in the church, first in a round and later a square appendix building/chapel in the northern part of the building (Linde & Westrin 2000, 2–21). Pilgrimage churches were often designed for the movement of a lot of visitors, and the size is variable depending on how popular the church is. This often entails having a floor plan that is more accessible (Lovén 1990, 22).

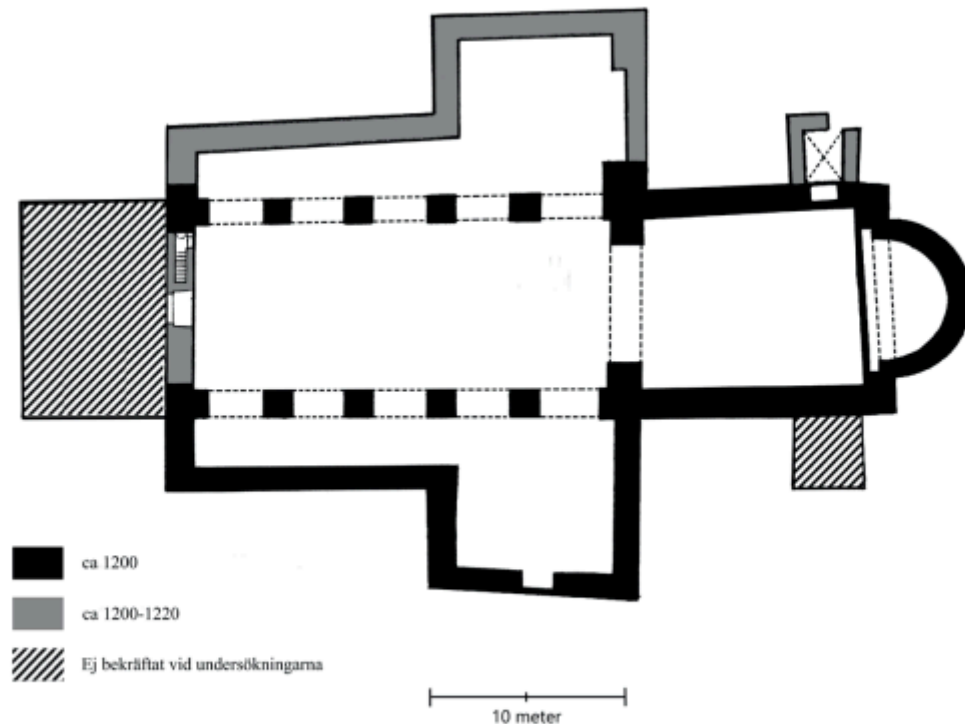
3. Results & analysis

3.1. Edsleskog church

3.1.1. The archaeology

During the excavation of Edsleskog church, there were no finds that pointed towards an older wooden church. The dating of the church was mostly done by the combined analysis of 278 coins, stratigraphic layers and 24 ^{14}C tests. The ^{14}C were tested with 95,4 % accuracy and the dating of the coins should be quite accurate as well, since the exchange rate of coins was high during this period. The construction of the church probably started by the end of the twelfth century, or by the turn of the century (Mühlenbock, Lazarides & Beckman 2023, 159–164). The excavation report remarks that the church had an apse, which dates it to the Romanesque style and thus the building is more likely to be from the twelfth century. The church also had rounded vaults in the internal colonnade of the nave, which is typically Romanesque (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 A, 8). The floorplan was also typically Romanesque since the church had a smaller distinct chancel (Nilsson 2009, 49).

The results from the 2019–2021 excavation gave a general idea of how the medieval church in Edsleskog might have appeared. The church's floor plan was discussed to be similar to the cathedral of Skara during the sixteenth century. The size and floorplan of the church probably did not change since its original conception, being 41 meters long, three-aisled with two transepts to the south and north that extended to almost 30 metres. The church thus had an unusual cross-shaped floor plan. The chancel was noted to be big, one-aisled and rectangular with an apse (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 A, 5). The size of the chancel was noted to be as broad as the middle aisle of the nave. The church's floor plan was slightly skewed, the transepts and aisles were not exactly in line with the nave. But this feature was so slight that it was probably not made on purpose (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 B, 76–77) (Fig. 4).



(Fig. 4. Proposed floor plan of the medieval church in Edsleskog done by Lödöse museum. The black lines show the first building phase that happened about 1200, the grey shows the second phase about 1200–1220 and the dashed lines show the areas with unclear dating. There is no north arrow in the sketch, but it is orientated with north up. Drawing: Lödöse museum. Mühlenbock, Lazarides & Beckman 2023.)

Based on the floor plan, the internal area of the nave would have been about, maybe a little bigger than, 400 m² and the area inside the internal colonnade about 200 m². The nave had internal measurements of about 20 times 20 meters as a low estimate. The chancel on its own seemed to have had an internal area of about 100 m², maybe even larger. The transepts were about 50 m² each. This would roughly make the internal area of the church about 600 m² as a low estimate (Mühlenbock, Lazarides & Beckman 2023, 154) (Fig 4).

The excavation of Edsleskog church showed that the building was built in two different phases. The first phase probably occurred at the end of the twelfth century or by the year 1200, then there was a break in the building process for an unknown period of time before the second phase commenced. In the initial building phase, the chancel, southern part of the nave, southern transept

and a probable foundation for a western tower was built. The construction then stopped for unknown reasons, perhaps due to financial constraints. In the beginning of the thirteenth century the construction started again and finished the north side of the nave and the northern transept. The western tower appeared to never have been built, but seemed to have been prepared with a western arch that was now bricked shut. In the end of the thirteenth century a possible sacristy or chapel was added on the north side of the chancel. A possible appendix building on the south side of the chancel might also have existed at some point. The archaeological report references sixteenth century sources that claim that the church might have had a roof turret (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 A, 5).

Mühlenbock et al. argues that the northern transept was not planned in the initial building phase since the foundational stonewall seems to have been built straight on the north–western side of the nave, which would not create an opening for where the transept would be. But since the initial building phase ended before the northern side was finished, this original floor plan was never fully realised and perhaps the transept was added in the second building phase. The apse seemed to have been hastily bricked over in the late medieval period, which made the church shorter. The church had three entrances, one from the west, one through the southern transept and one through the northern sacristy/chapel (Mühlenbock, Lazarides & Beckman 2023, 156–159).

The northern door probably existed before the adage of the sacristy/chapel, which might indicate that the sacristy/chapel was planned from the beginning. Another possibility is that the chancel simply had a northern door, which is unusual but appears in for example the church of St. Nikolai in Beuster in Germany from 1170. This church was also a Romanesque brick church. The western door might have been added later. The western tower was probably never realized, but the church might have had some sort of simpler tower somewhere to house the bells (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 B, 78–85).

The excavation discovered 15 graves in Edsleskog church, ¹⁴C dated from the eleventh to sixteenth century. The buried were men, women and children. These might have been graves of distinction since they were buried inside the church. One notable grave was of a woman that died at age 60 and was 172 centimeters tall, which might be due to a healthy and rich lifestyle. The report also notes that many of the individuals had teeth that showed potential poor dental hygiene and a rich diet. Most of the individuals were most probably buried swept in shrouds, since the graves were very slim, there were no traces of caskets and the pins from the shrouds were found. No grave goods were found. Most of the individuals were buried with their right hand above the heart and the left on their stomach, which might be connected to a common courteous gesture from the thirteenth century. This might indicate that the individuals were of high status. One individual is ¹⁴C dated to 1061–1156 and might have been buried in relation to an older church. Although an older church

has not been found it would be possible that one existed. The excavation found a layer of soot in the eastern part of the church under the chancel, ¹⁴C dated to the late Viking age. This might indicate that the place has been continually important, which would motivate the placement of the church (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 A, 8–25).

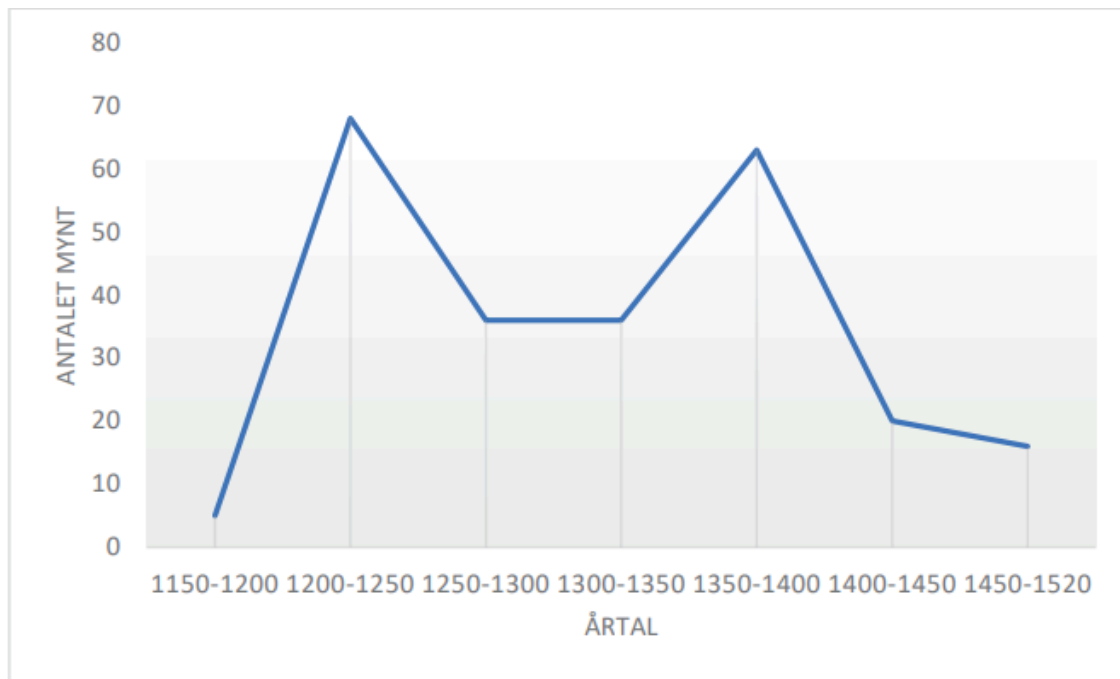
The above-mentioned female individual was possibly buried very early, her grave ¹⁴C dated to 997–1220. Since her grave was placed in the northern aisle of the nave and aligned with the wall, it seems that she was buried whilst the church was built. Mühlenbock et al. argued that some aspects of the grave are more common in the later medieval period, like her arms being positioned in a cross above her chest and the unusuality of being buried in the church in the early medieval period. But they also argued that arm positioning is not always accurate for dating, and being buried in the church could signify that she was a member of the elite (Mühlenbock, Lazarides & Beckman 2023, 162–163).

The medieval church in Edsleskog was made out of bricks with a stone foundation. The church was generally built in monk bond, but irregular and sometimes almost in wild bond. The bricks changed between building phases. In the initial phase in the twelfth century, the bricks were unusually big at around 33–36 centimeters, with the biggest being 40 centimetres long and 15 centimetres broad. In the later phase the bricks became smaller, at around 27 centimeters. Decorative bricks for vaults, arches and pillars have been found. One of these decorative bricks was “treklöverformad” (own trans. trefoil shaped) and was most probably used in a cross vault in the possible sacristy during the late medieval period. Some of the semi-circular bricks were probably used in pilasters. One of the bricks found by the chancel has a cross carved into it, which might mark it the first brick placed. The report does not mention if the church was plastered (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 A, 14–23).

The list of finds show some pieces of plaster, but it is unknown if it was placed inside or outside of the church (Lödöse museum, unpublished list of finds given 27-02-26). Mühlenbock et al. argued that the varying sizes of the bricks might be the result of an amateur bricklayer, since the burning of bricks can change the size if the craftsman is not experienced on how to regulate the process. But they also argued that the oldest bricks in Edsleskog church are big enough to be made so on purpose. The bricks were probably made on site, although no oven has been found close to Edsleskog. An ICP-analysis of the bricks informs that the mud was locally sourced (Mühlenbock, Lazarides & Beckman 2023, 156).

The archeological finds in Edsleskog church were mostly dominated by coins. Most of the coins originated from the first half of the thirteenth century, for the amount to slowly reduce in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century to then briefly increase again by the end of the fourteenth

and beginning of the fifteenth century. The oldest coins from the site were from the end of the twelfth century. The temporal distribution of the coins might mirror the popularity of the church and possible pilgrimage site. The reduction of coins in the church coincides with the rising popularity of St. Elin/Helena of Skövde, which might indicate that Edsleskog was replaced as a pilgrimage site. The temporal distribution of coins in Edsleskog church disagrees with the general trends in Swedish coinage during the medieval period, since the early medieval coins were generally few and were exchanged quickly. Regular use of coinage rose in the thirteenth century, to peak during the fourteenth century. In Norway it peaked slightly earlier. Although the brief increase of coins found in Edsleskog church during the later fourteenth century coincides with coins becoming more common in Sweden. It also occurs at the same time as the Black Death and the practice of giving more offerings to escape it. Some of the oldest coins in Edsleskog church are Norwegian, and the Swedish coins became dominant in the thirteenth century. The coins were generally found in the transepts, chancel and the northern potential sacristy. The oldest coins were generally in the sacristy. The distribution of coins in the transepts and chancel might indicate the presence of several altars that people made offerings to, maybe an altar to Mary in the north and a male saint in the south. A lot of the coins from the fourteenth century were found in the supposed sacristy or chapel in the north (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 A, 15–20) (Fig. 5).



(Fig. 5. A graph that shows the temporal distribution of the coins found in Edsleskog church during the 2019-2021 excavations by Lödöse museum. The x-axis shows the years in groups of fifty years, from 1150 to 1520. The y-axis shows the amount of coins. Note the peak in the first half of the thirteenth century, for the amount of coins to reduce significantly in the second half. The amount increased again in the end of the fourteenth century and beginning of the fifteenth century, then the amount reduced again. Chart by Lödöse museum. Mühlenbock, Lazarides & Beckman 2023.)

The church floor seemed to have been made out of lime mortar in the initial phase of the church, at least in the chancel, but were remade as a wood floor some time in the thirteenth century after a small fire (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 B, 77). A wooden floor often provides a higher likelihood for preserving coins because people might drop them between the planks. In churches, this most likely happened whilst doing an offering thus most coins are found by the altars. Coins from Germany, Gotland and Denmark were found in Edsleskog church. Since the oldest coins were concentrated in the chancel, the chancel was probably the oldest part of the church and offerings occurred very early in the building process. Some of the coins, especially from the thirteenth and fourteenth century, were purposefully folded. This can be compared to similar practices in pilgrimage churches in other countries, especially when offering coins to a healing saint. The early blend of Norwegian and Swedish coins might signify a lack of monetary control by the Swedish king in the area (Klackenberg 1992, 15–45) (Jonsson & Mühlenbock 2024, 1–19).

Most of the artefacts from the excavation of the medieval church in Edsleskog, except the coins, were nails and pieces of window glass. The nails were both decorative and functional. The most common type of nail found was probably used in the internal roof. The pieces of window glass were often painted and decorated, at least the colors blue and green have been found with most of the blue glass in the northern transept. Pieces from the bells have been found, mostly melted material, and pieces from decorative hanging devices and chandeliers. Amongst the artefacts were also fittings, many with iconography of fleur de lis and roses. Some of these were most probably for books and their bindings. The possibility that the church had books also coincides with the finding of an artefact that might be interpreted as a “reading stone”, a polished crystal that was used as a magnifying glass before glasses. A censer was found by the chancel. In the northern transept several pearls of bone and horn were found, possibly from a rosary. Something that appeared to be a cross or a small idol of an angel were found in the chancel. In the supposed sacristy/chapel unknown artefacts made of gilded copper were found. Also found in the church were fishing hooks and a lot of fishbone, especially in the supposed sacristy, which might indicate gifts of fish to the church. A lot of sewing needles were found in the northern part of the building, which might signify that the church separated genders as was common in medieval churches. Pieces of a “Bartmannkrus”, ceramics which were usually made in Köln, Germany in the mid sixteenth century, were found in the supposed sacristy/chapel (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 A, 23–30). An undated seal was found in Edsleskog church with the text “Petrus Niculai Frater” with the letter P (Wiktorsson & Odelman 1996, 392).

Many places close to Edsleskog church have ecclesiastical names like “Kapellängen” (Own trans. Chapel meadow) and “Munkhättan/Munkhyttan” (Own trans. Monk hut). The second name might be an indication of a historical presence of monks, even though there is no archaeological evidence for this. The holy spring in Edsleskog was examined in the seventeenth century, which yielded finds of coins, needles, rings and other small trinkets. In the report from the archaeological excavation of Edsleskog church, the authors presented the theory that the church was most probably built as a show of power by the diocese of Skara to establish agency and presence in a less controlled area of Sweden. They conclude that the church was most definitely a pilgrimage church, pointing at the unusual size of the building and that the population of the area does not reflect the need for that space. The size of the chancel might also show that the church had a lot of priests, and might indicate that Edsleskog was a sort of administrative centre for Dalsland (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 A, 9–15).

Although in 2020 archeologists Anton Lazarides & Christian Mühlenbock proposed that the medieval church in Edsleskog could have been built by a king of Götaland. For example Knut Eriksson, who had an allyship with the Danish king and could thus have had the means and connections to build a brick church (Lazarides & Mühlenbock 2020, 34–35).

To summarize, according to several dating techniques Edsleskog church was probably built around or a bit earlier than the year 1200. It was built in two phases, the bricks becoming more standardized in the second phase. Between the phases, the plans probably changed to include a northern transept and exclude the western tower. The church was about 41 times 30 meters, and the size seemed to have been planned from the beginning. During the excavation of the church a few graves were found, spanning in age from the initial building of the church until it burned down in the sixteenth century. The graves generally seemed to contain people of high status in various ages and sexes, and they were buried in shrouds with no grave goods. The finds were dominated by coins, most of them from the first half of the thirteenth century. The other artifacts were mostly building material like bricks and painted window glass. The osteological material was vastly dominated by fish, which might be offerings to the church. There were several finds, like fittings and a “reading stone”, that potentially show that the church might have had quite a few books. The excavation yielded no luxury items or items that could signify pilgrimage, but parts of the bells, the baptismal font and religious items like rosary beads were found. The excavation report concluded that Edsleskog church was most likely built as a pilgrimage church by the diocese of Skara to control the borderland of Dalsland.

3.1.2. The history

Edsleskog church was probably and indirectly first mentioned in a letter from the 4th of November 1220, when Pope Honorius III wrote to the bishop of Skara. In the letter, the Pope mentions that a church dedicated to Nicolaus is being built in the diocese of Skara and accepts that the bishop has the right to grant indulgence for people who visit. The name or the location of this church is not discussed. The letter claims that Nicolaus, who was a priest named Nils or Niklas, was murdered by “unfaithful people” and that miracles have happened around the death place since. The letter also informs that the Pope has not given the dead priest full acknowledgments as a saint (SDHK 388).

Archeologist Rune Ekre noted that the bishop of Skara must have been passionate about the cult of Nicolaus since the aforementioned letter seems to be an answer to a plea. The Pope does not grant full sainthood to Nicolaus in the letter, but he does accept the indulgence and the beatification of the murdered priest. Ekre argued that the letter has to discuss the church in Edsleskog, since no cult of St. Nicolaus has been found elsewhere (Ekre 1991, 7–15).

The first true mention of the church in Edsleskog can be found in a declaration from the bishop of Skara, Brynolf Algotsson, from August 15th 1308. He announced that he and the dean of Skara, Bengt, have chosen a man named Håkan as a permanent deputy to control of the church of Edsleskog. The bishop also mentioned that he had tied Edsleskog church to the diocese of Skara

with the consent of the people of the parish. The bishop proclaimed that the church in Edsleskog has the ability to tax Dalsland and Västergötland, the tax in question being called “Nicolaus penningen” (own trans. tax of Nicolaus”). The income should be distributed to the dean and his successors. The dean shall also be granted half of the offerings that the church is given during the day of St. John the Baptist, as well as a considerable amount of butter from the associated farms. Håkan and his successors were granted the right to the tax income of Tösse, specifically the “prostskäppa”(own trans. tax in kind) and “biskopgengärdet” (own trans. bishop tax) to aid with the maintenance of the church in Edsleskog. They also had the right to all other possible income and returns the parish could yield, except the ones from the farms of “salæby” and “wazendæ”. The letter ends with the notation that this agreement can not be changed if not all parties agree. The letter refers to the name Edsleskog as “Etlæschogh” (SDHK 2259). The diocese of Skara utilized the tax of St. Nicolaus until 1488 (Lundén 1983, 161).

On July 7th 1309 the bishop of Skara, Brynolf Algotsson, announced that the deanery of Skara did not produce enough income to sustain the dean. The dean will try to increase the income by tying the church of Edsleskog to the deanery with the consent of the people of the parish, and by promising the deputy a part of the income. The letter refers to the name Edsleskog as “Etlæschogh” (SDHK 2294).

The bishop of Skara announced on July 6th 1310 that the dean of Skara exchanged land with a man named Sven Prästson. Both owned land that was tied to the church of Edsleskog and made a deal to exchange some of it. Sven Prästson specifically gained land and farms owned by the church, one of these were called “Wazændæ” or “Vassända”. Edsleskog is referred to as “Etlæschogh” (SDHK 2370). In an undated letter from the same year, the bishop of Skara announced that the deputy Håkan in Edsleskog was given an inventory of animals and other “movable belongings”. What these inventories were is not written. Edsleskog is still referred to as “Etlæschogh”(SDHK 2319).

On June 27th 1312 the bishop of Skara announced that the dean of Skara and the bishop's servant Sigvard had exchanged land. The dean and his successors would now own the farm Sigerud in Edsleskog, and in exchange Sigvard gained the mill in Forsnärs and a guaranteed burial in Edsleskog church. Edsleskog is referred to as “Etlæschogh” (SDHK 2503).

Edsleskog is mentioned in a letter from September 25th in 1349 by king Magnus of Sweden. The letter renewed the dean of Skara's privilege to take out fines during the market that happened every midsummer by Edsleskog church. The king also added that it is now forbidden to put sheds and horses in the vicinity of the rectory. He referred to Edsleskog as “Ethlaskogh” (SDHK 5844).

The later medieval letters that mention Edsleskog were generally about land disputes resolved by the local thing (court). On September 21st 1379 a man named Anund Nykommen gave his new wife some land in the area of Edsleskog with the approval of several people, one being a man called mister Johan of Edsleskog (SDHK 11523). On June 24th 1391 the thing in Edsleskog approved the exchange of land between several individuals (SDHK 13906). On June 23rd 1434 a priest named Jacob of Edsleskog co created the announcement of another solved land dispute (SDHK 22172).

Edsleskog was probably sparsely populated during the medieval era. Before the Reformation, the church in Edsleskog owned about two thirds of the parish, which were about two “kyrkohemman” (pieces of land given to the church), three “prebendehemman” (land gifted to an institution to provide income) and four crofts. After the Reformation this was most probably reduced. In 1564 there were 7,5 “mantal”(units for taxation, often land and farm, approximately a family with workers) in Edsleskog that were not owned by the church (Fransson 2003, 29). The estimated population of specific places in Sweden are very difficult to find before the sixteenth century. But from 1571 it is possible to claim that there are 18 “fiscal homes” or “family units” in Edsleskog parish. It has been discussed how many people were generally included in a “fiscal home”, but estimates claim that by the sixteenth century it would have included about 5–10 people. This means that Edsleskog parish, by 1571, housed between 90–180 people (Andersson Palm 2000, 27–136).

In 1583, 15 years after the medieval church burned down, the diocese of Skara wrote down the current state and inventory of Edsleskog church. The text claimed that the church was made of brick, and similar to the cathedral in Skara in some design aspects. The text is vague about what elements of the two churches that were similar, possibly the shape and internal design. The inventory report claimed that Edsleskog church had an internal colonnade, two sacristies and a spire. The most notable inventory from the church were three small bells and two big ones, but the inventory report remarked that the big bells burned down with the church (*Inventarium för kyrkorna i Skara stift. 1583*, 38). Author Effe Runelid added that the church in Edsleskog burned down in 1568 after being struck by lightning. After the fire the church was in ruins and was probably plundered during times of war. The church was later rebuilt in the same place with the adage of a western campanile. One of the bells from Edsleskog church apparently had an inscription that claimed itself to be from “the time when Edsleskog had a monastery”. Runelid only transcribes the first part of the inscription, which is:

“Jag är fordomdags guten i påviska tiden Då denna Hesselskogs kyrka var ett kloster...”

Which could be translated as:

“I am in older times cast in the papal times When this Hesselskog church was a monestary...”

Although the legitimacy of this statement could be questioned since little evidence of a monastery in Edsleskog exists. The age of this bell is also unknown, since several were remade after the fire (Runelid 1984, 130–135).

During the seventeenth century the general opinion about the medieval church in Edsleskog was that it had been a grand pilgrimage church tied to the pilgrimage of St. Olof, and that the holy spring was an St. Olof spring (Rosell 1983, 84). A substantial romanticism about the church existed during the time, an example of this being the speech “Lovtal över Hesselskog” (own trans. Eulogy for Hesselskog) by Nils Hesselgren from 1672. The eulogy specifically mentioned that the church was of unknown origin and age, but known to be old. Hesselgren also mentioned a fire that apparently burned all texts that can inform about the church's older history. Hesselgren claimed that people in Edsleskog knew the church to be an old monastery, and a pilgrimage site so important that even “the old Romans” visited. He also claimed the existence of a yearly celebration and thing tied to the church, and that it had been a cathedral. The eulogy informed that the walls of the church were built in brick with a stone foundation, and were never plastered until, then, recently. Hesselgren claimed that the church contained cross vaults and were thus often called “Korskyrkia” (own trans. cross church) by locals. The church had two rows of windows and the internal roof was supported by pillars made of brick. He explained that the church was partially ruined by a fire at the time of writing and that a new smaller one was built in the same place. But some inventory carried over, like a marble baptismal font, a crucifix that was “very old” and iron doors that were “very old”. Hesselgren claimed that the church had “very high towers” which contained the bells (Hesselgren 1672).

Hesselgren ended the eulogy by telling the story of St. Nicolaus and the origin of the holy spring. The eulogy claimed that the spring had been a healing spring, and had an accompanying chapel. The holy spring was created when drunk, young people from the nearby village of Högheden killed the priest Nicolaus. As the priest died, the water sprang forth. The chapel was built soon thereafter, which was the origin of the, then, current name of the area “Kapellängen” (Own trans. Chapel Meadow). Hesselgren also claimed that a second holy spring was located south of the church in a place called “Munkhyttan” (Own trans. Monk hut), which was dedicated to “St. Ola” (Hesselgren 1672).

The 1718 dissertation about Dalsland by Lars Hesselgren repeated the same points as the eulogy, with some additions. The text discussed the many names of Edsleskog, confirming that people called the place variants of “Hesselskog”, “Edsleskog” and “Ädelskog”. Hesselgren also claimed that “Munkhyttan” was a building and could have been connected to an old monastery. But he did not

explain this further. Hesselgren did not acknowledge the holy spring of “St. Ola” (Hesselgren 1718, 106–108).

Linguist and local historian Erland Rosell noted that several places in Dalsland have names that relate to the word “munk” (own trans. monk) and argued that it might indicate the historical presence of monks and pilgrims. He also discussed the local stories about the historical existence of a holy spring dedicated to St. Olof in the hamlet Steneby, and connected it with the alleged spring dedicated to “St.Ola” in Edsleskog. Rosell argued that, due to the springs, both locations might have been a part of the pilgrimage to Nidaros (Rosell 1983, 84).

To summarize, Edsleskog church was most likely mentioned for the first time in 1220 by the Pope in a letter to the bishop of Skara. Although the name Edsleskog was not used, the letter discussed a church being built in the diocese of Skara due to the death of the priest that would become St. Nicolaus. After this initial indirect mention, the church was written about quite a lot in the manner of administration, land ownership and taxes. Edsleskog was truly mentioned for the first time in a declaration of taxes and administration from 1308 by the bishop of Skara. The following sources that mentioned Edsleskog were mostly administrative and economical announcements from the early fourteenth century. From the second half of the fourteenth century onward Edsleskog was mostly referenced in regards to the thing or land disputes. In 1349 the king of Sweden clarified some rules about the yearly market in Edsleskog.

The medieval church in Edsleskog burned down for the first time in 1568, the appearance and inventory of the church was written down by the diocese of Skara a few years later. The church seems to have become a local myth after this, demonstrated by the romanticized 1672 eulogy about the building held by Nils Hesselgren. The 1718 dissertation by Lars Hesselgren generally supported the ideas Nils Hesselgren presented, thus they might have been the general consensus on Edsleskog church during this time.

3.1.3. The maps

When depicting the church in Edsleskog, the map material showed some variations. Some of the maps, like map O9 and map O37, depicted Edsleskog church as notably different from the other churches in the area. Sometimes Edsleskog church was bigger than the surrounding churches with more detail and a cross-shaped floor plan. In some variations the size was not different, but the cross-shaped floor plan remained. Often, the church was not depicted with a crucifix whilst most other churches in the area were. The coloring of the church always seemed to be the same as the others in the area and varied a lot. This probably indicates that the color used to draw the church on the maps did not reflect the actual color of the church. A variation of how Edsleskog church was

depicted, like on map O15, was as a towerless box shape. Sometimes the church was depicted to have had a western tower, or what appeared to be a tower in both the west and east. The maps that drew Edsleskog church with towers often seemed to standardize the drawings of the churches. In general, the “standardized” depictions of Edsleskog church, as a box shape with a western tower, appeared on the maps that were made in the later seventeenth century. The more varied depictions came from the older maps (Lantmäteriet. Historiska kartor) (Riksarkivet. “Handritade kartverk”) (Riksarkivet. “Sveriges topografiska kartor 1580–1990) (Appendix B) (Fig 6–30)

The name of the church and the area varied slightly. The most common was a version of “Hesleskoug” with several different spellings. Some variants were “Hesleskog” and “Häsleskog”. Two maps, map 023a and O15, wrote versions of the name “Edsleskog”. Perhaps this signified that both variants of the name existed during this time, but that a version of “Hesleskoug” was the most common name (Lantmäteriet. Historiska kartor) (Riksarkivet. “Handritade kartverk”) (Riksarkivet. “Sveriges topografiska kartor 1580–1990) (Appendix B) (Fig 6–30).

The depiction of the landscape around Edsleskog church varied some. The depiction of the elevation around the church was inconsistent, about half of the maps showed that the area around Edsleskog church was mountainous. This might sometimes be due to the level of detail in which the map was drawn, or that the elevation was not very noticeable. The maps that showed elevation seemed to depict that Edsleskog was surrounded by high points, mostly in the east and south (Lantmäteriet. Historiska kartor) (Riksarkivet. “Handritade kartverk”) (Riksarkivet. “Sveriges topografiska kartor 1580–1990) (Appendix B) (Fig 6–30)

The water by Edsleskog church was often depicted as two lakes connected by a thin stream west of the church. Sometimes there was a depiction of a bridge over the stream. The lakes were, in general, called versions of “Heslan”. The northern lake was often called just “Heslan” or “Heslan lacus”³. The southern lake was often called a version of “Yttre Heslan” or “Yttre Heslan Lacus” (Own trans. Outer Heslan). Sometimes the southern lake did not have a name at all, but was narrowly connected to an even more southern lake called “Yttre Heslan”. Thus the two lower bodies of water were most probably regarded as the same. Sometimes, the northern and southern lakes had the same name and were called a version of “Heslan”. On map 007a the lakes were called “Öfre Häslen” and “Nedra Häslen” (own trans, Higher and Lower Häslen) (Lantmäteriet. Historiska kartor) (Riksarkivet. “Handritade kartverk”) (Riksarkivet. “Sveriges topografiska kartor 1580–1990) (Appendix B) (Fig. 6–30).

³ “Lacus”, latin for inland body of water, like a lake or swamp (Ahlberg, Lundqvist & Sörbom 1987, 484)

Lastly, the depictions of roads by Edsleskog church varied quite a lot but seemed to agree that there was a road fork in Edsleskog. The maps showed different variations on how the road fork split. A common depiction of the roads was that there was one road from the south that went by the eastern shore of the lake, probably from Fröskog, and ended in Edsleskog. There was also often a road from Edsleskog towards the west, over the aforementioned possible bridge, and towards Laxarby. From Laxarby the road forked again, often towards the north. There were also often depictions of two roads towards the north from Edsleskog. One often followed the eastern shore of the lake to end up in a place called “Strand”. The other one went towards the north-east and passed through a place called a version of “Prästerud”, to then continue north (Lantmäteriet. Historiska kartor) (Riksarkivet. “Handritade kartverk) (Riksarkivet. “Sveriges topografiska kartor 1580–1990) (Appendix B) (Fig. 6–30)

On some maps some of these roads were missing. But on all the maps that depicted roads, the western one to Laxarby and some version of a northern road always existed. The road towards the south was sometimes depicted. On map O15 a road going through a place called Bräcke towards Åmål and Mo in the southeast was depicted. On quite a few maps, no roads at all were drawn by Edsleskog church. Thus, the roads in Edsleskog were probably not very important in the seventeenth century, since they were depicted in various ways or not at all. But the road fork and the road towards Laxarby seemed to have been important. The other roads probably existed in some form, but were possibly smaller and not as vital to depict. Map 023a, which was a border map and did not show correct depictions of the landscape in Dalsland, portrayed Edsleskog church and the road fork. Thus, the church and the road fork itself were probably regarded as important, but the exact directions of the roads were less so (Lantmäteriet. Historiska kartor) (Riksarkivet. “Handritade kartverk) (Riksarkivet. “Sveriges topografiska kartor 1580–1990) (Appendix B) (Fig. 6–30)

In comparison, the present day map generally showed the same roads, with the addition of highway 164. 164 came from the west, the same main road as depicted in the seventeenth century, but continued through Edsleskog towards the east and Åmål. There was still a road fork towards Bräcke, but the main road went straight to Åmål. The current map also showed that the two aforementioned lakes were connected by a thin stream. The northern lake was called “Edslan” and the southern lake was depicted as several smaller lakes with different names. Edsleskog is called Edsleskog on a modern map. The church was marked as an archaeological remain, and the new church southeast of the old one was marked as a cross (Author 2026, Lantmäteriet) (Fig. 31).

Archaeologists Christian Mühlenbock, Anton Lazarides & Anna Beckman described Edsleskog church as placed in a valley by a lake system. They argued that the lakes most probably were the

most convenient way to travel to Edsleskog during the medieval period (Mühlenbock, Lazarides & Beckman 2023, 153).

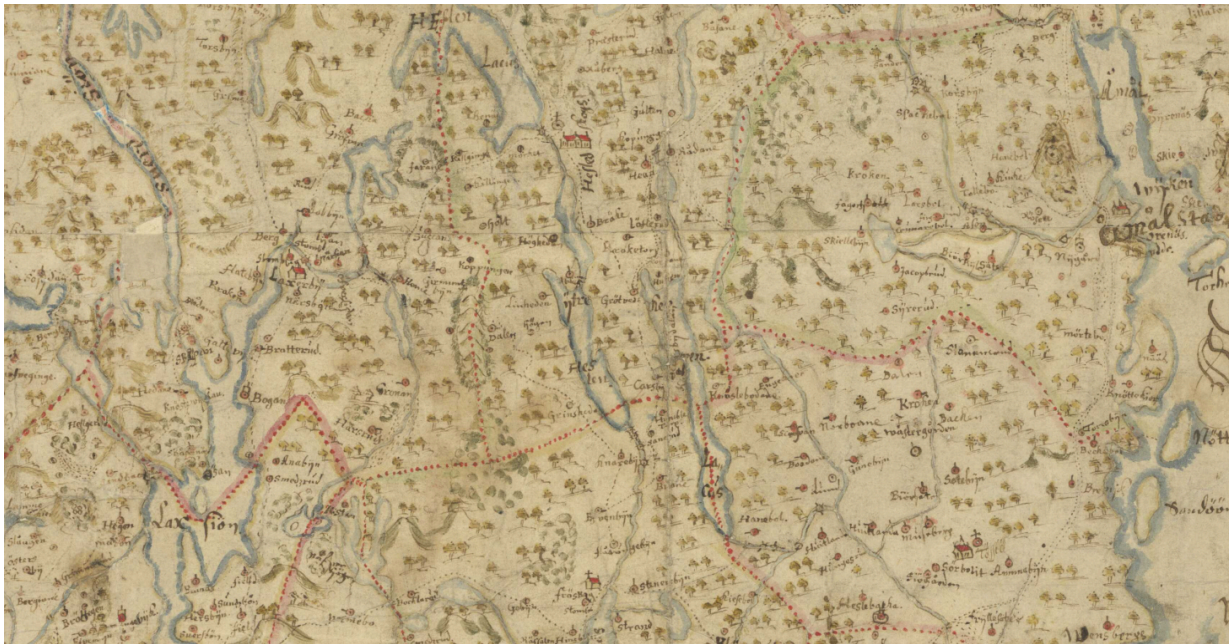
Scandinavian pilgrimage roads were quite underdeveloped and simple, but they often had road markers or hostels (Andersson 1989, 13–14). Thus a simple pilgrimage road to Edsleskog might have existed, even if no research has yet found it. The area might also be poorly researched and the possible hostels and road markers not been found. If there was a pilgrimage road towards Edsleskog church, it probably came from the south and went by the shores of the lakes. Or, pilgrims traveled with boats which would require constant hopping between lakes. There is no indication that anyone traveled from today's Åmål, since in general there are no roads from there before modern time (Fig. 6–31)

If Edsleskog was connected to the pilgrimage to Nidaros, for example as proposed through Järnskog in Värmland, Laxarby (Wadensjö 1995, 14) or Steneby (Runelid 1984, 161) then the old western road might be the pilgrimage road. Although, there is no archaeological or contemporary historical proof yet found that proves that there was a pilgrimage route that connected Edsleskog to Nidaros (Fig. 6–31).

To summarize, during the seventeenth century Edsleskog church was depicted either in a probably standardized form or as cross-shaped and towerless. The church was, with variations, named “Hesleskoug” but could be called a variant of “Edsleskog”. Edsleskog church was probably placed in some sort of valley between elevations, and had two connected lakes to its west called variations of the name “Heslen”. There was a road fork in Edsleskog, most likely with roads to the south, the west and the north (Fig. 6–30).



(Fig. 6. Map O9, Geometric measurement and depiction of the region of Dalsland. The year the map was made is unknown but it is from the seventeenth century. Note the northern arrow, thus the map is generally depicted with north up. ©Lantmäteriet.)



(Fig. 7. Enhanced part of map O9, thus showing Edsleskog and the surrounding region. Note the depiction of the church of Edsleskog on the upper middle part of the map. The church seems to be called “Hesledskog” and is placed east of the intersection of two lakes. Geometric measurement of Dalsland, year unknown, seventeenth century, ©Lantmäteriet.)



(Fig. 8. An enhancement of map O9, Geometric measurement of Dalsland. Note the depiction of Edsleskog church seemingly without a tower and with transepts. Also note the roads from the west, south and north. The year that the map was made is unknown, but it is from the seventeenth century. ©Lantmäteriet.)



(Fig.9.Map O37, Geografical drawing of Västergötland, Dalsland, Halland och Bohuslän. The year the map was made is unknown but it is from the seventeenth century. Note that the north arrow shows that north is up, but compared to modern maps the depiction of the region is slightly skewed. ©Lantmäteriet.)



(Fig.10. Map O37, Geographical drawing of Västergötland, Dalsland, Halland och Bohuslän. This is an enhancement on Edsleskog and the surrounding area. Note that Edsleskog, seemingly called “Hesleskoug”, is placed east of the intersection of two lakes. The church is depicted without a tower and possibly with transepts. There are no depictions of roads close to the church. The year the map was made is unknown, but it is from the seventeenth century, ©Lantmäteriet.)



(Fig. 11. Map O15, Delineation of Dalsland from 1658. Note the northern arrow and that the map is rotated, thus east is up. ©Lantmäteriet.)



(Fig. 13. Map 004. Geometric measurement of Dalsland from 1675. North is up. "14A Västergötland och Dalsland, generalkartor" "Sveriges topografiska kartor 1580–1990" Riksarkivet.)



(Fig.15. Map 005. Geographic drawing of Dalsland from 1684. North is up but slightly skewed.
 “14A Västergötland och Dalsland, generalkartor” “Sveriges topografiska kartor 1580–1990”
 Riksarkivet.)



(Fig.16. Map 005. Geographic drawing of Dalsland from 1684. This shows an enhancement on Edsleskog, here called “Hesleskoug”, and the surrounding area. The church is seemingly depicted with two towers, one in the west and one in the east, and maybe transepts. The church is placed east of the intersection between two lakes. There seems to be a road that goes from the west to the northeast, and one separate road from the church to the north. “14A Västergötland och Dalsland, generalkartor” “Sveriges topografiska kartor 1580–1990” Riksarkivet.)



(Fig.17. Map 023a, border map to Norway from 1686. The red line is the border to Norway, this map shows the parts of the border that is drawn through Dalsland. Note that the map, according to the northern arrow, seems to be drawn with east up. Although, compared to modern maps the directions are slightly skewed overall. “26 Gränsen mot Norge” “Sveriges topografiska kartor 1580–1990” Riksarkivet.)



(Fig.18. Map 023a, border map against Norway from 1686. This shows an enhancement on the area around Edsleskog church, here seemingly called “Edeskoug. k.”. The church is depicted as the other churches in the area, as a box with a western tower. Note that, on this map, the landscape seems purposely not depicted correctly and it is not similar to the other maps. Text on the map states that this shows “En deel af Dahls” or, freely translated, “some of Dalsland”, and is thus not an accurate map. But note the depiction of a roadfork by Edsleskog church, and that Edsleskog church was a priority when choosing what of Dalsland to show. “26 Gränsen mot Norge” “Sveriges topografiska kartor 1580–1990” Riksarkivet.)



(Fig.19. Map 007a. Geographical map of Dalsland with border towards Norway, made 1680–90. Note that north is up. “14A Västergötland och Dalsland, generalkartor” “Sveriges topografiska kartor 1580–1990” Riksarkivet.)



(Fig.20. Map 007a. Geographical map of Dalsland with border towards Norway, made 1680–90. This is an enhancement on Edsleskog, here called “Hälsleskogs k”, and the surrounding area. The church is depicted as a box-shape with a western tower. The church is placed east of the intersection of two lakes, and there are no roads depicted close to the church. “14A Västergötland och Dalsland, generalkartor” “Sveriges topografiska kartor 1580–1990” Riksarkivet.)



(Fig.21. Map 007b. Geographical map of Dalsland with border towards Norway, made 1680–90. Note that north is up. “14A Västergötland och Dalsland, generalkartor” “Sveriges topografiska kartor 1580–1990” Riksarkivet.)





(Fig. 23. Map 007c. Geographical map of Dalsland with border towards Norway, made 1680–90.

Note that north is up. “14A Västergötland och Dalsland, generalkartor” “Sveriges topografiska kartor 1580–1990” Riksarkivet.)



(Fig.24. Map 007c. Geographical map of Dalsland with border towards Norway, made 1680–90.

This is an enhancement of Edsleskog church, here called “Hesleskog”, and the surrounding area. Note that the church is depicted as a box-shape with a western tower. The church is placed east of the intersection of two lakes, and by a road that goes from the west to the northeast. There seems to be another, disconnected road to the north from the church. “14A Västergötland och Dalsland, generalkartor” “Sveriges topografiska kartor 1580–1990” Riksarkivet)



(Fig.25. Map 007e. Geographical map of Dalsland with border towards Norway, made 1680–1690.
 Note that north is up. “14A Västergötland och Dalsland, generalkartor” “Sveriges topografiska
 kartor 1580–1990” Riksarkivet.)



(Fig. 26. Map 007e. Geographical map of Dalsland with border towards Norway, made 1675.

Enhancement on Edsleskog, here called “Hesleskoug”, with surrounding area. Note the poor quality of the map, but it seems like the church is depicted with one western and one eastern tower. Also note that Edsleskog is placed east of the intersection of two lakes, by a road that goes from the west to the northeast. There is also a road from the church to the north that might be connected to the other roads. “14A Västergötland och Dalsland, generalkartor” “Sveriges topografiska kartor 1580–1990” Riksarkivet.)



(Fig. 28. Map N12, Geographical drawing of Gothenburg and Bohuslän, including Västergötland, Dalsland, Halland and Bohuslän, made 1689. This is an enhancement that shows Edsleskog church, here called “Hesleskoug”, and the surrounding area. Note that the church is depicted as a box-shape with a western tower, placed east of the intersection of two lakes. Also note that there are no clear depictions of roads close to the church. ©Lantmäteriet.)



(Fig. 29. Map P3, geographical map of Skaraborg, Älvsborg, Dalsland, Halland och Bohuslän from 1689. Note that the map is turned, up is west. ©Lantmäteriet)



(Fig. 30. Map P3, geographical map of Skaraborg, Älvsborg, Dalsland, Halland och Bohuslän from 1689. This is an enhancement that show Edsleskog church, here seemingly called “Heslesou’g” or Hesleskon’g”, and the region around. Note that the church is depicted as a box-shape. Some of the nearby churches are depicted with crosses, but not Edsleskog. It is unclear if the two points on the roof indicate towers or turrets. Also note that the church is placed east of the intersection of two lakes and that there are no roads depicted in the area. ©Lantmäteriet.)



(Fig. 31. Modern map of Edsleskog and the surrounding area, north is up. Note that the place is now called Edsleskog and that the church is marked as an “R” for archeological remain. The new church is marked as a cross. Also note that Edsleskog is still placed by the intersection of lakes, but that the modern depiction of the lake systems are more complex and there are more than two lakes. Lastly, note the modern roads. The main modern road, marked in red, comes from the west, passes through Edsleskog and continues east. The main road forks off to the south and north in Edsleskog. There are also several smaller roads in all directions. Edited by author 20–02–26.

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3.2. Edsleskog church compared to other churches

3.2.1. Edsleskog church compared to neighbouring churches in Tössbo precinct

The selection of these churches were motivated by the former precinct system that was used from the medieval period, mainly because comparing the churches in the same precinct would be more manageable than comparing all medieval churches in Dalsland and because it created a clear selection (Roeck Hansen 2003, 11). The precinct that contained Edsleskog parish also included Fröskog, Tösse, Mo, Tydje, Åmål and Ånimskog parishes (“Tössbo härad” NAD, Riksarkivet 2026). The choice to compare the churches in the same precinct were also motivated by the mention of Tössbo in Äldre Västgötalagen, which could signify that the precinct and thus the churches had a special status during the medieval period (Lindkvist & Sjöberg 2003, 125–150).

In Appendix C the medieval churches of the former precinct of Tössbo, the precinct which Edsleskog was included in, are compared. The data was mainly acquired from the book by author Effe Runelid from 1984 and the anthology by cultural geographer Birgitta Roeck Hansen et al. from 2003, especially the text by art historian Ann Catherine Bonnier. The table compared the known facts about the medieval churches, including the architecture, material, the landscape it was located in, inventory and age (Runelid 1984, 90–136) (Sjöström & Dahlberg; Roeck Hansen; Bonnier; Lindblad; Lindahl; Åman 2003, 8–60) (Appendix C).

When comparing the ages of the medieval churches, Edsleskog was generally older than its neighbours but also the only one that was clearly dated. It was notable for this comparison that most of these churches were not well researched, and much information about them was unknown. Five out of six neighbouring churches were undated. Although four out of the six churches were probably made of wood, Mö, Åmål, Tydje and Fröskog, which would in all likelihood date them to the early medieval period. Ånimskog church was made out of greystone and was probably from the early thirteenth century. Tösse church was made out of brick, one of the six medieval brick churches in Dalsland, and was probably built in the late thirteenth century. It was noticed that all of these churches might have had predecessors in wood, and that the sources about the medieval churches existence and appearance generally derived from after the medieval period when they were torn down or replaced. This indicated that a lot of the knowledge on how they had appeared during the medieval period was unknown. Fröskog medieval church was torn down in the seventeenth century to be replaced by newer churches several times. The medieval church in Mo is gone and was replaced in the seventeenth century. Tydje medieval church is also gone, and the parish of Tydje is today a part of Tösse parish. Tösse church still exists, but has been rebuilt heavily after the medieval period. Åmål medieval church is gone, with several successors built afterwards. And lastly, Ånimskog church is still standing, but was heavily rebuilt. Common motivations for the poor preservation of these churches were the neglect brought by the

Reformation and the destruction that was caused by the conflicts that took place in Dalsland during the sixteenth century. This follows the same trend as Edsleskog church, where the medieval church was destroyed after the medieval period (Runelid 1984, 90–136) (Roeck Hansen, Bonnier; Lindblad; Lindahl; Åman 2003, 11–60)(Appendix C).

Potential apses were never described or found on any of these churches and the shape of the chancels was seldom known. The churches in Tösse and Ånimskog might have had smaller, rectangular chancels. Edsleskog church was the only one that has a noticeably big chancel and known apse. The general floor plan of these churches were also unknown. Tösse church was noted to probably have been a simple rectangular nave with a built out chancel, and Ånimskog church was probably a simple nave, almost square, with a simple chancel. Ånimskog church was also the only church with suggestions on where the doors might have been, one in the south and one in the west. The southern door was probably built in a late Romanesque style. Since the church also had Gothic style trusses, it was possibly built in the transitional phase of the early thirteenth century. If these six churches had building details like transepts, sacristies or a narthexes were either unknown or unlikely, no other church than Edsleskog had traces of sacristies or transepts. It seemed like the six other churches in Tössbo precinct had very simple floor plans. Details like paintings and vaults were also generally lacking in the six churches. Five out of six of these churches had no known towers. When rebuilding the church in Tösse in the eighteenth century, records showed that they removed something that might have been a tower but much more likely was a roof turret. It was unknown when this possible roof turret was built. There were no records of paintings or vaults in any of these churches (Runelid 1984, 90–136) (Sjöström & Dahlberg; Bonnier; Lindblad; Lindahl; Åman, Roeck Hansen 2003, 8–60). Since most of the appearances of the churches were unknown it was difficult to place them in the Romanesque or Gothic style. Most of them seem to have leaned against the more Romanesque style of having small separate chancels, which made them more likely to be from the early medieval period (Nilsson 2009, 49–99) (Appendix C).

The compared estimated sizes of the churches in Tössbo precinct and the estimated population of the parishes gave a lot of information about Edsleskog church. Most of the sizes of the medieval churches in Tössbo precinct were unknown. The medieval church in Åmål had an approximate measurement, and some of the other churches have relative measurements compared to the medieval church in Ör (Runelid 1984, 90–136) (Bonnier 2003, 24). There were no data about the medieval population of these parishes, and the earliest numbers came from 1571. This data showed the amount of “fiscal homes” in each parish, and each “fiscal home” was probably around 5-10 people. Most noticeable was the considerable size difference between Edsleskog and Åmål church, even though Åmål had a higher population, Edsleskog church was much bigger. Although Åmål were two parishes by 1571, the city and country parish, and were listed here as one. The medieval population could thus have been notably smaller, but the comparative sizes of the medieval

churches of Edsleskog and Åmål were still remarkable (Andersson Palm 2000, 27–136). If the data from 1571 can be comparable to the medieval population, this data showed that Edsleskog church was much bigger than the other churches. But the parish still had an equal, and often smaller, population (Tab. 1) (Appendix C).

Name of church/parish	Approximate measurements of church	Approximate area of church	Amount of “fiscal homes” in parish 1571	Approximate amount of people in parish 1571
Edsleskog	41 x 30 metres	About 400 m ² only nave, about 600 m ² with chancel and transepts	18 “fiscal homes”	90-180 people
Fröskog	Unknown	Unknown	18 “fiscal homes”	90-180 people
Mo	Unknown	Unknown	38 “fiscal homes”	190-380 people
Tydje	Unknown	Unknown	17 “fiscal homes”	85-170 people
Tösse	Unknown amount bigger than Ör medieval church, which was about 16 x 8 metres	Unknown amount bigger than Ör medieval church, which were about 128 m ²	34 “fiscal homes”	170-340 people
Åmål	About 15 x 8 metres	About 120 m ² with assumption of a simple floor plan	21 “fiscal homes”	105-210 people
Ånimskog	Unknown	Unknown	61 “fiscal homes”	305-610 people

(Tab.1. Table comparing the approximate sizes of the medieval parish churches in Tössbo precinct to their 1571 estimated population. Note that only Edsleskog and Åmål have known measurements, and thus they were written in bold. Also note that Edsleskog parish was amongst the least populated areas in Tössbo. The sizes of the churches were sourced from Runelid 1984, 90-136 and Bonnier 2003, 24. The information on the population was sourced from Andersson Palm 2000, 27–136. The data about the size of Edsleskog church was sourced from Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 A, 5 and the information about the probable floorplan of Edsleskog church was sourced from Mühlenbock, Lazarides & Beckman 2023, 154).

Edsleskog church was placed in a forested area by lakes, which was comparable to the placement of Ånimskog church. Ånimskog church was placed by lake Ånimmen, in an area that notably housed a lot of pre-Christian graves and artefacts. The other five churches did not follow the same trend. Fröskog church was the only one that seems to have been purposely built on a height to tower over the landscape. Tydje and Åmål churches were placed on notably flat plain areas for northern Dalsland, close to the shore of lake Vänern. Tösse church was located in a flat and agricultural area (Runelid 1984, 90–136) (Roeck Hansen; Bonnier; Lindahl; Åman 2003, 12–60) (Appendix C).

The medieval inventory of these churches were mostly gone, but the churches in Tösse, Åmål and Ånimskog housed preserved medieval baptismal fonts. The baptismal font in Tösse church was undated and in a Norwegian style. The font from Åmål church was also undated and had not been identified stylistically. The font in Ånimskog church was dated to probably the thirteenth century, made in a style common in Västergötland. The churches in Mo, Tösse and Åmål had preserved medieval bells from the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries. Fröskog church housed a crucifix made in a French style that was identified to be from the late twelfth or early thirteenth century. Fröskog church also had an undated medieval processional cross and pieces of a thirteenth century altar cabinet/madonna cabinet. The churches of Mo, Tydje, Tösse and Åmål did not have further inventory than discussed. Ånimskog church housed some late medieval inventory as well as an eleventh century oak coffin, although this coffin originated from an older graveyard that the church was built upon (Runelid 1984, 90–136) (Bonnie 2003, 19–26) (Appendix C). The medieval baptismal font of Edsleskog church was probably locally made before 1250, and was stylistically similar to fonts from Värmland, Bohuslän, Dalsland and Østfold (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 B, 74).

To summarize, the preservation of the medieval churches in Tössbo precinct seemed to be roughly the same. The medieval churches were generally gone and either rebuilt or replaced after the medieval era. Most of the inventory was gone as well, but some of the churches housed medieval bells or baptismal fonts. The oldest inventory, a late twelfth century crucifix, was found in Fröskog church. The general dating of the churches themselves were difficult and poorly researched. That the majority were made of wood might signify that they were from the early medieval period. Ånimskog church was probably the oldest, dated from the early thirteenth century and housed a mix of Romanesque and Gothic styles. The brick church of Tösse was probably built during the thirteenth century. The possibility of predecessors of some or all of these churches cannot be ruled out, especially with the possible continuity of graves that Ånimskog church seemed to have (Runelid 1984, 90–136) (Roeck Hansen; Bonnier; Lindblad; Lindahl; Åman 2003, 11–60) (Appendix C).

The floor plans and the general size and shape of these churches were generally unknown. Although it seemed like that they were built relatively simple, with simple rectangular nave, small chancels if they had any and little appendix buildings. There were no signs of sacristies, apses, narthexes, transepts, towers, vaults, extensive decoration or paintings in any of these churches. The outlier was Tösse church, which might have had a roof turret. The churches were also, as far as it was provable, way smaller than Edsleskog church. The two churches that had some known measurements, Åmål and Tösse, both seemed to be around 15 times 8 metres, with Tösse probably being an unknown amount bigger. But there was no proof that any of these churches were close to the 41 times 30 metres of Edsleskog church. The probable population of Edsleskog compared to its neighbouring parishes did not coincide with the sizes of the churches. Edsleskog parish seemed to have had a small population that was comparable to its neighbours, it even seemed to have been even less populated than some. Only the churches in Edsleskog and Ånimskog were placed by a lake in a forested area. Some of the other churches were placed by Vänern, and often on flat, agricultural land. Fröskog was an outlier with it being placed on a height (Runelid 1984, 90–136) (Andersson Palm 2000, 136–194) (Sjöström & Dahlberg; Roeck Hansen; Bonnier; Lindblad; Lindahl; Åman 2003, 8–60) (Appendix C).

Edsleskog church was not like the other churches in the area. It was mostly comparable to Tösse and Ånimskog churches. Tösse church had a similar building style, with the bricks, the roof turret and possibly bigger size. Ånimskog church shared the placement in the landscape, the continuity with the pre-Christian landscape and older age. But in size, floor plan and overall design, Edsleskog church was an extreme outlier in Tössbo precinct (Runelid 1984, 90–136) (Sjöström & Dahlberg; Roeck Hansen; Bonnier; Lindblad; Lindahl; Åman 2003, 8–60) (Appendix C).

3.2.2. Edsleskog church compared to medieval brick churches in Dalsland

There are six known medieval churches in Dalsland that were fully built in brick. These were Edsleskog, Frändefors, Gestad, Grinstad, Tösse and Ör churches (Bonnier 2003, 22). These six churches were compared based on ages, floor plans, building designs, inventories, placements in landscape and style of the bricks. The data was mainly acquired from the book by author Effe Runelid from 1984 and the anthology by cultural geographer Birgitta Roeck Hansen et al. from 2003, especially the text by art historian Ann Catherine Bonnier. The information was placed in Appendix D (Runelid 1984, 11–136) (Sjöström & Dahlberg; Roeck Hansen; Bonnier; Lindblad; Lindahl; Åman 2003, 8–60)(Appendix D).

The medieval churches in Edsleskog, Frändefors, and Gestad are gone, and the churches in Grinstad, Tösse and Ör were heavily rebuilt after the medieval period. A majority of these churches

are not properly dated, but have assumed ages. The churches in Frändefors, Gestad and Tösse had no suggested dating except probably the late thirteenth century. In the church in Gestad there have been found two coins dated 1250–1300. The churches in Grinstad and Ör have some traditions about being older than the second half of the thirteenth century, Grinstad church traditionally being thought of as being from the twelfth century. Although Grinstad church probably had stylistic similarities to a mid thirteenth century church in Skara, and was supposedly dedicated to St. Erik. The church was thus probably not from the twelfth century, due to the style and unusually early dedication to a saint that had just died. Also, the church was often dated to the late thirteenth century due to the assumption that brick did not exist earlier in Dalsland. A tradition around the church in Ör tells of a brick with the date 1219 found in the seventeenth century when renovating. No proof of this have been found (Runelid 1984, 11–136) (Roeck Hansen; Bonnier; Lindblad; Lindahl; Åman 2003, 8–60) (Appendix D).

The placements of these churches were overwhelmingly in the southeast of Dalsland. The churches of Grinstad, Gestad, Frändefors and Ör were all located in the former region of Dal. The exceptions were the churches Tösse and Edsleskog, which were placed relatively close to each other in Tössbo precinct in northeastern Dalsland. The four churches in the south seemed to have been placed just outside of hamlets in an agricultural area. Tösse church was placed on a flat area, on a notably low placement in the landscape. Gestad church was placed on a notably marshy place, which made the medieval church slowly sink down in the ground. Only Edsleskog church was placed in the forest (Runelid 1984, 11–136) (Roeck Hansen; Bonnier; Lindblad; Lindahl; Åman 2003, 8–60) (Appendix D).

The known appearances of these churches seemed to have followed a general trend of being quite simple. All of the churches except Edsleskog probably had simple rectangular naves and small square chancels with some, like the church in Ör, possibly having no chancel at all. Generally none of these five churches had building details like towers, apses, transepts, narthex, or sacristies. At least none that can be proven or found. Frändefors church might have had a tower, according to a sixteenth century observation, but the design and age of it was unknown. Tösse church was also noted in a post medieval source to have had a tower, or most likely a roof turret, with an unknown age. Gestad church seemed to have had a narthex (Runelid 1984, 11–136) (Roeck Hansen; Bonnier; Lindblad; Lindahl; Åman 2003, 8–60) (Appendix D).

The bricks in these churches were not well researched. Some of the bricks had the edges cut in a similar fashion to the bricks in the Benedictine church of Lödöse, namely Gestad, Ör and Edsleskog churches. Some of the churches were preserved enough to identify the walls as being built in monk bond, namely Grinstad and Ör. The bricks in Grinstad were specifically noted to be the sizes 29 times 14 times 9 centimeters. Grinstad and Ör had red and white painted bricks. A lot

of this data of course has to do with the state of preservation of the brick walls, and some of these churches are gone (Runelid 1984, 11–136)(Roeck Hansen; Bonnier; Lindblad; Lindahl; Åman 2003, 8–60) (Appendix D).

The churches generally did not have any vaults or paintings, at least that can be proven. Grinstad church most likely had internal brick vaults, due to finds of building blocks typically used in vaults. Grinstad church also had some Gothic paintings in red that depicted a labyrinth, a consecration cross and parts of a frieze. Grinstad church probably had rounded arched windows in the older Gothic style, as well as an ornamental face mask, an ornate plaque, a “capstone like” button in glazed brick, a brick with an etched in name (Canutus), blind windows and possibly a western door. In Gestad church rests of ornamental bricks were found. Ör church probably had round arched window in the older Gothic style, blind windows, and a possible built out section for the southern door with spiral ornaments (Runelid 1984, 11–136)) (Roeck Hansen; Bonnier; Lindblad; Lindahl; Åman 2003, 8–60) (Appendix D).

The compared estimated sizes of the medieval brick churches in Dalsland and the estimated population of the parishes provided a lot of information about Edsleskog church. The sizes of the medieval brick churches in Dalsland, with the exception of Edsleskog church, was generally unknown. The churches in Ör and Gestad had approximate measurements, and the others had relative sizes (Runelid 1984, 11–136))(Roeck Hansen; Bonnier; Lindblad; Lindahl; Åman 2003, 8–60). The medieval population of the parishes was unknown, but might be comparable to the 1571 data of the amount of “fiscal homes” in each parish. Each “fiscal home” was probably about 5–10 people (Andersson Palm 2000 , 27–136)(Tab. 2) (Appendix D).

Name of church/parish	Approximated measurements of church	Approximate area of church	Amount of “fiscal homes” in parish 1571	Approximate mount of people in parish 1571
Edsleskog	41 x 30 metres	About 400 m ² only nave, about 600 m ² with chancel and transepts	18 “fiscal homes”	90-180 people
Frändefors	Probably the same size, or smaller than, the church in Ör, at	Probably around or smaller than the estimated area of Ör	58 “fiscal homes”	290–580 people

	16 x 8 metres	medieval church at 128 m ² , assuming that the church had a simple floor plan		
Gestad	About 13 x 10 metres	About 130 m ² , assuming that the church had a simple floor plan	37 “fiscal homes”	185–370 people
Grinstad	Unknown, probably smaller than the church in Ör at 16 x 8 metres	Unknown, probably smaller than the estimated area of Ör medieval church at 128 m ²	35 “fiscal homes”	175–350 people
Tösse	Unknown, probably bigger than the church in Ör at 16 x 8 metres	Unknown, probably bigger than the estimated area of Ör medieval church at 128 m ²	34 “fiscal homes”	170–340 people
Ör	About 16 x 8 metres	About 128 m ² , assuming a simple floor plan	47 “fiscal homes”	235–470 people

(Tab. 2. Table comparing the approximate sizes of the medieval parish churches made of brick in Dalsland to their 1571 estimated population. Note that Edsleskog, Gestad and Ör are the only churches with known approximate measurements and are thus in bold. Also note that Edsleskog parish was considerably less populated compared to the other parishes, but that the other churches were notably smaller. The sizes of the churches were sourced from Runelid 1984, 11–136 and Roeck Hansen; Bonnier; Lindblad; Lindahl; Åman 2003, 8–60. The information on the population was sourced from Andersson Palm 2000, 27–136. The data about the size of Edsleskog church was sourced from Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 A, 5 and the information on the probable floorplan of Edsleskog church was sourced from Mühlenbock, Lazarides & Beckman 2023, 154).

The above comparison showed that Edsleskog parish had a considerably smaller population than the other parishes that housed medieval brick churches. The less populated parishes had about double the amount of homes compared to Edsleskog, and Frändefors and Ör were even more

populated. If this data is comparable to the medieval population, or at least can create a point of comparison, Edsleskog church would have been too big for the population in the parish. The churches that had known estimated measurements were generally three times smaller than Edsleskog, or even smaller if adding the area of the transepts to Edsleskog church. For example Frändefors parish, which seemed to have had the densest population in 1571 of about three times more homes than Edsleskog, had a church that was probably even smaller than the one in Ör. Ör church was three times smaller than Edsleskog church if just comparing the naves (Runelid 1984, 11–136)) (Roeck Hansen; Bonnier; Lindblad; Lindahl; Åman 2003, 8–60) (Andersson Palm 2000, 27–136) (Tab. 2)(Appendix D).

The churches in Frändefors, Gestad, Grinstad, Tösse and Ör had preserved medieval baptismal fonts, all being from the thirteenth century with the exception of the one in Tösse, which was undated. They had mixed stylistic origins. The font from Gestad church was in Västergötland style, the ones from Grinstad and Tösse churches in Norwegian style and the one from Ör church was mixed between Västergötland and Norwegian style. Gestad church had a preserved communion chalice in silver from the fifteenth century. Tösse church had a possible thirteenth century bell. Ör church housed a Jesus statue in English style from the fourteenth century (Runelid 1984, 11–136) (Roeck Hansen; Bonnier; Lindblad; Lindahl; Åman 2003, 8–60) (Appendix D).

To summarize, the placement and floor plan of Edsleskog church was not common amongst the few medieval brick churches in Dalsland. In general, they were built in the south and connected to agricultural plain lands. The other brick churches probably had simpler floor plans and smaller sizes than Edsleskog church, even though the populations of the parishes were greater. Although the knowledge about the medieval brick churches in Dalsland are limited and the churches might have had more building details than can be assumed. The dating of these churches generally seem to place them in the late thirteenth century. The baptismal fonts had mixed origins, they were equally likely to be in Norwegian style as in Västergötland style. The bricks from the churches were not well preserved and to analyze which bond they were placed in was almost impossible. The few instances where the size or bond of the bricks were known, they were smaller than the ones in Edsleskog and placed in monk bonds. Edsleskog church was mostly comparable to the only other brick church placed in the north, Tösse. Although, Tösse church was not as big as Edsleskog church and was not comparable in structure. Tösse church also did not share the placement of Edsleskog, the church notably being placed on an unusually flat area of northern Dalsland. The roof turrets both churches possibly shared showed a similarity in building design. But in conclusion, Edsleskog church seemed to have been bigger and more elaborate than the other medieval brick churches in Dalsland. The church was placed unusually and was probably older than the others.

3.2.3. Edsleskog church compared to other pilgrimage churches

Pilgrimage churches were often disproportionate in size to the population of the community (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 A, 12). The building often expanded as the pilgrimage site became more popular (Bringéus 1997, 24). Edsleskog church was disproportionately large for the probable population of the area. There was no proof that the size of the church was ever intended to be smaller than what it became. Some things changed between building phase one and two, but the intended size did not seem to be one of them. The church also did not seem to expand with time, except perhaps adding appendix buildings. A large chancel was also a sign of a large priesthood, which showed administrative importance. Edsleskog church had a large chancel, which seemed to be original to the initial building phase (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 A, 5–15).

Disproportion in wealth and inventory was also a common sign of a pilgrimage church. Depictions of saints and their attributes, finds of pilgrimage badges, and graffiti were also common features in pilgrimage churches. Often this accompanied the existence of many sacrificial coffins and appendix buildings for the inventory, like many sacristies (Bringéus 1997, 24–45). The possible presence of graffiti in Edsleskog church was impossible to prove since the church is gone. There were also no finds of pilgrimage badges or depictions of saints in the church. The few graves housed nothing that could identify the individuals as pilgrims, and had no pilgrimage badges or other artefacts that could be tied to pilgrimage. Although, only a small part of the church and its surroundings were excavated. Edsleskog church might have had several sacristies, one in the north and one in the south, which might indicate the aforementioned growth of the church. Amongst the few finds there was little sign of rich inventory, although it might be lost. Although there were finds of possible offerings, like fish and coins. The abundance of coins were generally dated to the thirteenth century. This probably signified a clear period of popularity for the church, perhaps the popularity of the pilgrimage site. The distribution of the coins possibly show that there were at least two other altars in the transepts. Most of the earliest coins were found by the main altar, which might indicate a later adage of the side altars (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 A, 3–30).

The landscape around a pilgrimage church was most likely adapted to the pilgrims and the cult. The area probably had a road, hostels and road markers (Andersson 1989, 13–14). A nearby holy spring and pre-Christian cult continuity might also be features of a pilgrimage site, as well as annual markets and festivities (Bringéus 1997, 9–46). Placenames in the area around a pilgrimage site might contain ecclesiastical words. In the area around Edsleskog the aforementioned places Kapellängen and Munkhyttan/Munkhättan existed. Edsleskog had a thing(court), and an annual market and festivities, although they were not mentioned until later sources. The holy spring in Edsleskog was directly connected to the church but of unknown age (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 A, 12). The spring was not mentioned in the initial letter about the creation of

the church and cult (SDHK 388). No sources have been found that identifies a possible pilgrimage road in Edsleskog.

To summarize, Edsleskog church seems to have been built as a typical pilgrimage church. It was large, with transepts, possibly several sacristies and a big chancel. The inventory was difficult to analyze since most of it was gone. But the church had many finds of coins, which together with the possible sacristies might have signified a great amount of offerings or tax revenue. The landscape around the church was also difficult to analyze due to a lack of sources. There were no remains of a pilgrimage road, road markers or medieval hostels in the area. The age of the holy spring, market, thing and festivities could only be traced back to after the church was established. Although again, this might be due to lack of sources.

4. Discussion

4.1. Edsleskog church

The 2019–2021 archaeological excavation of the medieval church in Edsleskog created more knowledge about the finds and building of the site. Some of the finds, like sewing needles, coins, fish bones and fishing hooks might not only show the activities of the church, but the placements of activities due to the distribution. For example, the sewing needles were mostly found in the north, which might indicate that the church was separated by gender (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 A, 5–30). Although, it is important to point out that there is a graveyard over the ruins of the medieval church and it is very possible that distribution of finds have been disrupted or destroyed by the graves (Jonsson & Mühlenbock 2024, 5–6). The distribution of the finds could also be questioned due to the placement of the trenches during the excavation, and that some areas were avoided due to graves being there (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 A, 1–13). Most of the trenches were placed on the walls of the church, and avoided much of the nave (Mühlenbock, Lazarides & Beckman 2023, 154) (Fig. 2). Thus, distribution patterns of the finds should be questioned on several accounts. Even the stratigraphical dating could be questioned depending on how much disruption the graves have caused. A lot of the finds could possibly have been lost due to the disturbance. Thus, the finds are a flawed source.

That the bricks in Edsleskog church became more standardized over time seems to show that the church was either built by an amateur bricklayer, or at least someone who didn't know or cared to do the standardized techniques for bricklaying, in the first phase and then changed to a more experienced one. The fact that the church is slightly skewed might also show some level of amateurishness. Or, perhaps the bricklayer became more trained in the standardized way of bricklaying between phase one and two. Most of the earliest brick buildings in Scandinavia were built by masters from other countries which generally made the buildings constructed in a standardized way. The lack of standardization in Edsleskog church might show that it was built by a local craftsman who perhaps had little experience with bricks. The church might thus have been built with a limited budget. The archaeological material does not discern if the church was plastered on the outside or inside, and Hesselgren's eulogy claimed that it was not plastered on the outside. This could of course have changed during the ages, but one might assume that the agent behind the church wanted to show off the material since it was so new. But the bricks were placed in an irregular and "non decorative" pattern, which could either signify that they were hidden behind plaster or that the bricklayers were inexperienced and could not do it in a decorative way. Perhaps the bricks were impressive enough without being decorative.

The lack of standardization and possibly limited budget might support the idea that Edsleskog church was built by a private agent. This could be further supported by the possible plans for a

western tower in the first building phase, something that is often associated with private agency (Nilsson 2009, 49–99). Thus it is possible that Edsleskog church was initially built by a private agent that hired local craftsmen. Also, Edsleskog was probably a difficult location to travel to in the medieval era, which would make the hiring of any non-local craftsmen complicated. If the bricklayer was local, then the issue of travel would not exist. There is also little evidence that any Norwegian administration had anything to do with the conception of Edsleskog church. Bricks and Romanesque western towers were uncommon in Norway, and there are no sources that point to major Norwegian powers being involved. This does not exclude that a potential private agent might have been Norwegian.

The idea proposed by archaeologists Anton Lazarides & Christian Mühlenbock that the private agent behind the church was a king can not be excluded, and would explain the probable connections and wealth of the agent. It could be argued that this would have been mentioned in a source. Also, if the church was built by amateurs or on a strict budget, this proposed agent should be questioned (Lazarides & Mühlenbock 2020, 34–35).

The second building phase of the church can thus be explained in a few different ways. Perhaps the bricklayer learned how to standardize and refine the technique between phase one and two. Another option, which could coincide with the removal of the plans for the western tower, would be that the agent changed between the phases. It is possible that Edsleskog church started as a localized and private project, and was finished by, most likely, the diocese of Skara. The new agent could also have been a monastic order or a convent since they were closely tied to bricklaying. Edsleskog church, as well as the churches in Gestad and Ör, had similar brick techniques to the Dominican monastery in Lödöse. But no further evidence of this possible agency exists. If the diocese of Skara took over the building project, they would have more connections to experienced bricklayers, like for example the Dominican monks of Lödöse, and have the funds to make them travel to Edsleskog. Maybe the building of the church was stopped in the initial phase because of budget concerns, and could start again because the diocese of Skara had more funds.

A problem with the idea of a private agent, and thus possibly that the church was initially planned for a more localized cult and pilgrimage, is that the church was huge and had building details like transepts, a big chancel and possibly several sacristies from the beginning. This would indicate that it was planned from the start to house many pilgrims and a large priesthood. Maybe these design elements were present because of the inspiration the agent got from other brickchurches, and thus the size and design might simply be a show of power, wealth and connections.

As established, the size, weight and verticality of this church were in themselves shows of power. There were also elements of privacy and distance, since the church probably was quite isolated.

People had to travel to the church and make an effort to visit. The element of symmetry seems to be something that developed over time, with the northern transept and the potential double sacristies/side chapels. Maybe the later focus on symmetry is connected to the diocese of Skara taking over and wanting to show architectural control (Thiis-Evensen 1998, 5–14).

The church was probably planned to be a pilgrimage church from the beginning, just arguably not in the organized way that the diocese of Skara made it later. If the northern transept was added later, as suggested, that might indicate that the church was originally planned for smaller pilgrimage but expanded in the second phase. The southern transept, the traditional male side of the church, could have housed an altar for St. Nicolaus.

The oldest coins found in the church were Norwegian, which might show that the very first pilgrims were locals and people from Norway. The amount of coins peaked in the early thirteenth century, and they were mostly Swedish. This might coincide with the diocese of Skara taking over and making the pilgrimage grander. Something of note must have happened in the first half of the thirteenth century that produced this amount of coin finds, since coins were usually more common in later periods. Also, the wood floor that the church would have had in the late thirteenth century would arguably preserve more coins than the lime mortar floor the church had in the early thirteenth century (Jonsson & Mühlenbock 2024, 1–19)(Klackenberg 1992, 15–45).

The diocese of Skara was probably not the initial agent behind the church. The first time the church was probably mentioned, as well as the first time the diocese of Skara acknowledged it, was in 1220(SDHK 338). If the dating of the church to the late twelfth century is correct, this means that by 1220 the building of the church could have been ongoing for about 25–30 years. For the bishop to mention a church like Edsleskog this late into the building process is peculiar. There were also no other contracts or texts that mention this decades-long building project. Perhaps the diocese of Skara was recently involved with the project in 1220. A private agent could have started to build the church, but possibly ran out of money and had to take a break, and during the break the diocese of Skara found out that the church existed and took over the project. The cult of St. Nicolaus might have been very important to a local, elite individual, which inspired the building of the church. The diocese of Skara might have noticed the cult, and the accompanying church being built, as an opportunity to take control over the area of northern Dalsland and thus gain control of the borderlands towards Norway. The revenue from the pilgrimage became a bonus, and the church became an administrative centre to control the area. Thus what started as a local cult became, due to the diocese of Skara, a popular pilgrimage site.

It is worth discussing if the aforementioned connection between elite people and saints might be true for St. Nicolaus. The woman buried in the northern aisle can be interpreted as a member of

the elite due to her health and burial placement, and could have been a benefactor for the building of the church. This could further support the theory that Edsleskog church was built by a private agent or agents. She might even have been a relative to the mysterious St. Nicolaus, which would further motivate the funding of a church in his honor. Following the trends at the time, for example St.Elin/Helena, it would be possible that St. Nicolaus was a member of the elite. This would then signify that the construction of Edsleskog church might have been more driven by private agency and localized power than centralized power from the diocese of Skara. It is also possible to draw a parallel between St. Elin/Helena and the woman in the grave, perhaps they shared the same role as powerful women and benefactors to the church. There is no proof that the woman in the grave was a saint and she was not buried in a similar manner to St. Elin/Helena, but they might have shared a similar social role in early medieval society.

But, who was this private agent? One might assume that if the above arguments are correct, this agent wanted to show domination and agency over the landscape. But, as established, Edsleskog was not particularly important except for two things, as a part of the borderland between Sweden and Norway and as a pilgrimage site. Thus the private agent probably built the church either to show agency over the cult or to draw a clearer border.

This does not narrow the options between a Norwegian, Swedish or entirely independent agent. Potential Norwegian influence of the area can be seen in the names Edsleskog and Hesleskog. “Hesle” could potentially be connected to the tree “hassel” (own trans. hazel tree), which was a common name for streams in Norway. The name “Edslan” is possibly related to the old Norwegian word for “roaring water” (Rosell 1983, 38-99). In one scenario, it might be a Norwegian agent that tried to establish dominance towards the growing influence of Sweden, and the diocese of Skara did a takeover of the church as a final victory against Norwegian influence in the area. If this was a Swedish agent, then the establishment of the church might be a more collaborative effort with Swedish powers. The agent behind the church might also have acted independently, wanting to show their own influence over the area. But to build this extreme show of power to establish dominance over the seemingly unimportant area of Edsleskog is peculiar. The argument that grander powers, like the diocese of Skara or a monastic order, built Edsleskog church to colonize the area then becomes more likely. The presence of the church would not be about establishing dominance over Edsleskog specifically, but over the entirety of Markerna.

Although, if this was the plan from the start, the placement of this show of dominance was strange, since it is hard to get to and far away from anything important, like a big population, important communication routes or administrative centres. Of course, the church probably became these things over time, but the initial placement seems accidental. The placement is too specific and irregular to just be about the grander picture. This leads to the assumption that the agent behind

the church either must have had the will to show dominance over the specific area of Edsleskog or that the building is located where it is specifically because of the cult of St. Nicolaus. If the agent or agents wanted to show dominance over specifically Edsleskog one can assume that they were locals, because there was no known significance about Edsleskog that would attract someone from another area, except of course the cult.

A possible model for explaining why Edsleskog were important for a short time to then be abandoned could be the phenomena of the medieval expansion and later reduction. The Swedish kingdom was generally around lakes Vänern, Vättern and Mälaren during the twelfth century and might have had a vague control over other areas. But those areas were most probably controlled by local lords. The kingdom then started to expand greatly during the second half of the thirteenth century when the Bjälbo family unified it. The Black Death came to Sweden about 1350, which greatly reduced population and many farms and communities were abandoned. Especially the communities that lived in forested areas were abandoned, because the survivors often moved to uninhabited farms in agricultural lands (Harrison 2020, 199-297). Edsleskog church and the surrounding community might have been an attempt from the kingdom of Sweden to expand, but it did not last. This is possible, but there are a few stipulations.

The coin finds from the church in Edsleskog do not collaborate this interpretation. The amount of coins in Edsleskog church peaked during the first half of the thirteenth century, to then reduce in the second half and rise again in the late fourteenth century. The fourteenth century peak was probably due to the Black Death and people offering more to escape it (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 A, 15–20) (Fig. 5). This shows the opposing trend to the theory that Edsleskog used to be populated during the expansion years of about 1250-1350. Although the distribution of coins is quite unreliable as a source due to heavy disturbance of the stratigraphical layers (Jonsson & Mühlenbock 2024, 5–6). The church was built before the mid-thirteenth century expansion (Mühlenbock, Lazarides & Beckman 2023, 159–164). Also, there is one medieval letter from the beginning of the thirteenth century that discusses Edsleskog, and then most letters regarding the place appear in the beginning of the fourteenth century to then reduce during the second half of the fourteenth century. This shows engagement in Edsleskog before the expansion, but very little during it (SDHK 388; 2259; 2294; 2319; 2370; 2503; 5844; 11523; 13906; 22172).

To summarize, none of these sources show the trend that Edsleskog church was built during the expansion of the Swedish kingdom and then abandoned during the Black Death. It was built before the expansion and was more or less abandoned before the Black Death. Thus, the original idea for Edsleskog church and the surrounding community were probably not a failed attempt for the Swedish kingdom to expand. The creation of the church was probably motivated by other factors, like pilgrimage and private agency, and the peaks in popularity were most likely tied to the

pilgrimage. The church could have been a part of the Swedish expansion, but thus later in its existence. The Black Death could have created a reduction in popularity for the church due to the lesser number of people that could visit, but there is no proof that the society in Edsleskog was abandoned during this time. The church lost popularity and interest over time, but Edsleskog still existed and the thing was still important.

4.2. Edsleskog & other churches

A notable occurrence in this research was that brick churches have been dated on, sometimes only, the fact that brick "could not exist" until a certain date. Since the existence of Edsleskog church challenges these assumptions, several datings should be questioned.

Most of the medieval brick churches in Dalsland were probably in the same cultural sphere as the churches in Västergötland, since brick generally became popular at the same time in both regions. The inventory showed equal cultural influence from Västergötland and Norway, with no clear divider. It would be reasonable that Edsleskog and Tösse had more influences from Norway and the four churches in the south from Västergötland, but there is no such pattern.

The reason why the only other brick church in medieval northern Dalsland was Tösse might be that it took direct inspiration from Edsleskog church. This would explain the brick as well as the roof turret. But if the dating of a lot of these churches are to be questioned then they could possibly be from the same time. Tösse church was also in Tössbo precinct, relatively close to Edsleskog, which would place it under the same early Västergötland jurisdiction as Edsleskog and Dal. This means that all brick churches were absolutely built in the sphere of influence of Västergötland.

When comparing Edsleskog church to other medieval churches in Tössbo, Edsleskog was an outlier in many accounts. The churches were generally simple, small, not rich and built in wood. The exceptions were the churches in Tösse and Ånimskog. Tösse church, as previously stated, might have been built in brick as a direct influence from Edsleskog. The churches in Tössbo were also generally built in locations that were more flat and not, as the case with Edsleskog, in difficult terrain. Ånimskog church followed a bit of the same pattern as Edsleskog, being built by a lake in a landscape with a lot of prehistoric artefacts. Generally, with maybe the exception of Ånimskog, it seems like the churches in Tössbo were built in a simple style with a material that was very common in the area. The churches were generally located in accessible locations and the population that used and built these churches were probably small. Edsleskog church stands out. It was more impractically placed and the design, material and size was not comparable to its neighbours. This

might signify that Edsleskog church was built by someone that was not from the area and had more funds.

When comparing the size of Edsleskog church to other churches, both other brick churches and other neighbouring churches, it is clear that Edsleskog church was about three times larger than all of them. Of course this varied, and most of these churches did not have established sizes. The average medieval church in Dalsland appeared to have been about 130 m², and only the nave of Edsleskog church was 400 m². This definitely shows that either the population of Edsleskog parish was much greater than any other parish in the region, even the ones in the south where they had more agricultural land, or that the size of the church was not related to the population.

In the sixteenth century inventory of Edsleskog church it was mentioned that the medieval church appeared similar to the cathedral in Skara. The original text was vague on how the churches were alike and briefly mentioned that the architecture was similar (*Inventarium för kyrkorna i Skara stift*. 1583, 38). Thus, to compare them, it is vital to know what Skara medieval cathedral looked like. It is unclear exactly how Skara cathedral appeared in the early medieval period, especially in the twelfth century. But the cathedral was probably three-aisled with smaller transepts. The cathedral could have had double towers, or at least one tower in the west. According to surveys done in the eighteenth century, the cathedral probably had an inner colonnade and appendix buildings in both the north and south. By the end of the medieval era the cathedral would have had a more Gothic design since it was heavily rebuilt in the thirteenth and fourteenth century. The early medieval cathedral, when it was in a more Romanesque style, was probably decorated with sculptures. The cathedral had a crypt and was, according to the eighteenth century sketch, about 50 meters long (Dahlberg 1998, 79–84). The cathedral in Skara was probably built in sandstone, which was common in the area and during this period (Gullbrandsson 2008, 24) (Fig. 32).



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(Fig. 32. Suggested floor plan of the cathedral in Skara as surveyed in the eighteenth century. The ages of the different building parts are unknown. North is up. Note the internal colonnade in the nave, the transepts and appendix buildings in the chancel. Dahlberg 1998.)

If a stylistic connection between Edsleskog church and the cathedral in Skara existed, then it might be strong proof that the diocese of Skara was involved in the building process of Edsleskog church. The known similarities seem to be the grand sizes and design elements like having three aisles, an inner colonnade and appendix buildings and/or transepts. By the time of the inventory report both churches might have shared Gothic features as well. Other elements in Skara cathedral, like the crypt, the possible tower, and the building material were not similar to Edsleskog church. Thus there seemed to have been some sort of stylistic overlap between Skara cathedral and Edsleskog church, or at least how the churches appeared by the sixteenth century. Or there might just have been a general connection between Edsleskog church and how cathedrals were built.

The cross-shaped planform of Edsleskog church does not seem to appear in any other church in the area at the time, but could be compared to other churches. For example, St. Thøgers church in Vestervig in Denmark, probably built in the mid twelfth century. Both churches had double transepts and apses. St. Thøgers church had, like Edsleskog church possibly had, double sacristies/side chapels. St. Thøgers church had a monastery attached to it, and as the name suggests, was connected with its own cult of St. Thøgers. St. Thøgers church seemed to have had a middle

tower and was built out of granite. According to the sketch of the floor plan the church seemed to have been quite large as well, about 30–35 meters. Studies of the church remarked that the architectural design seemed inspired by English church buildings (Jensen et al. 1942, 659–666) (Fig. 33).



(Fig.33. Floorplan of St. Thøgers church in Vestervig, Denmark by C. G. Schultz 1939. North is up. Notice the elaborate transepts, the apse and appendix buildings in the chancel. On the lower end of the figure, a scale shows 25 metres. Jensen et al. 1942)

The peculiar floor plan of Edsleskog church can be compared to The church of our Lady in Kalundborg, Denmark. This church has a floor plan formed as a Greek cross with five towers, each tower housing an altar dedicated to a different saint and holy concept like the true cross and the body of Christ. The age of the church is debatable, but it was probably built in the late twelfth or the early thirteenth century. The church was mainly built in brick with a foundation made of paving stone, and granite was used in the plinths, columns and portals. The brick was placed in a sometimes uneven monk bond. It is debated on what the architectural design of the church is a reference to, ideas ranging from churches in Germany, Italy and Byzantium. The crusades might have provided cultural and architectural transferral that inspired the design of the church. With its many towers, the church might also have been a stylistic reference to fortifications or palace chapels.

The church also references early medieval Danish bricklaying linked to the royal dynasty of Valdemar (Jørgensen et al. 1994, 3016–3292)(Fig. 34).



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(Fig. 34. Floor plan of The church of our Lady in Kalundborg, Denmark. Probably done by C.B. Hornbech, about 1820. North is up. Notice that the floor plan is the shape of a Greek cross. Jørgensen et al. 1994.)

The builder of Edsleskog church seemed to have, just like the builder of the church in Kalundborg, gotten inspiration from other cultures. This might show that the builder of Edsleskog church was well-traveled and/or connected. The brick techniques of the two churches seem to have been similar, which might show that the agent behind Edsleskog church had connections in Denmark. The similarities in the floor plans might also indicate that Edsleskog church might have had several altars and that the transepts were built to house them. Although the floor plans of the two churches were not fully comparable since the church in Kalundborg was a symmetric Greek cross and Edsleskog was not. But the possible cultural influences could still be comparable.

Another church that can be compared to Edsleskog church is the church in Ringsted, Denmark. The church in Ringsted had a very similar floor plan to Edsleskog church, cross formed with double transepts, an apse and by some point a middle tower. According to the sketch of the floor plan, the church was about 65 meters long. The church was made in brick placed in monk bond,

and was from the middle of the twelfth century. The church had a monastic order tied to it and its founding was directly connected to royalty (Bertelsen 2021, 6–119) (Fig. 35). It is discussed how the technique of bricklaying came to Denmark. A suggestion is that it came from Lombardy through Germany (Lund Rasmussen et al. 2025, 1–19).



(Fig. 35. Suggested floorplan for Ringsted church in Denmark. North is up. The sketch shows all building phases at once, the darker parts are medieval. Note the internal colonnade, the transepts and the apse. Bertelsen 2021.)

Another parallel to Edsleskog church could be Maglarp church in Scania, which was located in then Denmark and today Sweden. Maglarp church was also an early Romanesque brick church. This church was built in several phases, probably due to the exchange of workers and pauses in the brick production. The church was notably built in different brick techniques in the different phases. This could indicate that craftsmen with varying experiences in bricklaying were working on the church in different phases. The bricklaying became more standardized in the later phases, which might either indicate that the craftsmen became more experienced or that the agent that ordered the church gained more control over the design. It is also remarked that the church had a western tower which housed a coffin of brick, which would imply that it was a patronage church (Sundnér 1982, 5–106) (Fig. 36).

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(Fig. 36. Floor plan of Maglarp church in Scania. North is up. Note the building phases depicted in the sketch. The stripes going to the left in the chancel show the oldest phase. The stripes going to the right in the north show the second phase. The crossed parts in the south show the third phase. The dark area shows the fifth phase. Note that there is a fourth phase which is only visible in the tower and facade. Sundnér 1982.)

Edsleskog church could also be compared to Söderala church in Hälsingland, built during the second half of the twelfth century. The two churches had almost the same floor plans, cross formed with apses. Söderala church was seemingly not administratively important or had pilgrimage attached to it. The proposed explanation for its design is that it was built by a local member of the elite as a reference to grand churches in Uppland (Lovén 1990, 20–21) (Fig. 37). These grand churches were, for example, the cathedral in Gamla Uppsala from the twelfth century. The cathedral had a central tower, a three-aisled nave, an apse and transepts. Also the pilgrimage churches of St. Olof and St. Per in Sigtuna, which were probably built in the very beginning of the twelfth century and also had centralized towers and transepts. Also Vårfrukyrkan (Own trans. Church of Our Lady) in Enköping, which were built during the same period as the others and also had transepts and a centralized tower, as well as being notably big. All of these churches were

probably vital administrative centres, and the designs might have symbolized their importance. They were all built in stone (Bonnier 2004, 31–32).

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(Fig. 37. Floor plan of Söderala church in Hälsingland by Cnattingius 1982. North is up. Note the elaborate transepts that made the church almost the shape of a Greek cross. Lovén 1990.)

It seems like the best parallels that can be drawn to Edsleskog church are early monastic churches in Denmark. Or, in the case of Söderala church and the church in Kalundborg, churches that seem to have been built as references to other powerful buildings. It is also possible to draw parallels between Edsleskog church and the administratively important churches of Uppland. Some of the examples were pilgrimage churches, whilst others were not. Thus, the architectural design elements of, for example, a centralized tower and transepts might not have symbolized anything specific in the Romanesque period except an important church. It is arguable if Edsleskog church had a centralized tower, but elements like the three-aisled nave and transepts were found in Edsleskog church as well as in the important churches in Uppland. Edsleskog church might simply have been built as a reference to how an important Romanesque church looked like. Some parallels existed between the churches in Edsleskog and Ringsted. Both were huge, were made in early brick technique, and had similar floor plans. The early brick in Ringsted church can be explained by the

church's royal connection and its connection to a monastic order. This could signify that Edsleskog church could have had these connections as well.

Maybe Edsleskog church's design was a reference, just like round churches probably were. The unusual floor plan of Edsleskog church might have been practical, with the transepts simply existing to give pilgrims more space, but might also have been a status symbol and a reference to another famous church with a similar design. Edsleskog church might have been unusual because it was supposed to be conspicuous to show off elite status (Wienberg 2014, 215– 244). The parallel with Maglarp church shows a similar narrative of brick churches built in phases, possibly by different builders and with various amounts of control from the agent. Perhaps, like Maglarp church, Edsleskog church was built by a private patron, as indicated by the western tower, who had little control over the craftsmen. Then perhaps the agent, who could have been the diocese of Skara by then, gained more control.

4.3. Edsleskog as a pilgrimage site

In regards to the question if it is possible to archaeologically state that Edsleskog church was a pilgrimage church, the answer seems to be a hesitant yes. This conclusion was drawn mainly because there seems to be no exact way to identify a pilgrimage church, but there were general trends. Also, since the medieval church in Edsleskog is gone, a lot of the conclusions had to be drawn from only the ruins.

But some trends can be analyzed from the floor plan. Pilgrimage churches were in general too large for the nearby population and could have had unusually large chancels (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 A, 9–15). Pilgrimage churches often had transepts and sacristies to house altars and inventory (Dahlberg 2002, 57). A pilgrimage church might have had appendix buildings for the relics of the saint and be designed like a cathedral or monastery, for example by having a three-aisled nave (Linde & Westrin 2000, 2–21). A pilgrimage church was often built for the movement of a large group of people (Lovén 1990, 22). In general, all of these factors seemed to be correct for the church in Edsleskog, except any clear room for relics (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 B, 76–77). A lot of these design elements were present in grand Romanesque churches in Uppland, all which were not pilgrimage churches, like transepts and sizable, three aisled naves (Bonnier 2004, 31–32). Thus, it is difficult to claim that these architectural factors were proof of a pilgrimage church, and not just an administratively important church. There is also no proof that any relics of St. Nicolaus existed in Edsleskog church, or that the church had any specific altar, room or burial for him. This could be because the presence of these things were implied and not worth mentioning in sources. Possibly the remains were lost, removed or never existed.

Other factors that seemed to sometimes identify pilgrimage churches were valuable inventory, depictions of saints and especially the saint the church was dedicated to, sacrificial coffins and pilgrimage badges (Bringéus 1997, 20–45). The landscape around the pilgrimage church might have had pilgrimage roads, hostels and road markers (Andersson 1989, 13–14). Also, the pilgrimage site might have been a place for markets, yearly festivities or pre-Christian cult (Bringéus 1997, 9–25). The placenames in the landscape around the potential pilgrimage church might be ecclesiastical (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 A, 9–15). Or, the placenames of the area might show cult continuity (Nilars 2003, 14–18). Edsleskog church seemed to share many of these features (Lazarides, Beckman & Mühlenbock 2023 A, 3–30) But many of these trends were difficult to find archaeologically, and some had to be proven by historical records. But it seems to be possible to archaeologically state that Edsleskog church was a pilgrimage church, at least based on the general trends that pilgrimage churches often followed. But for more certainty, the historical sources were needed.

A medieval connection between the pilgrimage of St. Olof and Edsleskog church was not found in the material. There were no tangible artefacts connected to the pilgrimage, like badges or depictions of the saint (Lödöse museum, unpublished list of finds given 27-02-26). Although this lack of finds can be attributed to loss of medieval inventory.

Perhaps the connection between St. Olof and Edsleskog appeared for the first time after the medieval period. It was possibly first mentioned in the 1672 eulogy by Nils Hesselgren when he described the holy spring of “St. Ola” (Hesselgren 1672). There is no proof of this second spring, and Lars Hesselgren did not mention it in his 1718 dissertation (Hesselgren 1718, 106–108). “St. Ola” could have been another name for St. Olof. Since St. Olof became very popular during the late medieval era specifically, whilst cults like St. Nicolaus were mostly forgotten, one can assume that the cult in Edsleskog became retroactively intertwined with the pilgrimage to Nidaros. This assumption does not exclude the idea that pilgrims that went to Edsleskog also went to Nidaros, but there is no proof from the medieval era that the church in Edsleskog was specifically built in relation to the Nidaros pilgrimage. It is quite possible that the idea of St. Olof pilgrimage became more popular during the late medieval and post medieval era. Especially during the seventeenth to nineteenth century in the era of “götecism”, when glorifying the past became more common. For example, Edsleskog seemed to return to the name “Edsleskog” sometime after the seventeenth century after an unknown period of being called “Hessleskog”. This might be due to nostalgia of the past.

The interest to glorify the church's past also appeared in the aforementioned church bells. The inscription that apparently was present on one of the bells when going through the inventory after

the 1568 fire is most probably made after the medieval era. This does not discredit that the bell itself was medieval, but the inscription was probably not. The inscription talks about “the old times” and the “papal times”, which is not something that would have been written during the medieval era about itself. The inscription also retroactively talks about “when there was monastery” and calls the church “Hesselskog”, something that can be observed on maps and in texts only as a name on the church for a brief time during mainly the sixteenth and seventeenth century (Runelid 1984, 130–135). So if this bell inscription truly existed, which is difficult to prove, then it was probably retroactively inscribed. Also, if the bell did not exist, the story about it was purposely invented. The inscription was also not mentioned in the 1583 inventory (*Inventarium för kyrkorna i Skara stift* 1583, 38). In any case, this shows a will to retroactively “prove” the presence of a monastery. This seems to be in the same spirit as Hesselgren’s eulogy, as well as the other Hesselgren’s dissertation. All this proves a willingness to make up or enhance the importance of Edsleskog church after the medieval era, which most likely might have fabricated the church’s associations with a monastery and connections to the pilgrimage to Nidaros.

This study could not find any real proof of a monastery being attached to the medieval church in Edsleskog. But since the surroundings of Edsleskog church are quite archaeologically unexplored, the possibility of finding a monastery still exists. The medieval letters show that the church owned a considerable amount of land, valuable enough to be traded and exchanged through the bishop of Skara. The local place name “Munkhättan/Munkhyttan” might suggest the presence of monks, but since this was never mentioned in medieval sources it is impossible to assume from just this name that there was a monastery in the area.

Another option is that Edsleskog was a “failed monastery”. It might have been a monastery that was planned and never realised, or existed briefly. A good analogy is Lurö monastery, a short-lived branch of the Cistercian order on the small island of Lurö in the middle of Värnern during the middle of the twelfth century. Lurö monastery supposedly only existed for a few years. It is possible that the monks moved because the economy of the island was insufficient for the monastery. Excavations of the monastery on Lurö showed that the church had some similar design elements to Edsleskog church, like an apse, no clear tower and several sacristies. The monastery was probably founded as a branch of Alvastra monastery. The placement of the monastery could have either been motivated by political reasons, the royal dynasty of Erik most probably owned Lurö island and could have wanted to influence the monastic order, or to be a hostel for people that traveled on Vänern. The monastery could even have had a connection to the pilgrimage to Nidaros, being a stop on the way there (Sigsjö 1990, 55–56).

There are a lot of parallels between the churches of Lurö and Edsleskog, if one assumes that Edsleskog could have been a short lived monastery. The designs of the churches were similar, and

the placements could have been motivated in the same manner. Both of these monasteries could have been built due to political motivations and as resting places for travelers. But there are no sources that connect Edsleskog church to any monastic order, nor a political force like the royal dynasty of Erik. Also, the theoretical reason for the monastic order to leave Edsleskog is unclear. Lurö monastery was probably abandoned due to economic reasons, but the economy of Edsleskog church seemed to have been very strong in the beginning. There are also no sources that indicate that Edsleskog had a more long-lived monastery that was abandoned when the economy worsened during the late medieval period.

Edsleskog church and the church of St. Elin/Helena in Skövde had similar floor plans, both were three-aisled with transepts and appendix buildings. The similarities between the churches might be explained by both possibly having the same agent, the diocese of Skara. This might also have been a common design for pilgrimage churches in Västergötland at the time. Maybe there were no clear directions on how to build a pilgrimage church, but only how to build an important church. Since the church of St. Elin/Helena contained the remains of the saint, the relics of St. Nicolaus could have been in Edsleskog church. Perhaps they were placed in one of the appendix buildings (Linde & Westrin 2000, 2–21) (Fig. 38).



Figure removed for copyright

(Fig. 38. Floor plan of the medieval church of St. Elin/Helena according to Lundberg 1940 and edited by Westrin 1999. North is up. The black shows the building parts from the twelfth century and the rest is of unknown age but older than 1400. Note the internal colonnade and the elaborate transepts. The line pointing at the northern appendix building identifies the placement of the relics. Linde & Westrin 2000.)

A proposed way to identify a pilgrimage church is the ability to be accessible for a large group of people, which the cross-shaped floor plan of Edsleskog might have provided (Lovén 1990, 22). Maybe there are no clear methods for identifying a pilgrimage church based on design and architecture alone. Perhaps, a pilgrimage church was simply a church that held value for pilgrims, and as a result often had characteristics like accessible floor plans and bigger sizes.

The medieval church in Edsleskog seemed to have owned a lot of land and gained much income. But none of the fourteenth century letters regarding the economics or land ownership of the parish mentioned a monastic order. This could signify that the monks had already left by the fourteenth century, were not involved with the economics of the church or never existed. One scenario could be that the monastic order in Edsleskog existed for such a short time that they had already abandoned the place by the end of the thirteenth century, and the motivation for leaving was never economic. Maybe the potential monastic order were the original builders in the initial phase, which would explain the early use of brick, but abandoned the project to be continued by the diocese of Skara.

That Edsleskog church seemed to have owned a lot of land supports its possible administrative significance. Some of the land seemed to have been quite valuable since the dean of Skara himself owned and exchanged some of it in 1310. He notably exchanged land with a man named Sven Prästson, freely translated as Sven “son of priest”, which might indicate that the man was the son of the priest in Edsleskog. The dean also gave Sven Prästson “wazændæ”, which probably was the same farm that was mentioned in the letter from 1308. This could mean that “wazændæ” was one of the few farms in the area that the deputy could not take income from. The dean of Skara gained a farm owned by Edsleskog church in 1312 from the bishop’s servant in exchange for a mill and the right to be buried in the aforementioned church. If comparing these exchanges of land to the 1309 letter, which claims that the dean of Skara was trying to tie himself closer to Edsleskog for more income, it could be assumed that the dean and possibly the diocese were slowly taking over land in the parish (SDHK 2259; 2294; 2319; 2370; 2503).

That a man named Sven Prästson existed in 1310, and owned and possibly inherited important land, might show an evolution from the local priesthood having administrative control in the thirteenth century to slowly being pushed out by the fourteenth century. Just the fact that the priest might have had a son that owned church land, which generally would be considered against the rules, suggests that the priesthood in the area was not under full control of the diocese. Maybe the exchanges of land during the fourteenth century coincided with the church becoming less visited as a pilgrimage site, and the diocese of Skara needed to find economic gain from other sources than the pilgrimage. This possible narrative might support the idea that there was never a monastery in the area, because if monks also had a hand in the ownership of church land and the economic changes, they would probably have been mentioned or involved in the exchanges.

Thus to summarize, Edsleskog church could have been a successful pilgrimage site with a lot of land inventory during the thirteenth century. The diocese of Skara let the church be controlled by the local priesthood as long as the financial gains from the church were good. This would explain why the church is never mentioned during the thirteenth century. But in the beginning of the fourteenth century the pilgrimage became less popular and the church gained less income. So in an effort to stabilize the income the bishop and dean of Skara took control over the area by regulating the taxes, appointing a deputy and buying land. But as the popularity of the pilgrimage site continued to drop, the diocese of Skara decided to move on to other sources of income and largely abandoned Edsleskog church. The pilgrimage site was generally forgotten, but as seen in later letters, the thing and market survived until at least the fifteenth century. The thing and market could have been created in relation to the pilgrimage site.

The landscape around Edsleskog church was seemingly not designed for pilgrimage. If the potential pilgrimage road is possible to identify, it probably came from the south and west, which is supported by the placement of the doors on the church. Pilgrims could have traveled from Västergötland, either by foot or by boat over Vänern, and then walked on the shores of the long lakes towards Edsleskog. They could also possibly have traveled by boat on these lakes, having to lift it to change lakes from time to time. Pilgrims could also have come from the west, possibly from Norway.

The modern west–eastern road that goes straight through Edsleskog to Åmål, could be an option for a possible pilgrimage road (Fig.31). It would require the least amount of walking through the forest and the pilgrim could travel to Åmål by boat. What speaks against it is the lack of any road in this direction on any map before current times, as well as the terrain being quite mountainous. The above proposed route from the south and west existed on the maps from the seventeenth century. Of course one should not always assume continuous use of roads, just because there were roads in a specific location in the seventeenth century does not mean that they also existed in the thirteenth, but a good place for a road remains a good place for a road. But even if the most likely option for the pilgrimage road is from the south along the shores of Ånimmen and Knarrbysjön, there are no archaeological signs of this. Edsleskog might have been the final location for the pilgrims. If further travel was required, for example to Nidaros, the route would probably be through Laxarby in the west and then somehow this road would connect to southwestern Värmland. But there is no real proof of this either, except assumptions made after the medieval period and local traditions. The road to the west could have been for Norwegian pilgrims to travel to the church. The early pilgrimage to this church might have consisted of local people, which could have been Swedish and Norwegian since the area probably was not under clear Swedish jurisdiction yet.

5. Conclusion & summary

5.1. Conclusion

The medieval church in Edsleskog was probably built to be a pilgrimage church from the beginning. From the very start, the church was probably too large for the area and built in a style generally only found in monasteries, cathedrals and pilgrimage churches. Arguably, the church was not initially built by the diocese of Skara, but by a private agent. Thus, the answer to the question if it is possible to archaeologically state that Edsleskog church was a pilgrimage church, the answer would be a possible yes. But also, it might just be possible to archaeologically state that it was an important church. The general trends of pilgrimage churches were present in Edsleskog church, but to answer with certainty the historical sources were needed.

It is not possible in this thesis to name an agent or agents behind the conception of Edsleskog church. The agent behind the church could have been local or not, and were probably well connected and/or well traveled and thus know of bricklaying technique. Or the agent was not local, which would explain why no other church in the region looked like Edsleskog. The church seems to have been a reference to grand monastic churches in Denmark. The agent was possibly very passionate about the new cult of St. Nicolaus, or wanted to show agency over the landscape through the church. This church might have been built due to reverence of the cult, to establish power in the area, or both. The first building phase of the church, compared to the second phase, probably shows that the builders were not well versed with brick to become experienced later. This might mean that the diocese of Skara became involved in the second phase and made the church the pilgrimage destination that it would become, possibly to control the area through administration and taxation.

The church is placed too strangely and too inconveniently for it to have been originally planned by the diocese of Skara as an administrative power. Thus this thesis proposes that Edsleskog church was initially a local cult church and a pilgrimage church, originally planned by a well-traveled private agent, and was then taken over by the diocese of Skara to gain control over the area. Probably, this exchange of agents happened between building phase one and two. The main problem with this interpretation is that Edsleskog church was arguably built too big and luxuriously for just local pilgrimage. But, the size and design might also have been referencing other churches the agent drew inspiration from. This thesis also proposed that Edsleskog church was not tied to the pilgrimage to Nidaros and St. Olof. The church was likely sometimes visited on the way towards Nidaros by some pilgrims, but there is no proof from the medieval period that it was purposely tied to the St. Olof pilgrimage. The association with St. Olof was probably retroactively created after the medieval period when romanticizing the past was popular.

5.2. Summary

When the oldest known brick building in Sweden was found in Dalsland in the form of a grand church, the general theory became that this must have been an unusually important pilgrimage church. Theories were made that connected this church to the diocese of Skara and the pilgrimage of St. Olof in Nidaros. But this thesis proposed that the medieval church in Edsleskog might have been a private endeavour, built as a local pilgrimage site and as a reference to other significant churches at the time to show power. But this original endeavour was then taken over by the expanding presence of the kingdom of Sweden and the diocese of Skara, which transformed Edsleskog church to an administrative power and a method to better control the area. This thesis also proposed that the assumed connection between the church in Edsleskog and the pilgrimage to Nidaros was created after the medieval era when the church was gone.

These ideas might not only add to the discussion about this particular church, but might be used for further exploration about the waves of influences in the early medieval period. Several discussions can and should continue from this study. For example, the map material could be studied further and the potential medieval roads in Dalsland could be explored more. The identity of the initial agent of Edsleskog church can be explored further. It would be interesting to research who had the means, connections and motivation to start building the church. Lastly, this study could open a door to questioning the often assumed age of brick-buildings in Sweden and Scandinavia. There is always a possibility that new materials, techniques and trends were used much earlier than previously thought by a few well-connected agents. The centres of power were not necessarily always the first to adapt new phenomena.

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7. Appendices

Appendix A. Table of medieval letters (Presented in chronological order)

Acquired from Riksarkivet SDHK(Medeltidsbrev)

SDHK 388

Date: 4th of November 1220

Language: Latin

Written to: Bishop of Skara

Written by: The Pope Honorius III

Place written in: The Lateran

General content: Granted indulgence for new church in diocese of Skara, acknowledgment of St. Nicolaus

SDHK 2259

Date: 15th of August 1308

Language: Latin

Written to: Announcement

Written by: Bishop of Skara, Brynolf Algotsson

Place written in: Skara

General content: Decisions on taxes for the area of Edsleskog and the appointment of a substitute caretaker of the church

SDHK 2294

Date: July 7th 1309

Language: Latin

Written to: Announcement

Written by: Bishop of Skara, Brynolf Algotsson

Place written in: Höjentorp

General content: The deflating taxes of the diocese and how to use Edsleskog church for more income

SDHK 2319

Date: 1310, unknown day

Language: Latin

Written to: Announcement

Written by: Dean of Skara, Bengt

Place written in: Skara

General content: The inventory if the substitute caretaker of Edsleskog church

SDHK 2370

Date: July 6th 1310

Language: Latin

Written to: Announcement

Written by: Bishop of Skara, Brynolf Algotsson

Place written in: Skara

General content: The exchange of land, some of it owned by the church in Edsleskog, between the dean of Skara, Bengt and a man named Sven Prästson

SDHK 2503

Date: June 27th 1312

Language: Latin

Written to: Announcement

Written by: Bishop of Skara, Brynolf Algotsson

Place written in: Åmål

General content: Exchange of land in Edsleskog between the dean of Skara, Bengt and the bishops servant

SDHK 5844

Date: September 25th 1349

Language: Latin

Written to: Announcement

Written by: King Magnus of Sweden

Place written in: Lödöse

General content: The king renewed the ability for the dean of Skara to take out fines, and forbid people to have sheds and horses by the rectory, during the midsummer market in Edsleskog

SDHK 11523

Date: September 21st 1379

Language: Swedish

Written to: Torkel Erengislesson, mister Johan of Edsleskog, mister Hallsten of Torsö och mister Klemet of Hassle

Written by: Anund Nykommen

Place written in: Säby

General content: A man named Anund Nykommen gives land in Edsleskog to his new wife, several people approve including one mister Johan of Edsleskog

SDHK 13906

Date: June 24th 1391

Language: Swedish

Written to: Declaration

Written by: Approval of declaration by Erik Kettilsson and the knight Knut Algotsson, probably as well the person receiving the exchange, Abjörn Jönsson

Place written in: Edsleskog

General content: Exchange of land approved by Edsleskog thing

SDHK 22172

Date: June 23rd 1434

Language: Swedish

Written to: Declaration

Written by: Jöns Lage Posse of Nordkärr and Jakob, priest of Edsleskog

Place written in: Edsleskog

General content: The approval of selling of land in southern Dalsland

Appendix B. Table of maps(Presented in chronological order)

Map O9

Dating: Unknown, seventeenth century

Maker: Kettil Claeson Felterus

Depiction of roads: North–southern road towards Värmland by Edsleskog, connects to Fröskog in south and Laxarby in west

Depiction of church: Shape of Greek cross, more detailed and larger than other churches in area

Depiction of water: Thin stream of water connects the two lakes by Edsleskog, possible bridge, both lakes are called “Helsen”, the southern “Yttre Helsen”

Depiction of mountains: Mountains depicted between Åmål and Edsleskog

Name of church: “Hesledskog”

From: Lantmäteriet

Figure number(s): 6, 7, 8

Map O37

Dating: Undated seventeenth century

Maker: Kettil Claeson Felterus

Depiction of roads: No roads depicted by Edsleskog

Depiction of church: Shape of Greek cross, depicted without crucifix like some churches in area have, equal in detail and size to other churches in area

Depiction of water: The two lakes are slightly connected with thin stream, possibly with bridge, both lakes named “Heslen”

Depiction of mountains: Unclear, might be depicting mountains east of Edsleskog

Name of church: “Hesleskoug”

From: Lantmäteriet

Figure number(s): 9, 10

Map O15

Dating: 1658

Maker: Kettil Claeson Felterus

Depiction of roads: Road through Edsleskog, from Laxarby in the west to a place called “Prästerna” by Edsleskog. Also a road to Bräcke in southeast that goes towards Åmål and Mo church

Depiction of church: Simple box, same coloring as other churches in area, no tower or cross depicted

Depiction of water: Two lakes that are slightly connected with a thin stream, one is called something unclear and “lacus”, bridge between, seem to have two different names but names unclear, one seemingly being called “yttre XX”(outer XX).

Depiction of mountains: Mountainous area both west and east of Edsleskog

Name of church: “Edsleskogs kyrcka”

From: Lantmäteriet

Figure number(s): 11, 12

Map 004

Dating: 1675

Maker: Kettil Claeson Felterus

Depiction of roads: Road south to north along the east side of the lakes, forks of north of Edsleskog to two roads, one continue to Strand in north, one continue north, one road west from Edsleskog to Laxarby

Depiction of church: Yellow and red, same coloring as the other churches in area, with same details of crosses and windows, seemingly a depiction of a southern door into transept, seemingly cross formed compared to other churches, no tower,

Depiction of water: Two lakes with thin stream between, with bridge, northern lake seem to be called “Heslen Lacus”, the southern lake is unnamed, but connected to a lower lake named “Yttre Heslen Lacus”, (own trans.Outer Heslen Lacus), so possibly perceived the same lake

Depiction of mountains: Seem to be some unclear depiction of mountains around the church, especially in the east

Name of church: “Hesleskougs” or “Hesleskon’gs

From: Riksarkivet

Figure number(s): 13, 14

Map 005

Dating: 1684

Maker: Unknown

Depiction of roads: A road from the west, through Edsleskog towards the north, an unconnected road north from Edsleskog to Strand

Depiction of church: Depicted in white as the other churches, depicted as a smaller box with tower both in west and east, possibly showing a southern transept

Depiction of water: Two lakes with thin stream between, no clear bridge, northern lake called Heslen Lacus, lower lake called Yttre Heslen Lacus (own trans. Outer Heslen Lacus)

Depiction of mountains: No depictions of mountains close to Edsleskog

Name of church: Hesleskoug

From: Riksarkivet

Figure number(s): 15, 16

Map 023a

Dating: 1686

Maker: Unknown

Depiction of roads: A road fork by Edsleskog, very unclear directions and connections to other places

Depiction of church: Drawn like the others, box with western tower

Depiction of water: Lakes around Edsleskog, but does not seem to connect to actual geography, because the lakes are called “Leelangen” and “Leen”

Depiction of mountains: No mountains depicted in area

Name of church: Edeskoug k.

From: Riksarkivet

Figure number(s): 17, 18

Map 007a

Dating: 1680–90

Maker: Unknown

Depiction of roads: No roads depicted in area

Depiction of church: Exactly like others, seems like a standard depiction, white box, grey roof, western tower with cross, some windows and doors

Depiction of water: Two lakes, connected with a thin stream, northern one called “Sjön öfre Häslen”(own trans; Lake higher Häslen), no depiction of bridge, southern lake not named, but connected to a lower lake called “nedra Häslen” (own trans. lower Häslen)

Depiction of mountains: Depictions of mountains all around Edsleskog, but not particularly close by

Name of church: Hälseskogs k

From: Riksarkivet

Figure number(s): 19, 20

Map 007b

Dating:1680–90

Maker: Unknown

Depiction of roads: Road from the south, east by the lake, coming from Fröskog, one road towards north that goes through Prästerud, road north towards Strand unconnected to the others, road west to Laxarby

Depiction of church: Drawn in red, like others, box-shape but sectioned in two with one part lower than the other, no tower and little detail

Depiction of water: Two lakes with thin stream connecting, no clear depiction of bridge, northern lake is called “sjön Häslen” (own trans, the lake Häslen), the southern is not named but connected to a lower lake called “ytter Häslen” (own trans. outer Häslen), so might be considered same lake

Depiction of mountains: Mountainous around Edsleskog, especially in east and southwest

Name of church: “Hesleskog”

From: Riksarkivet

Figure number(s): 21, 22

Map 007c

Dating: 1680–90

Maker: Unknown

Depiction of roads: Connected road from Laxarby in west, through Edsleskog towards the north, continuing north passing through Prästerud, unconnected road from Edsleskog to Strand in the north

Depiction of church: Seem to be drawn very similar to others, drawn in red like other, box with western tower

Depiction of water: Two lakes, connected through thin stream, no clear bridge depicted, northern lake called “Heslen Lacus” and southern lake unnamed, above but not connected to a lower “Yttre Heslen Lacus”(Own trans. Outer Heslen Lacus) so possibly considered same lake

Depiction of mountains: No mountains close to Edsleskog

Name of church: Hesleskog

From: Riksarkivet

Figure number(s): 23, 24

Map 007e

Dating: 1680–90

Maker: Unknown

Depiction of roads: Seem to be two roads towards the north starting from Edsleskog, one to Strand and one that continue north, passing by a place called “Prästerud”, a road west between Edsleskog and Laxarby

Depiction of church: Quite unclear due to quality of the map, but seem to be a box form with a western tower, drawn in red like other churches in the area

Depiction of water: Two lakes connected through thin stream, maybe a bridge but unclear, the northern seems to be called “Heslen Lacus” and the southern “Yttre Heslen Lacus”, (own trans.Outer Heslen Lacus)

Depiction of mountains: No or unclear depiction of elevation

Name of church: “Hesleskoug”

From: Riksarkivet

Figure number(s): 25, 26

Map N12

Dating: 1689

Maker: Kettil Claeson Felterus

Depiction of roads: No roads depicted close to Edsleskog

Depiction of church: Simple box with western tower and crucifix

Depiction of water: The two lakes are slightly connected with thin stream, possibly with bridge, both named Helsan

Depiction of mountains: No mountains depicted

Name of church: “Hesleskoug”

From: Lantmäteriet

Figure number(s): 27, 28

Map P3

Dating: 1689

Maker: Kettil Claeson Felterus

Depiction of roads: No roads depicted close to Edsleskog

Depiction of church: Simple box, depicted as others in area, no crucifix like some in area

Depiction of water: The two lakes are connected with thin stream and a bridge, both are named Heslen

Depiction of mountains: No drawn mountains

Name of church: “Heslesou’g” or Hesleskon’g”

From: Lantmäteriet

Figure number(s): 29, 30

Modern map

Dating: 2026

Maker: Author and Lantmäteriet

Depiction of roads: Main road from west, through Edsleskog towards the east, fork in this road towards Bräcke, road to the north through Prästerud, several smaller roads, one towards the south and one to the north by Strand

Depiction of church: R for the old church as archaeological remain, cross for the new church

Depiction of water: Northern lake called “Edslan”, connected with a thin stream to the small lake Bräcketjärnet in the south, which is connected to the bigger lakes Knarrbysjön and Köppesjö

Depiction of mountains: General elevation around Edsleskog, especially in east and south

Name of church: “Edsleskog”

From: Lantmäteriet

Figure number(s): 31

Appendix C. Table of medieval churches in Tössbo precinct, Dalsland

Sources: Runelid 1984, Roeck Hansen et al. 2003 & Andersson Palm 2000.

Edsleskog church

Year built: Late twelfth/early thirteenth century

Material: Brick

Floorplan: Greek cross, triple aisled

Chancel shape: Big, rectangular

Apse?: Yes

Size: 41 times 30 metres

Estimated area: About 400 m² just nave, about 600 m² with transepts

Vault: Unknown, probable crossvault in supposed sacristy by late medieval period

Trancepts: Double transepts

Sacristy: Probable northern sacristy, might have been one in south as well

Paintings: Unknown

Tower: Probable plans for western tower, but never realised

Notable architecture: Roof turret, or at least sceptre

Landscape: Forested area, by lake

Notable inventory: Unclear surviving inventory

Preservation: Ruins, new church in new placement

Estimated parish population 1571: 18 fiscal homes, about 90–180 people

Fröskog church

Year built: Unknown

Material: Wood

Floor plan: Unknown

Chancel shape: Unknown

Apse?: Unknown

Size: Unknown

Estimated area: Unknown

Vault: Probably not

Trancepts: Probably not

Sacristy: Unknown

Paintings: Unknown

Tower: Unknown, probably not

Notable architecture: Unknown

Landscape: Placed on a height

Notable inventory: French style late twelfth/early thirteenth century crucifix, a second undated medieval processional cross, pieces of thirteenth century altar cabinet (Madonna cabinet)

Preservation: Torn down in seventeenth century, rebuilt several times after

Estimated parish population 1571: 18 fiscal homes, about 90–180 people

Mo church

Year built: Unknown

Material: Wood

Floor plan: Unknown

Chancel shape: Unknown

Apse?: Unknown
Size: Unknown
Estimated area: Unknown
Vault: Unknown
Trancepts: Unknown
Sacristy: Unknown
Paintings: Unknown
Tower: Unknown
Notable architecture: Unknown
Landscape: Nothing notable
Notable inventory: Thirteenth century bell
Preservation: Medieval church gone, rebuilt in seventeenth century
Estimated parish population 1571: 38 fiscal homes, about 190–380 people

Tydje church

Year built: Unknown
Material: Probably wood
Floor plan: Unknown
Chancel shape: Unknown
Apse?: Unknown
Size: Unknown
Estimated area: Unknown
Vault: Unknown
Trancepts: Unknown
Sacristy: Unknown
Paintings: Unknown
Tower: Unknown
Notable architecture: Unknown
Landscape: Noted to have been placed on plains close to lake Vänern
Notable inventory: Unknown
Preservation: Gone
Estimated parish population 1571: 17 fiscal homes, about 85–170 people

Tösse church

Year built: Unknown, probably late thirteenth century
Material: Brick
Floorplan: Unknown, probably simple rectangular nave and square chancel, rebuilt
Chancel shape: Unknown, probably square,rebuilt

Apse: Unknown

Size: Probably bigger than Ör church, thus bigger than 16 times 8 metres, rebuilt

Estimated area: Probably bigger than the estimated area of Ör medieval church, which would be 128 m², with the assumption that the church had a simple floor plan

Vault: Unknown, rebuilt

Trancepts: Unknown, rebuilt

Sacristy: Unknown, rebuilt

Paintings: Unknown, rebuilt

Tower: A “tower” was removed from Tösse church in the eighteenth century, which might have been roof turret from unknown time in the medieval period

Notable architecture: Nothing notable

Landscape: Placed in an unusually flat area and agricultural part of northern Dalsland

Notable inventory: A bell probably from the thirteenth century, undated baptismal font in Norwegian style

Preservation: Old church standing but rebuilt after medieval era, unused since nineteenth century, new church built on another place

Estimated parish population 1571: 34 fiscal homes, about 170–340 people

Ånimskog church

Year built: Probably early thirteenth century, maybe older wood church on same place

Material: Greystone

Floorplan: Probably almost square nave with small chancel and doors in south and west

Chancel shape: Might have been a small chancel

Apse?: Unknown

Size: Unknown

Estimated area: Unknown

Vault: Unknown

Trancepts: Unknown

Sacristy: Unknown

Paintings: Unknown

Tower: Probably no tower

Notable architecture: Southern door more Romanesque (tall and tapers off at the top), Gothic truss in roof

Landscape: Just by lake Ånimmen, in an area notably filled with pre-Christian artefacts and graves

Notable inventory: Baptismal font from early thirteenth century in Västergötland style, an fifteenth century embroidered cloth with Mary's deathbed depicted, a late medieval ironclad door, an eleventh century oak coffin found in area

Preservation: Still standing but rebuilt, parts of medieval church in new church

Estimated parish population 1571: 61 fiscal homes, about 305–610 people

Åmål church

Year built: Unknown

Material: Wood

Floor plan: Unknown

Chancel shape: Unknown

Apse?: Unknown

Size: About 15 times 8 meters

Estimated area: About 120 m², with the assumption that the church had a simple floor plan

Vault: Unknown

Trancepts: Unknown

Sacristy: Unknown

Paintings: Unknown

Tower: Unknown

Notable architecture: Unknown

Landscape: Placed on shore by lake Vänern

Notable inventory: Fourteenth century bell, placed in new church, a probable medieval baptismal font in new church

Preservation: Gone, another post medieval church built on same place, another church built later in another place

Estimated parish population 1571: 21 fiscal homes, about 105–210 people

Appendix D. Table of medieval brick churches in Dalsland

Sources: Runelid 1984, Roeck Hansen et al. 2003 & Andersson Palm 2000.

Edsleskog church

Year built: Late twelfth/early thirteenth century

Geographical placement: Northeastern Dalsland, precinct of Tössbo

Brick: Wild bond and monk bond, unusually large, edges cut in a manner similar to the bricks in the Dominican church of Lödöse

Floorplan: Greek cross, triple aisled

Chancel shape: Big, rectangular

Apse?: Yes

Size: 41 times 30 metres

Estimated area: About 400 m² just nave, about 600 m² with transepts

Vault: Unknown, probable crossvault in supposed sacristy by late medieval period

Trancepts: Double transepts

Sacristy: Probable northern sacristy, might have been one in north as well

Paintings: Unknown

Tower: Probable plans for western tower, but never realised

Notable architecture: Roof turret, or at least sceptre

Landscape: Placed in forest, by lakes

Notable inventory: Unclear surviving inventory

Preservation: Ruins, new church in new placement

Estimated parish population 1571: 18 fiscal homes, about 90–180 people

Frändefors church

Year built: Probably second half of thirteenth century

Geographical placement: Southeastern Dalsland, precinct of Sundal

Brick: Unknown

Floorplan: Probably simple rectangular nave

Chancel shape: Probably rectangular

Apse: Unknown, probably not

Size: Probably around, or smaller than Ör at 16 times 8 metres

Estimated area: Probably around or smaller than the estimated area of Ör medieval church at 128 m², with the assumption that the church had a simple floor plan

Vault: Unknown

Trancepts: Unknown, probably not

Sacristy: Unknown

Paintings: Unknown

Tower: Sixteenth century source mentions a tower existing, unknown age and appearance

Notable architecture: Unknown

Landscape: Church placed outside of hamlet

Notable inventory: Baptismal font from thirteenth century

Preservation: Ruins, became ruins slightly after the medieval period ended, new church rebuilt on other place in eighteenth century

Estimated parish population 1571: 58 fiscal homes, about 290–580 people

Gestad church

Year built: Probably second half of thirteenth century, two coins found dated 1250–1300

Geographical placement: Southeastern Dalsland, precinct of Sundal

Brick: Similar edge cut to brick like the Dominican church in Lödöse

Floorplan: Probably simple rectangular nave with chancel

Chancel shape: Square chancel, probably small
Apse: Unknown, probably not
Size: 13 times 10 metre nave
Estimated area: About 130 m², with the assumption that the church had a simple floor plan
Vault: Unknown
Trancepts: Unknown, probably not
Sacristy: Probably not
Paintings: Unknown
Tower: Probably not
Notable architecture: Rests of ornamental bricks, narthex
Landscape: Notably placed on marshy land that made it sink
Notable inventory: Thirteenth century baptismal font from Västergötland, communion chalice in silver from fifteenth century
Preservation: Ruins, demolished in the eighteenth century, new church built on another place, also another medieval church close by in Murängen
Estimated parish population 1571: 37 fiscal homes, about 185–370 people

Grinstad church

Year built: Unknown, probably thirteenth century, some traditions that it was from the twelfth, but not proven, dating is partially due to it being made of brick and stylistically close to mid thirteenth century church in Skara
Geographical placement: Southeastern Dalsland, precinct of Sundal
Brick: Possibly painted red and white, monk bond, 29x14x9 centimeters
Floorplan: Probably simple rectangular nave
Chancel shape: Probably small and rectangular
Apse: Probably not
Size: Smaller than Ör church, 16 times 8 metres
Estimated area: Probably smaller than the estimated area of the church in Ör of 128 m², with the assumption that the church had a simple floor plan
Vault: Probably had brick vaults
Trancepts: Probably not
Sacristy: Unknown
Paintings: Possible Gothic paintings in red of a labyrinth, a consecration cross and a frieze
Tower: Probably no tower
Notable architecture: Round arched window openings in older Gothic type, possibly ornament of a face mask, a ornate plaque, “capstone like” button in glazed brick, a brick with an etched in name(Canutus), blind windows, possibly a western door

Landscape: Nothing notable

Notable inventory: Thirteenth century baptismal font in Norwegian style

Preservation: Rebuilt in after the medieval period, but with some of the medieval construction in new building

Estimated parish population 1571: 35 fiscal homes, about 175–350 people

Tösse church

Year built: Unknown, probably late thirteenth century

Geographical placement: Northeastern Dalsland, precinct of Tössbo

Brick: Unknown

Floorplan: Unknown, probably simple rectangular nave and square chancel

Chancel shape: Unknown, probably square

Apse: Unknown

Size: Probably bigger than Ör church, thus bigger than 16 times 8 metres

Estimated area: Probably bigger than the estimated area of the church in Ör at 128 m², with the assumption that the church had a simple floor plan

Vault: Unknown

Trancepts: Unknown

Sacristy: Unknown

Paintings: Unknown

Tower: A “tower” was removed from Tösse church in the eighteenth century, wich might have been roof turret from unknown time in the medieval period

Notable architecture: Unknown

Landscape: Placed in a notably flat area and agricultural part of northern Dalsland, placed in a notably lower position than the new church, that was built on higher ground

Notable inventory: A bell probably from the thirteenth century, undated baptismal font in Norwegian style

Preservation: Old church standing, unused since nineteenth century, new church built on another place

Estimated parish population 1571: 34 fiscal homes, about 170–340 people

Ör church

Year built: Unknown, possibly 1219 (due to a brick said to have this year inscribed found in the seventeenth century, now lost), probably mid to late thirteenth century

Geographical placement: Southeastern Dalsland, precinct of Nordal

Brick: Monk bond, similar edge cut as Dominican church of Lödöse, possibly painted red and white

Floorplan: Probably simple rectangular nave

Chancel shape: Probably no built out chancel, or possibly a small and square one

Apse?: Probably not

Size: Not fully known, probably about 16 times 8 metres

Estimated area: Probably about 128 m², assuming that the church had a simple floor plan

Vault: Unknown, probably not

Trancepts: Probably not

Sacristy: Unknown

Paintings: Unknown

Tower: Unknown

Notable architecture: Round arched window openings in older Gothic type, blind windows, a possible built out southern door with spiral ornaments

Landscape: Placed outside of farmland and hamlet

Notable inventory: Early fourteenth century Jesus statue in English style, baptismal font from thirteenth century in both Västergötland and Norway style

Preservation: Rebuilt 1663, with medieval construction partly preserved in walls

Estimated parish population 1571: 47 fiscal homes, about 235–470 people